

RNO vessel rescues Iranian boat

A Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) vessel rescued an Iranian boat after it broke down some 23 nautical miles off Muscat outside Oman's territorial waters. In response to a distress call from the Coast Guard about a broken boat, the Royal Navy of Oman vessel headed to the site and towed the boat to Port Sultan Qaboos in Muscat Governorate. **SEE ALSO P5**



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HM CUP
QUARTERFINALS
CHAMPIONSHIP
BEGIN TODAY



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STUDY MOOTS 1,000
KM HYDROGEN
PIPELINE TO SERVE
NORTH OMAN



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MIRIAM ANNE
MALIN - THE
MAPPING LADY
OF OMAN



MUSCAT

AZERBAIJAN EMABSSY
ATTACK CONDEMNED

The Sultanate of Oman condemned the attack on the Azerbaijani Embassy in the Iranian capital Tehran. In a statement, the Foreign Ministry said the Sultanate of Oman reaffirms its constant stance rejecting any action that targets diplomatic missions or undermines security and stability. The Sultanate of Oman expressed its condolences to the government, the people of Azerbaijan and the victims' families, wishing the wounded speedy recovery. — ONA

SUBMISSION OF FORMS
FOR MAJLIS ELECTIONS

The submission of applications by candidates for the 10th term of Majlis Ash'ushura elections will begin on Sunday and ends on February 16. The Ministry of Interior called on citizens willing to stand for the elections and who meet the eligibility criteria to submit their applications on the election website elections.om after filling the form and attaching the required documents. — ONA

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OMAN CALLS FOR END TO ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE

ISRAELI ARMY REINFORCES IN WEST BANK AFTER SHOOTING

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman reiterated its constant stance rejecting and condemning all forms of violence and terrorism that target civilians and destabilise security and stability, calling on the international community to undertake its responsibilities to end the dangerous escalation in the occupied Palestinian territories that claimed the lives of Palestinian and Israeli civilians, the latest of which was an attack on a synagogue in East Jerusalem.

The Sultanate of Oman reaffirmed its stern attitude by calling on the international community to achieve a just and comprehensive peace and support the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to establish their independent state based on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital in accordance with the two-state



Israeli security forces gather in Jerusalem's predominantly Arab neighbourhood of Silwan on Saturday. — AFP

solution and the resolutions of the international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military was sending more troops into the occupied West Bank, a day after a Palestinian gunman shot dead

seven people on the outskirts of Jerusalem and another shooting attack in the city on Saturday wounded two people.

The attacks took place towards the end of a month of growing confrontation and follow an

Israeli raid in the West Bank that killed nine Palestinians.

Saudi Arabia has warned of the situation between Palestinians and Israelis escalating further after an attack on a synagogue in Jerusalem, the kingdom's foreign ministry said on Saturday.

The European Union denounced attacks in Jerusalem and urged Israel to only use lethal force as a last resort.

The bloc's chief diplomat, Josep Borrell Borrell said that last year's toll, when "more than 150 people were killed by Israeli forces in the West Bank, including 30 children", was "the highest number since the end of the second intifada in 2005".

"The European Union stresses that lethal force must only be used as a last resort when it is strictly unavoidable in order to protect life," said. — Agencies



ABDULLAH BAGS OMAN RALLY TITLE FOR SECOND TIME

The Oman Rally Team's Abdullah al Rawahi and Jordanian co-driver Ata al Hmoud clinched victory in the Oman International Rally for the second time in three years on Saturday. The fastest time on the final stage enabled Petr Kacirek and Petra Rihakova to see off a late challenge from pre-tournament favourite Nasser Saleh al Attiyah for second overall and the Czech crew duly sealed the runner-up spot in their Duck Racing Skoda Fabia. **DETAILS ON P10**

PHOTO BY ABDULWAHID AL HAMADANI

Be cautious — jellyfish stings may cause health problems

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

Looks can be deceptive, and so are some jellyfish, which look so attractive that the beachgoers do not resist going nearby and touching them. They need to be cautious, as a species of jellyfish called Portuguese Man o'wars have been pushed to the shores of Salalah due to recent northern winds.

Salalah and its adjoining areas are under the grip of the north winds, which are bringing some rains, cold waves and Portuguese Man o'wars, a slight touch of which can cause severe health problems.

Dr Sachin Singh and his wife Vinita Singh were on a beach trip

when they spotted the Portuguese Man o'wars.

A medical practitioner Dr Sachin advises not to touch the Portuguese Man o'wars jellyfish because it is capable of delivering an excruciating sting.

"It is rarely deadly to humans, but most people suffer immediate pain that lasts up to 20 minutes. In more severe cases, the sting can trigger chest pain and breathing difficulty," he said.

He advises not to touch this marine species even if it is dead. Its harmful capabilities remain even after death, he says.

After the sting, the Portuguese Man o'wars leave long tentacles that cause stringy red welts on the skin. There is local pain, burning, swelling and redness. The welts



PHOTO BY DR SACHIN SINGH

last from minutes to hours. A rash may come and go for up to 6 weeks.

"Other jellyfish called Velella are also poisonous and found on beaches, but the Velella pack

a much tinier sting and won't hurt much," says Dr Sachin, a keen traveller who loves to create awareness among tourists and visitors of beaches and other places.

According to some fisheries experts, jellyfish are classified as toxic and non-toxic. "Most jellyfish stings are harmless to humans and cause only a mild irritation. One should be cautious as a few species of jellyfish are toxic and can cause harm in the form of severe itching and long-duration pain in the affected area," they suggest.

A dermatologist, however, suggests not to venture into the sea for swimming when jellyfish are spotted on the shore. "Generally, cases of jellyfish allergy are reported in summer when the sea is hot, and jellyfish are washed to the shore." She suggests consulting a doctor when redness on the skin starts burning after swimming in the sea or a beach visit.



SHINAS HERITAGE FESTIVAL CONCLUDES



SHINAS: The second edition of Shinas Heritage Festival wrapped up at the camel race track under the auspices of HH Sayyid Firas bin Fatik al Said on Saturday.

The closing ceremony was attended by a number of camel owners from different governorates. The chief guest visited the heritage village that displayed maritime, agricultural and Bedouin exhibits peculiar to the Wilayat of Shinas in addition to the productive families' exhibition.

The four-day festival included beauty contests of Ardha camels and horse Ardha shows staged by horse riders from Shinas Equestrian Committee as well as folklore songs, music and dances.

At the end of the event, the chief guest gave away prizes to the winners of the camel beauty contests and honoured the participating institutions.

Exhibition showcases energy transition from fossil to renewable

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

An interactive exhibition highlighting the challenges and potentials of the global energy transition and its impact on society and politics began at Bait al Zubair on January 16. It will come to an end on February 2.

The exhibition titled 'Energy in Transition — Powering Tomorrow' showcases the transition of energy from fossil to renewable.

The exhibition takes visitors



through a powerful multimedia experience created with animated and interactive infographics, typographic overlays, and graphically enhanced maps.

Many clickable diagrams, film sequences, decision trees, and a continuous change of perspective help the audience have small interactions on multi-touch monitors.

Energy economy and global scientific perspectives are highlighted in a decentralised way, among other things, through international project examples and interview partners.

The organisers claimed that the travelling exhibition is suitable for all generations, providing an introduction to the energy transition and its challenges. Furthermore, to accompany the exhibition, a panel discussion entitled "Energy transition in the mobility sector" will be held on January 29.

"Transforming our energy supply to protect the climate and conserve resources is one of the most significant challenges the global community is facing, and close international cooperation is essential to its success," said a statement from the office of Thomas F Schneider, German Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman.

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Tender Notice

Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI), announces following E-Tenders for 2023:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Deadline for Specifications Request	Deadline for tenders bids	Tender Price
06/2023	F5 Devices Renewal Subscription and Support For One Year	09 Feb 2023	23 Feb 2023	25 RO
07/2023	Renewal License and Support for Nutanix and Citrix Environment for One Year	09 Feb 2023	23 Feb 2023	25 RO

Interested companies registered with Tender Board may obtain Tender document from the E-Tendering website: <http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>. The Vendors must provide **Electronic Bank Guarantee** issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of (2%) of the Tender value valid for (90) days on website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> and addressed to Public Authority for Social Insurance.

CORRESPONDANCE:

- Tender inquiry : All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at E-Tendering system (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- E-Tendering system inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering system technical support must be directed to the fo llowing helpdesk email address and phone number: Tel : +968 24402200 , E-mail : etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

PASI is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other tender that may be received

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VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The northern parts of the Sultanate of Oman, including Muscat, have experienced heavy to light rains over the last two days, which has led to a considerable drop in night and day temperatures.

No untoward incidents, such as flowing wadis and vehicles' detention, were reported during this period of unstable weather that started on Thursday.

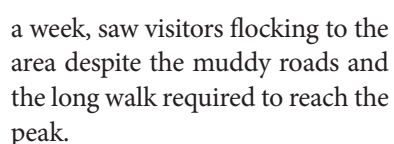
On Saturday, a number of wilayats of the governorates of Muscat, South Al Batinah, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Dhahirah, South and North Al Sharqiyah, and Al Hajar Mountains experienced light to medium rains.

Due to Friday's rains, activities of Muscat Nights were suspended and resumed on Saturday evening as the effects of the air trough gradually eased out.

The latest weather analysis indicates a receding of the effects of the air trough that affected most of the northern governorates during the past days, with a total withdrawal expected by Sunday morning.

The wilayats of Barka and Al Musannah, Al Seeb, Bausher, Al Amerat, Muttrah and Qurayat, Ibri, and Dhank received light to medium rains on Saturday.

Jabal Shams, which recorded sub-zero temperatures for almost



According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources, the Wilayat of Mahdha received the maximum amount of rainfall (124 mm), Shinas (105 mm), and Liwa (103 mm).

An official at the Directorate General of Meteorology said that weather conditions will stabilise by Sunday and the temperatures will continue to be on the lower side in mountainous and open areas.



VINOD NAIR
 @vinot_nair

With Jabal Shams reporting sub-zero temperatures for nearly seven straight days, a large number of people from the Sultanate of Oman, including foreign tourists, made attempts to visit the mountains and experience the freezing cold climate.

As travellers had to negotiate a stretch of unpaved roads which got muddier and slipperier, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) was forced to issue words of caution as there are chances of vehicles slipping on wet roads. Drivers have been urged not to take any risks and leave a safe distance between vehicles to ensure their safety and the safety of others on the road.

It may be noted that, unlike Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, visit to Jabal Shams do not require four-wheel vehicles at all times though it is advisable.

Jabal Shams is the highest peak in Oman with several summits. It is said to be the first place where

the sun sets in Oman and is popular with tourists for camping, low temperatures, stargazing, and hiking.

Several citizens called on the authorities to take adequate measures, such as developing paved roads with adequate safety nets so that it can be promoted as a winter and summer destination. “Healthy competitions between governorates to promote their tourism spots will contribute to a significant increase in business opportunities,” said one social media post.

"The development of this unique site will pay rich economic dividends, and facilities needed at the venue include good roads, parks, and cafes all throughout the year," Faris, who made an attempt to visit Jabal Shams on Friday, said.

An expatriate professor who visited Jabal Shams recently said, “I visited the site a few days before the ‘sub-zero’ temperatures, and it was a pleasant trip. A few more facilities, even if they are paid services, will help boost the image of this destination with the help of social media influencers and other promotions.”



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

#اليالي.مسقط

منوره بوجودكم

#MUSCATNIGHTS

YOU LIGHT UP THE NIGHT



MUSCAT NIGHTS

ليالي مسقط



KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

After a day's pause due to inclement weather, the Muscat Nights is back with more action-packed activities, rides and e-games meant for the young at heart. The venues are perfect for those who love e-games and those who love competition through the digital medium.

Outdoor activities at all the venues were suspended for a day, while indoor activities at the Oman Automobile Association continued and attracted scores of visitors from 4 pm to 10 pm.

Hosting events full of fun and entertainment, the Muscat Nights venues at Qurum Natural Park, Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), Naseem Park and Oman Automobile Association have activities for all age groups.

Electronic games and other activities help them enjoy, entertain and invest capabilities and talents through large screens in halls equipped with modern technologies.

"The various activities of Muscat Nights are aimed at keeping pace with the interests of young people who love technology and play behind virtual worlds through which competition and fun are mixed in equal proportion," said Ibrahim al Hasani, Chief Media Coordinator from the Muscat Municipality, the chief organiser of the nearly 2-week-long series of events.

"Here, especially at the Oman Automobile Association (OAA), activities are to target the age group in adolescence and youth, which reflects in the formulation of events and the entertainment sector to include the interests of individuals of all age groups," he adds.

ACTION GAMES AT THE ASSOCIATION

Some action games are characterised by the spirit of competition, which attracts players to engage in the game through screens that connect them. Players are able to get to know the characteristics of the players by default in this type of game, as this type of game requires a quick

ACTION-PACKED ACTIVITIES CONTINUE

reaction and the ability to quickly coordinate between hand and eye. This is even more demanding because most of the time, the player is under the pressure of time to overcome various challenges, which is attractive for many youth groups and makes the Association a destination for them to visit Muscat Nights and experience this type of game.

SIMULATION GAMES

Simulation games were also chosen as part of the programmes and games that are offered under the roof of the OAA, as the young generation is attracted to this type of games as an element of excitement and enthusiasm that push them to exert a visual ability to control realistic vehicles such as tanks, ships, planes and other games that characterise this type of games.

Friends can participate in this type of game to raise the level of their craftsmanship and ignite an atmosphere of enthusiasm among the audience of the Association and fans of electronic games.

ROLE-PLAYING AND YOUTHFUL WORLDS

This type of game enables the individual who loves them from his favourite character and lives through a virtual reality that enables visual and audio interaction in an imaginary space within the game or with other players who have a team with them. This gives them an opportunity to participate in creating moments that develop their skills in the field of electronic play, which is considered a subject of attention to the current generation.

EDUCATIONAL GAMES

Apart from the competition and excitement of e-gaming, youngsters are offered educational games and adventure games as part of the sports and skill entertainment that helps in the process of individual learning in order to make learning enjoyable by playing electronic games.

Through these games, they gain skills and get the opportunity to learn complicated things playfully.



WINTER CAMP TEACHES ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY



The Environment Authority participated in a winter camp for boys and girls organised by the Directorate General of Education in the Governorate of North Al Batinah, which included participation from other governorates and female guides from Saudi Arabia. The camp aimed to educate young people about environmental dangers and the importance of investing in Omani youth for the country's future. The authority led a workshop on the Omani environment, teaching skills for preserving it and raising awareness among students to develop a culture of environmental responsibility.

RNO vessel rescues Iranian boat



A Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) vessel rescued an Iranian boat some 23 nautical miles off Muscat outside Oman's territorial waters after it received a distress call from the Coast Guard about a broken down boat. The RNO vessel headed to site and towed the boat to Port Sultan Qaboos in Muscat. – ONA

Swimming course for kids in Nizwa

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, JAN 28

A swimming course for children has been launched at the Nizwa Sports Complex, under the supervision of swimming coach Ayman Mohammed. The course is being implemented for the eighth time as part of a plan of activities and programmes from the Department of Culture, Sports and Youth in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

The course is open to children aged 6 to 14 and will last for four weeks, with two classes per week from January 26 to February 21. A total of 31 trainees of different ages and nationalities are participating in the course.

According to the course's administration, the primary goal of the programme is to pay attention to children's mental and physical activities through swimming. They believe that teaching children to swim is among the priorities that they must learn from childhood, as it will help them to occupy their free time and also enhance their immunity and ability to resist diseases.

In addition to the health benefits, the course also aims to promote the essential role of sport in building a normal personality and a good citizen in general. The swimming course is one of many programmes being implemented by the Department of Culture, Sports and Youth in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate to promote healthy living and civic engagement among children in the region.



Partnership and Development Forum at OPAZ

MUSCAT: The Partnership and Development Forum, organised by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), will kick off on Tuesday, with the participation of a group of employees and experts from OPAZ, the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), the free zones in Suhar, Salalah, Al Mazunah and the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn).

The full-day forum will touch on the tremendous efforts made by OPAZ and all its affiliated zones in the different sectors related to partnership and social development in general and In-Country Value (ICV) in particular. As well, it intends to highlight the initiatives introduced to support and empower the Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

In addition, the participants will review and discuss views, plans and initiatives related to supporting ICV initiatives in the zones. Overall, the Partnership and Development Forum serves as a platform for exchanging experiences and enhancing cooperation in developing business plans for partnership and community development activities for OPAZ and its affiliated zones for the year 2023.



SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

NOTICE

(Auction No.1/2023)

The Ministry of Health would like to invite sealed bids for the Lease for Cafeteria of Catering Services to all the Students and Staff at Higher Institute of Health Specialities in Al-Wattiyah, in Muscat Governorate. Offers should be submitted in sealed envelopes.

Specialized Companies and establishments may collect the documents and specifications of this Auction from the Directorate of Purchase & tenders at General Directorate of Financial Affairs at Ministry's Headquarters in Al Khuwair for Fee (25 O.R) between 8.30am and 12.30 pm during official working hours on or before 6/February/2023.

A Bank Guarantee or a Certified Cheque valid for 90 days issued by a local bank for (1%) of the Auction Value addressed to Ministry of Health shall be enclosed with the bid as an auction bond that may be reimbursed to unsuccessful bidder. A bid unaccompanied by the auction bond will be rejected.

Offers enclosed in the sealed envelope duly signed and stamped in the original form shall be addressed to H.E. the Chairperson of the Tender Committee providing the title of the auction Viz: "Auction No. 1/2023. Envelopes shall not bear any sign that refers to bidder's name or identity.

Offers shall be deposited at Purchase and Tender in Directorate of Financial Affairs by on or before 9: 00 am on Wednesday, the 20/ February /2023. Offers submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

The Ministry is not bound to assign any reason for rejected bids



Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Agricultural,
Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

TENDERS NOTICE

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources
Announces the following Tenders: -

Tender No.	Description	Tender Documents Price (R.O)	Class	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Last Date for Submission of Documents
44/2022/MAFWR/HQ-7	Providing loading, off-loading and Sorting Labors for Fish and Cleaning Service for Whole Sale Fish Market at Barka for Two Years	25/-	Specialized	Sunday 22/1/2023	Thursday 2/3/2023
44/2022/MAFWR/HQ-8	Supply of Pesticides for Dubas Bug Control in Date Palm Trees/ Autumn Generation 2023	25/-	Specialized	Sunday 22/1/2023	Thursday 2/3/2023

- Interested Companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should attach Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman (as required in the tender), and addressed to the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources, And the bidders can contact the Esnad technical support team at the number listed below to find out how to request electronic guarantees from local banks.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: **+968 24402200** or **etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om**.
- Note:** Bid Submission will be online only. Scan Copy of Tender Bond needs to be attached in system.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources



Philippines to appeal ICC resumption of drug war probe

MANILA: The Philippines said it intended to appeal an International Criminal Court decision to reopen an inquiry into Manila’s brutal anti-drug campaign, which left thousands dead.

Former president Rodrigo Duterte, who initiated the drug war, pulled the Philippines out of the ICC in 2019, a year after the Hague-based tribunal began a preliminary probe into the crackdown.

The ICC launched a formal inquiry in September 2021, only to suspend it two months later after Manila said it was re-examining several hundred cases of drug operations that led to deaths at the hands of police, hitmen and vigilantes. The ICC prosecutor later asked to reopen the inquiry in June 2022.

Announcing the probe’s resumption on Thursday, the ICC said its pre-trial chamber was “not satisfied that the Philippines is undertaking relevant investigations that would warrant a deferral of the court’s investigations”.

Menardo Guevarra, the chief lawyer for current Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos’

government, said: “It is our intention to exhaust our legal remedies, more particularly elevating the matter to the ICC appeals chamber.”

Solicitor General Guevarra and Justice Secretary Crispin Remulla both said Manila, instead of the ICC, should have jurisdiction over alleged drug war crimes. “They are insulting us,” Remulla told reporters.

“I will not stand for any of these antics that will tend to question our sovereignty, our status as a sovereign country.”

Philippine police operations chief Major-General Valeriano de Leon vowed the anti-drug crackdown would continue, calling Duterte an “inspiration”.

Former presidential spokesman Harry Roque said in a statement that Duterte “would never subject himself under the legal jurisdiction of any foreign body because it is an insult to the competence and impartiality of our functioning criminal justice system”.

However, Roque added: “He would humbly submit to the prosecution and judgment of any local court.”

— AFP

Auckland starts clean-up after deadly flash floods

AUCKLAND: Authorities in New Zealand’s biggest city, Auckland, began mopping up on Saturday after torrential rains brought flash flooding and evacuations, with at least two people confirmed dead and two missing in the widespread inundation.

A state of emergency remained in place in the city of 1.6 million people on New Zealand’s north island as the rains eased after Friday’s flooding in the north, northwest and west.

Prime Minister Chris Hipkins, less than a week in office, flew by helicopter over the city before touring flood-hit homes.

“The level of devastation in some areas is considerable,” Hipkins told reporters, describing the event as “unprecedented” in recent memory.

Daylight revealed the impact of the storm, caused by warm air descending from the tropics, sparking heavy rain and thunderstorms, said Auckland Emergency Management, part of the city’s council.

“Auckland was clobbered on Friday — Auckland’s wettest day on record — and today we start the clean-up,” the agency’s duty controller, Andrew Clark, said in a statement, urging caution for residents returning home to survey flood damage.

Two men were found dead, New Zealand Police said. A search was under way for a man believed swept away, while another person was unaccounted for after a



An area flooded during heavy rainfall is seen in Auckland, New Zealand, on Saturday. — Reuters

landslide hit a house in an inner Auckland suburb, police said.

More than 2,000 calls for assistance and 70 evacuations had been made around the city, the *New Zealand Herald* reported.

City rainfall records were broken, with Auckland Airport logging 249 mm (9.8 inches) in the 24 hours to 9 am on Saturday, beating the 1985 high of 161.8 mm. Some local flights resumed at Auckland Airport, which had closed domestic and international operations on Friday.

Air New Zealand said its

domestic flights in and out of Auckland resumed from noon (2300 GMT on Friday), and international flights out of Auckland would resume from noon on Sunday (2300 GMT on Saturday).

The airport’s website said its international terminal was to open for departures from 5 pm (0400 GMT), while international arrivals would restart at 4:30 am on Sunday (1530 GMT on Saturday).

Air New Zealand said 12 of its international flights due into Auckland had been diverted

overnight.

While heavy rain had eased, another period of downpours was possible on Sunday, the national weather forecaster said, adding the impact was “expected to be severe and wide reaching because of the saturated ground”.

“More flooding will occur through many northern regions in the coming days,” it warned.

On Friday, social media showed firefighters, police and defence force staff rescuing stranded people from flooded homes using ropes and rescue boats. — Reuters

Holiday trips within China surge after lifting of Covid curbs

BEIJING: Lunar New Year holiday trips inside China surged 74 per cent from last year after authorities scrapped Covid-19 curbs that had stifled travel for three years, media reported on Saturday.

The Lunar New Year is the most important holiday of the year in China, when huge numbers of people working in prosperous coastal cities head to their hometowns and villages for family reunions.

But for three years people were told not to travel during the holiday, with those who insisted facing the risk of snap lockdowns, multiple Covid tests, quarantine and even admonishment by their work units.

An estimated 226 million domestic trips were made by all means including plane during the holiday week that ended on Friday,

state broadcaster CCTV reported, citing government figures.

That compares with about 130 million domestic trips during the holiday week last year, according to the transport ministry. In the last Lunar New Year holiday before the novel coronavirus emerged in late 2019 in the central city of Wuhan, some 420 million trips were made internally.

As for travel abroad, inbound and outbound cross-border trips jumped 120.5 per cent from last year to 2.88 million, the National Immigration Administration said on Saturday.

During the Lunar New Year holiday in 2019, 12.53 million cross-border trips were made, the Xinhua news agency reported.

China abandoned its strict “zero Covid” policy in early December after protests against



Passengers arriving at Hankou railway station on the last day of the Lunar New Year holidays in Wuhan, in China’s central Hubei province, on Friday. — AFP

the restrictions, allowing people to travel and the virus to spread rapidly throughout the country.

Now that majority of the population had been infected,

China has achieved herd immunity, *Jiankang Shibao*, a state-backed newspaper with a focus on health reported, citing Shanghai-based medical professor Fang Bangjiang.

On the economic outlook, analysts at Japanese brokerage Nomura said in a research note that holiday consumption of in-person services had recovered notably, as seen in the rebound in travel, but households were likely to be moderate in releasing pent-up demand, given their worsening balance sheets.

Meanwhile, France on Saturday said it had extended until February 15 Covid tests for travellers arriving from China due to the “evolving situation”.

The tests had initially been decreed until January 31.

Since the start of this year, travellers aged over 11 and coming from China to France have had to present a negative test taken 48 hours before the flight to board the plane. Random testing will be carried out and anyone testing

positive will have to self-isolate, the French authorities said, adding that everyone above six years old would have to wear face masks on the plane.

Several countries had slapped fresh travel regulations on travellers from China after Beijing decided to relax strict virus restrictions.

China has said that the number of daily Covid-19 deaths has fallen by nearly 80 per cent since the start of the month. A wave of virus cases has washed over the world’s most populous nation since Beijing abruptly ended its zero-Covid policy last month.

Beijing’s figures are believed to only represent a fraction of the true toll, given China’s narrow definition of a Covid death and official estimates that swathes of the population have been infected.

— Agencies

SHORT TAKES

NEW DELHI

Two Indian air force jets crash

Two Indian air force fighter jets crashed on Saturday after becoming involved in an accident and one pilot was killed, the air force said.

“The aircraft were on routine operational flying training mission. One of the three pilots involved, sustained fatal injuries. An inquiry has been ordered to determine the cause of the accident,” the air force said in a statement.

The accident happened near the town of Gwalior in Madhya



Pradesh state, it said.

Officials said earlier one of the aircraft came down in Madhya Pradesh and the other in the neighbouring state of Rajasthan.

KATHMANDU

Nepal deputy PM loses job

Nepal’s Supreme Court ruled that deputy prime minister Rabi Lamichhane had stood for election with invalid citizenship papers, annulling his status as a lawmaker and effectively removing him from office.

Lamichhane became deputy prime minister for home affairs — heading the ministry that oversees identity cards — in a seven-party alliance that took power last month.

In its ruling on Friday, a five-member constitutional bench of



the top court said the 48-year-old had contested November elections on an invalid citizenship certificate after abandoning his US citizenship.

GENEVA

Myanmar situation ‘catastrophic’

Nearly two years after Myanmar’s military coup, the UN rights chief warned that the country had plunged into catastrophe, calling for the military to be brought under civilian oversight. Since the coup that toppled Aung San Suu Kyi’s civilian government on February 1, 2021, Myanmar has “by nearly every feasible measurement, and in every area of human rights... profoundly regressed,” Volker Turk said in a statement. “Despite clear legal obligations for



the military to protect civilians in the conduct of hostilities, there has been consistent disregard for the related rules of international law,” he said.

The French want to remain the French



A crowd at a cafe in Paris.

The Associated Press offends French sensibilities with a style guide, and retreats from the piece of descriptive advice

ROGER COHEN

As an exercise in style, the tweet from The Associated Press Stylebook appeared to strain taste and diplomacy: “We recommend avoiding general and often dehumanising ‘the’ labels such as the poor, the mentally ill, the French, the disabled, the college educated.”

At least it looked offensive to the French, or perhaps rather to people of Frenchness, or people with Gallic inclinations, or people under the influence of French civilisation. The French noted that they had been placed between the “mentally ill” and the “disabled.”

Certainly, the French Embassy in the United States reacted with indignation on Thursday to the AP tweet. It published a spoof on Twitter suggesting that it had renamed itself “the Embassy of Frenchness in the United States.”

“We just wondered what the alternative to the French would be,” said Pascal Confavreux, the embassy spokesperson. “I mean, really.” Perhaps, as Ben Collins, an

NBC journalist suggested, “people experiencing a croque-monsieur.”

With the AP tweet registering 23 million views, 18,000 retweets and cascades of mockery, the news agency decided on Friday to reverse course. It issued a statement calling its recommendation an “inappropriate” suggestion that had “caused unintended offense.”

A second AP tweet removed the reference to “the French” without explaining why writing “the college educated,” for example, could be construed as “dehumanising.”

The AP stylebook, a compilation of best writing practices, is a reference for many American journalists and other writers. But the point it appeared to be labouring to make about facile stereotyping of large groups of people seemed lost, in this instance.

Lauren Easton, the vice-president of AP corporate communications, told the French daily newspaper *Le Monde* that “the reference to ‘the French,’ as well as the reference to ‘the college educated,’ is an effort to show that labels shouldn’t be used for anyone, whether they are traditionally or stereotypically viewed as positive, negative or neutral.”

How “the French” constitutes a “label” left many French people mystified. It is simply who they are. Paula Froke, the editor of the AP stylebook, did not respond to a request for comment.

Why exactly The Associated Press chose the French to illustrate its point was unclear. The old and vigorous alliance between the United States and France is subject to periodic eruptions as two proud countries with a strong sense they have lessons for the world pursue their respective interests.

But the intermittent fracas, as over the Iraq war or more recently over a nuclear submarine deal with Australia, are generally followed quickly enough by rediscovered love grounded in grudging mutual admiration.

Jeremy McLellan, a comedian, tweeted that “My favorite movie is *The Connection* with Frenchness,” a reference to “*The French Connection*.” It appears unlikely that “pass the fries with a touch of Frenchness” would go down well.

Certainly, no French diplomat has ever complained that being called an envoy of “the French” was somehow dehumanising. In fact, the French rather like being stereotyped as the French, if that is the issue. They undergo Frenchness with considerable relish.

Is ‘workism’ dooming civilisation?

ROSS DOUTHAT

This week, the Pew Research Centre released a study looking at the attitudes of contemporary American parents towards their own lives and those of their kids. Among other things, the survey provides an interesting supplement to the themes of my Sunday column on declining birthrates and last week’s newsletter on “Fleishman Is in Trouble” and the angst of the American upper class. You can see both issues illuminated in the way American moms and dads experience child rearing and imagine a future for their kids.

The question of upper-class angst surfaces in what Pew reveals about class differences in parental experience. When the survey asks parents to assess their degree of worry about various dangers, from depression to bullying to substance abuse to trouble with the cops, for every danger there is a pretty clear class division. Whether the issue is mental health (the most common concern, notably), kidnapping, or any other risk, lower-income parents are more worried — sometimes much more worried — about their kids than upper-income parents.

But ask American parents whether they find parenting “rewarding” and “enjoyable,” and suddenly the class difference runs the other way: The same lower-income parents who are more stressed by potential dangers are also more likely to report that they enjoy and appreciate being mothers and fathers all the time, while upper-income parents are more likely to qualify their appreciation.

(Notably, there’s a parallel pattern along racial lines, with African American and Hispanic parents reporting more enjoyment than white parents and substantially more than Asian American parents.)

If you were inclined to flatter the meritocracy, you might speculate that this difference reflects the greater creative enjoyment that professional-class Americans take in their working lives, such that the pivot to the more quotidian and repetitive work of parenting feels a little less pleasurable than it might otherwise.

More harshly, you might speculate that what undermines upper-class parental enjoyment is often the same force undermining the fictional (but all too real) marriage in “Fleishman” — the nagging voice that meritocracy installs in the back of your consciousness, constantly asking if you’re doing well enough, working hard enough, keeping up with the competition adequately to maintain your position and your edge.

Which in the case of parenthood boils down to either the fear that parenting time is taking you away from professional obligations or that you aren’t doing enough to help your kids with their professional ascent: the anxiety that too much chilled-out playtime, too little zealous enrichment for your blessed progeny, is going to yield the great fear of all meritocrats: the dreaded regression to the mean.

Is this fear of material-financial-professional disappointment mostly confined to the upper and upper-middle classes, to the Fleishmans and their would-be



Should American parenting place more emphasis on grandkids?

competitors, or does it haunt the rest of American society as well? Here the Pew data offers mixed evidence. On the one hand, most American parents say it’s more important for their kids to be honest and hardworking and helpful to others than for them to be “ambitious,” the keystone value of the striving upper class.

On the other hand, when you ask them to give weight to professional aspirations versus personal ones, to compare the importance of their kids being “financially independent” or happy in their work to their getting married and having kids, finances and jobs win out easily — by an extraordinary margin, in fact. According to Pew, 88 per cent of American parents rate financial success and professional happiness as either “extremely” or “very” important for their kids. Only about 20 per cent give the same rating to eventual marriage and children.

I honestly find this result a little difficult to believe. As a normative matter, I can understand rating work and family equally or treating financial independence as the “extremely” important precursor to the “very” important hope of starting a family. But I don’t understand how almost 80 per cent of parents (the subset of Americans committed to family formation!) could possibly rate family life — and with it, their own hope of grandkids — as only “somewhat” or “not at all” important for their offspring. These results seem so dramatically at variance with my own experience of parental culture (across lines of class, politics and religion) that I wonder whether some quirk of question design is influencing the numbers.

Whether the issue is mental health (the most common concern, notably), kidnapping, or any other risk, lower-income parents are more worried — sometimes much more worried — about their kids than upper-income parents

Welcome to therapy



Dr Hamed al Sinawi
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The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

“People come to therapy with their own assumptions about what would it involve, despite being reminded about confidentiality.”

When people come to my clinic for consultation I offer to shake their hands and ask them to take a seat. Some look anxious and say “this is my first time at a psychiatrist clinic so I don’t know what I should say”.

I answer “how about we start by you telling me your name and where you study or work? Then you say what made you come for therapy.” For most people this would be enough to get them ready to talk, only a few people would still be reluctant to open up by now so I let them relax and ask them to start when they feel ready.

Understandably people come to therapy with their own assumptions about what would it involve, some

would be worried about discussing personal things with a stranger, therefore, I remind people that our session is bound by confidentiality and what every note I take is to remind me about their symptoms when they come for future visits.

Others fear they may be judged especially when they have a problem that is embarrassing to discuss or even acknowledge. Some people come with their parents, partners or siblings, in that case, I would ask the client if he or she prefers to see me alone and even when he says he does not mind the presence of his family I make a point preserving time for consultations where I ask the family to wait outside so I can talk to the client alone in case they wish to discuss personal matters but feel intimidated by their family.

The client therapist relationship is a critical one and we often read

MANY PEOPLE SEEK CONSULTATIONS FOR THEIR STRUGGLE WITH RELATIONSHIPS, SELF-DOUBT, CONFIDENCE, SELF-ESTEEM, WORK-LIFE STRESS, LIFE TRANSITIONS, DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY. SUCH PEOPLE ARE ACTUALLY BRAVE AS THEY ADMIT HAVING PROBLEMS AND TAKE STEPS TO SOLVE THEM

about common myths people have about therapy and what it includes, psychologists summarise these myths in the following points :

1. People who seek psychotherapy are weak or crazy.
- This is not true, many people seek

consultations for their struggle with relationships, self-doubt, confidence, self-esteem, work-life stress, life transitions, depression and anxiety. Such people are actually brave as they admit having problems and take steps to solve them.

2. Therapists sit behind desks taking notes while you lie on a couch.

This myth probably stems from the old movies while in reality both clients and therapists sit in comfortable chairs without barriers between them. I usually take a few notes and remain attentive to what the client is saying.

3. Therapists and clients become best friends.

The therapeutic relationship is kept strictly professional. Being friends with your client can be

harmful as it may bias the advice you give them. A therapist is being kind and supportive mainly because it’s his job and not trying to be your friend.

4. Your therapist will make you talk about your childhood.

This applies to very few types of therapy as the majority of psychology therapies focus on here and now. Others would target specific behaviours or thought patterns that are disturbing and work with you to address them.

The therapist does not have a magic stick and would not make you do things against your wishes. Finally, whatever the reason that makes you consult a therapist, remember that it is a brave step towards bettering yourself and seeking help and advice for your problem instead of denying them, so stay brave and carry on.

Leopard emoji puts Germany on the spot

A German foreign ministry quip about leopards and an African tour by Russia’s top diplomat has sparked a cool response on the continent, ranging from bewilderment to accusations of insensitivity.

On Wednesday, Germany said it would deliver 14 of its top-of-the-line Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine, bolstering support for the country in its fight against the Russian war.

The move was announced as Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was in southern Africa on a trip aimed at drumming support for Moscow.

“Lavrov is in Africa, not to see (leopard emoji) but to bluntly claim that #Ukraine’s partners ‘want to destroy everything Russian,’” the German foreign office tweeted.

But some were unimpressed by the pun and hit at the emoji as a stereotype of Africa as a land for safaris.

Ebba Kalondo, spokeswoman for the African Union’s chair, replied asking whether German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock had also “come to see animals” when she visited the Ethiopia-based AU headquarters this month.

“Or is the Continent of Africa, its people & wildlife just a joke to you?” she wrote.

Zainab Usman, head of the Africa Programme at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said the tweet was “not a good look.”

“Using terrible stereotypes... to score a geopolitical upper cut to an adversary in a European war will not win you any African friends. Tone deaf! Do better!” she wrote on Twitter.

Later the German foreign office replied it was “sorry” and the tweet was “in no way intended to mean offense” but to call out “the lies that Russia uses to justify its war of aggression”.

“Point taken. Thinking of a different, German breed of leopards may have made us miss the connotation you are pointing out,” it said in a reply to Usman. EU has expressed irritation at South Africa’s close ties with Russia. A continental powerhouse, South Africa has refused to condemn the war of Ukraine and this month announced it will host joint maritime drills with Russia and China in February. In Pretoria for talks with his local counterpart, the European Union’s top diplomat Josep Borrell said the planned naval exercises were “not the best thing.”

All countries were free to develop their own foreign policy, he said, adding he understood “the desire” of some countries “to spare Russia for one reason or another”.

“But... this coincidence between the starting of the war and these military drills for us is something that is not the best thing that we would have preferred,” Borrell told a press briefing alongside South Africa’s Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor. — AFP

Why Biden pushes an assault weapons ban despite the political odds

JEFF MASON & RICHARD COWAN

Flags are lowered, sorrowful statements are issued, pleas to lawmakers are made, again.

In the wake of recent two mass shootings in California, President Joe Biden has followed a heartfelt and familiar script of outrage and grief over gun violence in America, coupled with a renewed call for Congress to pass legislation banning assault-style weapons.

Such a ban has little chance of passing the Republican-controlled House of Representatives or the Senate, which is narrowly controlled by Democrats, political experts say.

But Biden’s stubborn strategy continues: make a ban the focus of public discourse whenever a mass shooting occurs and put pressure on lawmakers who oppose one. The White House hopes to build on already strong public support for stricter gun safety laws overall, and ultimately try to pressure Republicans in Congress into changing their thinking.

Biden personally adds mentions of an assault weapons ban to his planned public remarks, a White House official said.

This week, after 18 people were killed over two days in California, the president asked lawmakers to send a bill to his desk as quickly as possible.

“It’s really needed badly,” he told Democratic leaders at a meeting on Tuesday. “We’re going to ban assault weapons again,” he said on Thursday at a Lunar New Year reception at the White House.

Republican opposition has not changed.

Senator John Cornyn, a senior Republican member of the Senate Judiciary Committee who has been prominent during past gun control debates, said the California shootings had not altered the situation on Capitol Hill. “There’s not going to be any further legislative action there. We pretty much exhausted the possibilities a few months ago,” he told reporters.

The White House says Biden will not give up.

“The president’s strategy has been



An activist takes part in a rally calling on Congress to pass legislation to ban assault style weapons, at the US Capitol in Washington. – Reuters

to make an assault weapons ban a winning issue so we can build a pro-gun safety Congress, and we’re making progress on that,” a second White House official said.

Biden’s strategy may have longer-term political benefits going into the 2024 presidential election.

“I do suspect part of Biden’s re-election plans over the next year is to try to contrast himself as a moderate, centrist, pragmatic figure versus the extremes,” said Dante Scala, a political science professor at the University of New Hampshire.

SIMPLE MATH, NOT ENOUGH SUPPORT

A decade after 20 first-graders and six adults were killed in the Sandy Hook elementary school massacre, the US federal government has put few limits on weapons like the high-capacity AR-15 used in the attack, or on the estimated 400 million guns in the country. Over 150 rounds were fired in just five minutes at the school, investigators said.

The recent shootings in California, which killed 18 people, show how even the strictest state laws can be ineffective thanks to a patchwork of federal regulation.

Biden has railed against assault-style weapons for years and repeatedly throughout his presidency. He was instrumental in getting a decade-long

ban passed in 1994.

As vice-president, he spearheaded a set of gun control proposals for Barack Obama after Sandy Hook that included a recommendation for a new assault weapons ban. None passed Congress, opposed by Republicans and the then-powerful National Rifle Association lobby.

Last year, however, Biden signed into law the first major federal gun reform in three decades. It cracks down on overall gun sales to perpetrators of domestic violence and expands some background checks to juveniles.

These and even stricter measures have strong public support.

A June Quinnipiac poll showed nearly three out of four Americans support raising the age at which a person can buy a gun to 21, and 92 per cent supported background checks for all gun buyers.

However, the Quinnipiac and other polls show that just about half of Americans support an assault weapons ban.

To pass one, the president would need 60 votes in the Senate — 10 Republicans and all 50 Democrats and independents — and a simple majority of 218 votes in the House, which has 222 Republicans and a Republican speaker, who would have to consent to bringing a bill to the floor for a vote.

— Reuters

Imagination, inspiration, and the arts...

I have spent an awful lot of my life looking at exam papers, guiding students towards success in exams, yet I am still uncomfortable with the way the arts in secondary and higher education, are assessed or examined, as they are now.

I'm not against exams, far from it. I think they are 'character building,' so they contribute to students' individual, academic, and personal development. They challenge students in the same way that life surely will, so they offer a genuine life skill. Furthermore, they place students under pressure, not unlike the way both work and life will pressure them in the future, without the intensity of those later in life decisions that will have much deeper implications. Defined as 'tests of one's knowledge or proficiency,' exams are very much an evaluation of where a student is at a particular point on their academic journey.

That's why, whilst having sympathy for educational authorities around the world, I can't help but feel that there is too much regimentation throughout the education and examination processes as applied to the arts, governed by the somewhat restricted content streams in place globally for teaching and learning, the restraint of so many exam formats, and worst of all, the marks schemes which are circulated with the exams, identifying what responses earn what, or which, marks. After all, as Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "Every artist I know started out as an amateur."

There is simply too much prescription, and too little genuine quest for inspiration and imagination. But the Arts are 'the dance, where you have what no other has,' and that may or may not be the dance, it means something so individual and beautiful that one hand may have presented it, but millions have played their part in its evolution. "Art needs the security," wrote Mary Cassat, "of knowing that no genuine spark of originality will be extinguished." So, we must trust the artist, trust in their art, and



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DEFINED AS 'TESTS OF ONE'S KNOWLEDGE OR PROFICIENCY,' EXAMS ARE VERY MUCH AN EVALUATION OF WHERE A STUDENT IS AT A PARTICULAR POINT ON THEIR ACADEMIC JOURNEY

focus more on their processes than their results.

What we are in danger of ending up with from restricted processes, is a teach-to-test teaching and learning process, that owes success as much to memorisation as any other of the cerebral skills, which does nothing to develop talent, the pinnacle of imagination, whatsoever. In fact, what can conceivably happen is that given a relevant marking scheme, students could relatively easily create their own templates, and basically fill-in-the-blanks to achieve premium marks, and while this must necessarily be the objective of the sciences, such as maths, physics, biology and the likes, it seems to me that these are very much rote strong disciplines, they either know their sciences, or they don't!

But the arts are 'the dance, where you have what no other has,' and that may, or may not be, the dance. In fact, it means something so individual and beautiful that one hand may have presented it, but millions have played their part in its evolution. The ageless Picasso painted remarkably, and he commented that "every child is an artist, but that the problem is staying childish as you grow up." I think what he feared was that, not literally but artistically, we need to keep offering the best of ourselves, but that we should not feel that all of our art must be masterpieces, and that one artistic revelation is meaningless without knowing its artistic journey.

I saw one of my students this week, clearly struggling with a writing assignment, and supporting him, I found that he had difficulty composing 'exactly what he wanted to write.' "Don't worry," I said, "If you are looking for the perfect sentence to just emerge, you'll be here for a long time. Just write... because if you write, your first word will inspire your next... and so on.

We live in the age of the word processor, inspired perhaps by the ability to renew humanity, as with Bram Stoker's 'Dracula,' imagination is as valuable as knowledge, and art as essential as science.

DRYING GRASS



A woman places a bundle of grass for drying, which is later used to make brooms, at Zirikindeng village in Karbi Anglong district of Assam State, India, on Saturday. – AFP

Child abuse threatens family and society

Child abuse marks a critical social and health issue all over the world. It is simply defined as a maltreatment of a child below 18 years old by an adult, a parent, a caregiver or someone else. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), child abuse creates all forms of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, neglect or commercial and other exploitation causing an actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in a context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

As the Sultanate of Oman is concerned, child abuse stands as an alarming threat due to the increasing child abuse cases. Starting the records in 2015 by the Ministry of Social Development, this year recorded 102 cases while the cases have increased over the following years recording 442 in 2017 and 1,416 in 2018. Further, the years 2019, 2020 and 2021 recorded 488, 1,040, 1,650 cases of different child abuse types consecutively. Unfortunately, the child abuse phenomenon is extremely increasing year after another in the country. Hence, this raises the flag of danger to the concerned stakeholders and nation overall.

In response to this matter, child



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ALL STAKEHOLDERS ARE SPARING NO EFFORT TO OVERCOME THIS SOCIAL AND HEALTH ISSUE

abuse issue has been accorded high attention from the authorities concerned in Oman, striving to combat the increase in cases. All stakeholders, including the Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Royal Oman Police, Public Prosecution, and others are sparing no effort to overcome this social and health issue.

Each has been taking the necessary measures to support the government's efforts and endeavours in this regard. Case in a point, the Ministry of Social Development is leaving no stone unturned striving to overcome this challenging issue and handle its related consequences. The ministry is dedicating a special department concerned about the rights and welfare of family and child all over the country.

With regards to child abuse issue, there are different teams concerned about the various aspects of this matter and are supported by other stakeholders. However, prior to the emergence of child abuse issue in the Sultanate of Oman, the government approved the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1996 and its

two Optional Protocols in 2004. Post endorsing this Convention, the Omani Legislation included different sections formed to support child protection and better promote child abuse prevention. Such legislation includes but not limited to the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act, Juvenile Accountability Act, Trafficking in Persons Act and the Omani Child Law, which was issued in May 2014, as per the Royal Decree No 22/2014.

Accordingly, the Ministry of Social Development issued Ministerial Decision (125/ 2019) stipulating the legislation of Child

Law. Moreover, the Omani Penal Law, promulgated by the Royal Decree No 7/2018, included Articles (44,45,254,257,278-287,298,349) regulating child protection and preventing any act of child abuse in the Sultanate of Oman, serving all children regardless of their origins.

On the other hand, the ministry issued, in 2008, the Ministerial Decision (78/2008) to form 11 multi-disciplinary Child Protection Committees (CPC) in all governorates of Oman. These Committees have been responsible for investigating, following-up, managing and rehabilitating victims of child

abuse.

The ministry also established, in 2013, a welfare and rehabilitation homecare unit, called "Dar Al Wifaq", dedicated to host abused children and provide them the necessary protection and welfare services. Further, the ministry conducts annual awareness sessions on child abuse and child's rights and protection at schools, health centres and public places, targeting school students and families.

Likewise, the ministry established, in 2016, the 24-hour Child Protection Hotline (1100), to receive complaints and the reported cases and incidents of child abuse from all governorates around the country.

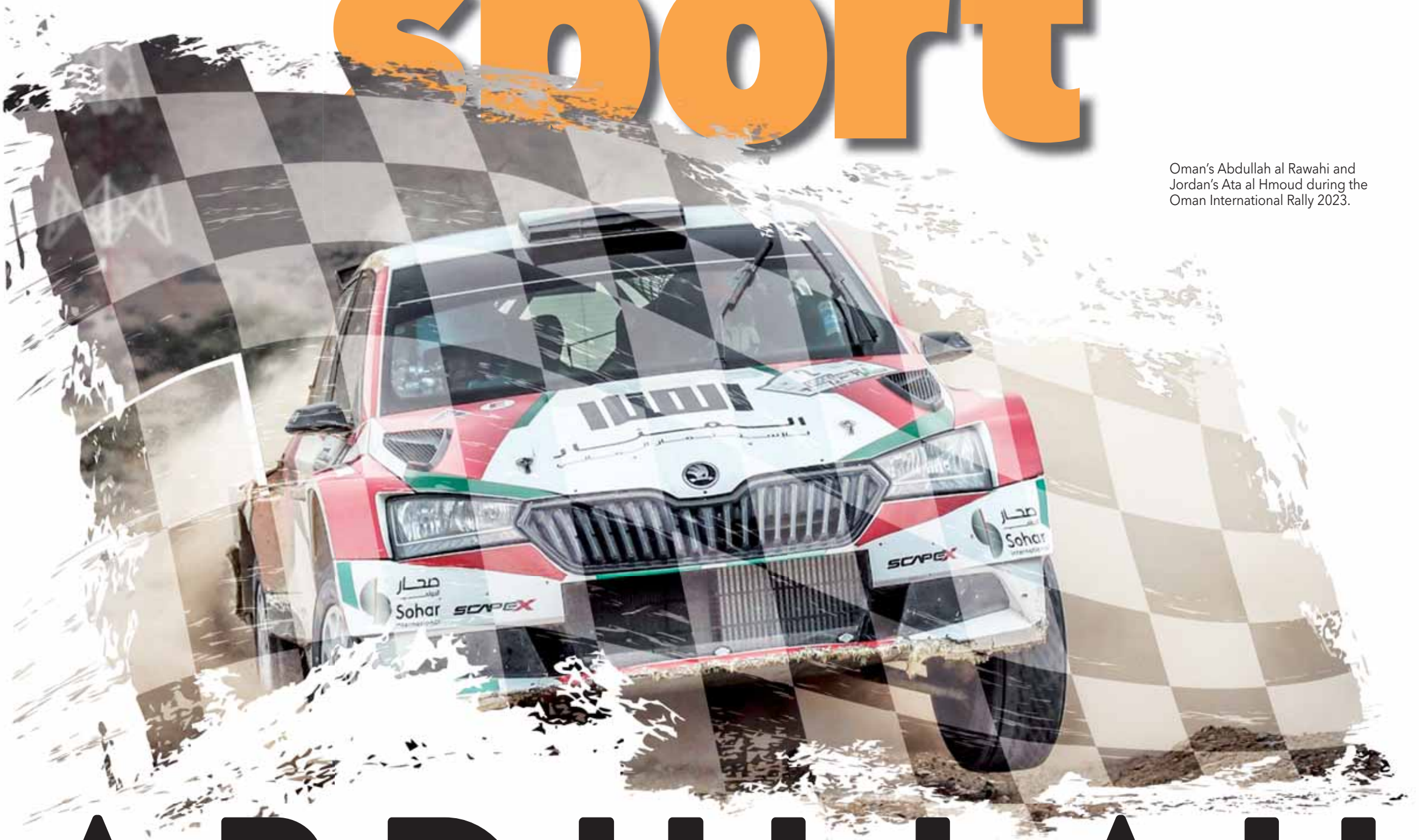
The hotline's team transfers the reported incidents and cases to the child protection correspondents, based in all governorates. As well, the team liaises with the other concerned government bodies to handle different cases that require either an immediate or a later intervention like Royal Oman Police, Public Prosecution or Ministry of Health.

(The article is part of a social research conducted by the writer)



SPORT

Oman's Abdullah al Rawahi and Jordan's Ata al Hmoud during the Oman International Rally 2023.



ABDULLAH

BAGS OMAN RALLY TITLE FOR SECOND TIME

CZECH PETR KACIREK
HOLDS OFF NASSER AL ATTIAH
TO FINISH SECOND

KUWAIT'S MESHARI
AL THEFIRI SEALS MERC2 VICTORY
WITH FOURTH OVERALL

MUSCAT: The Oman Rally Team's Abdullah al Rawahi and Jordanian co-driver Ata al Hmoud clinched victory in the Oman International Rally for the second time in three years on Saturday.

After pre-event favourite Nasser Saleh al Attiyah crashed on the opening super special stage, Al Rawahi hit the front on the first of a dozen gravel stages in the Sultanate of Oman and stayed clear of major trouble, punctures aside, to guide his Skoda Fabia Evo to victory by the margin of 6min 35.6sec. The feat meant the Omani became one of only 15 drivers ever to win more than one round of the FIA Middle East Rally Championship.

"It was a great feeling to win my home rally for the first time two years ago and to do it again is very special," said Al Rawahi. "This is a perfect start to the championship for us and I would like to thank Ata for his efforts and the team for giving me such a strong car on what was a difficult rally."

The fastest time on the final stage enabled Petr Kacirek and Petra Rihakova to see off a late challenge from Al Attiyah for second overall and the Czech crew duly sealed the runner-up spot in their Duck Racing Skoda Fabia.

Al Attiyah and Andorra-based co-driver Mathieu Baumel won 11 of the 13 special stages, but the costly error on the first stage damaged the Volkswagen Golf's radiator and a subsequent time penalty for a seat belt infringement meant the task was ultimately too much for the

Qatari to challenge for the win. Al Attiyah reached the finish at the Muscat Drift Arena in third overall to keep the defence of his regional title firmly on track. He may well have caught Kacirek and snatched second had he not suffered a rear right puncture and driven 17km on the shredding tyre to the finish of

the final stage. "After what happened on Thursday, I suppose I am happy enough with the result," said Al Attiyah. "But I am disappointed to have the puncture on the last stage when second place was achievable. That's rallying. I drove for 17km on a rear right puncture."

Meshari al Thefiri and his Qatari co-driver Nasser al Kuwari were passed by Al Attiyah on the afternoon's loop of stages but the Kuwaiti managed to finish fourth overall and confirm victory in the Merc2 category in his Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X. He had led the event outright on Thursday evening

after winning the opening super special stage.

Al Attiyah's cousin Nasser Khalifa al Atya teamed up with Giovanni Bernacchini to round off the top five in a Ford Fiesta R5, while the Jordanian duo of Shaker Jweihan and female co-driver Nancy al Majali finished sixth and second in Merc2.

Kuwait's Yousef al Dhefiri overhauled Jordan's Sheikh Bader al Fayeze to claim seventh overall and third in the showroom category.

Jordanian Ihab al Shorafa was deprived of a finish after stopping in the final stage. The Mitsubishi driver's demise lifted fellow countryman Shadi Shaban into ninth place and Lebanon's Ahmad Khaled rounded off the top 10. The Omani crew of Abdullah al Zubair and Taha Soomar were the last of the finishers in 11th.

GHAITH AND AHMED WIN
Ghaith al Qasbi and Ahmed Salim sealed victory in the day's round of the Oman National Championship. The Mitsubishi crew beat Faisal and Yaqdhan al Rashdi by 2min 15.8sec. Mutasim and Nofel al Balushi came home in third place.

The previous day's winners, Issa Abu Jamous and Yazan Juma, missed out on second place after shedding time in the 12th stage. The Jordanian crew finished fourth, well clear of fifth-placed Abdullah al Toqi and his Austrian co-driver Ilka Minor.

With the exception of Haitham al Zadjali, nine national entrants began the one-day round of the Oman National Championship. Salim al Toqi and Saif al Harthy fell by the wayside after the eighth stage and Mohammed al Mazroui retired his Yamaha on stage nine. Musab Soomar was the next retirement on SS11.

Action in the regional rally series continues in Qatar on February 16 to 18.

2023 OMAN INTERNATIONAL RALLY - POSITIONS AFTER SS13

RANK	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1.	Abdullah al Rawahi (OMN)/Ata al Hmoud (JOR)	Skoda Fabia Evo	2hr 37min 30.1sec
2.	Petr Kacirek (CZE)/Petra Rihakova (CZE)	Skoda Fabia	2hr 44min 05.7sec
3.	Nasser Saleh al Attiyah (QAT)/Mathieu Baumel (AND) Volkswagen	Polo GTI	2hr 44min 38.0sec
4.	Meshari al Thefiri (KWT)/Nasser al Kuwari (QAT)	Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X	2hr 46min 45.7sec
5.	Nasser Khalifa al Atya (QAT)/Giovanni Bernacchini (ITA)	Ford Fiesta R5	2hr 52min 41.2sec
6.	Shaker Jweihan (JOR)/Nancy al Majali (JOR)	Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X	2hr 54min 07.0sec
7.	Yousef al Dhefiri (KWT)/Carlos Hanna (LEB)	Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X	2hr 56min 39.1sec
8.	Sheikh Bader al Fayeze (JOR)/Emad Juma (JOR)	Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X	2hr 58min 13.8sec
9.	Shadi Shaban (JOR)/Samer Issa (JOR)	Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X	3hr 15min 17.1sec
10.	Ahmad Khaled (LEB)/Samer Sfeir (LEB)	Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX	3hr 21min 22.0sec
11.	Abdullah al Zubair (OMN)/Taha Soomar (OMN)	Subaru Impreza STi	3hr 24min 13.4sec
NOTE:	13 starters, 11 finishers		

2023 OMAN NATIONAL RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP - POSITIONS ON ROUND 2

1.	Ghaith al Qasbi (OMN)/Ahmed Salim OMN)	Mitsubishi Lancer Evo VIII	1hr 29min 23.5sec
2.	Faisal al Rashdi (OMN)/Yaqdhan al Rashdi (OMN)	Subaru Impreza STi	1hr 31min 39.3sec
3.	Mutasim al Balushi (OMN)/Nofel al Balushi (OMN)	Yamaha YXZ 1000 R	1hr 32min 03.4sec
4.	Issa Abu Jamous (JOR)/Yazan Juma (JOR)	Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX	1hr 32min 32.6sec
5.	Abdullah al Toqi (OMN)/Ilka Minor (AUT)	Toyota Yaris	1hr 39min 53.8sec

OC's grassroots programme is on a strong wicket: Varun Khimji



GARY KIRSTEN'S SECOND CAMP IS AMONG THE MANY INITIATIVES TAKEN TO NURTURE YOUNGSTERS

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket (OC) has been keen on developing cricket at the grassroots level in the Sultanate of Oman among local and expatriate schoolchildren over the past year. Various programmes and initiatives have been implemented by OC and to ensure the continuity is maintained, a pilot programme in Muscat-based schools, and a training camp under the guidance of legendary South African Gary Kirsten has been organised.

Providing further details on the ambitious grassroots programme, Varun Khimji, adviser to Oman Cricket, said: "Oman Cricket, at the moment, has initiated a grassroots programme with an aim to broaden the exposure of the game of cricket among the youth of the Sultanate of Oman.

"We have started coaching sessions at couple of schools - The Sultan's School and Cheltenham - with many more schools to be included in the coming semesters. The coaching programmes are run by the coaching staff of our established Oman Cricket Academy (OCA).

"It allows the children to experience the game in the best possible environment, where they are able to learn the right skills and have a correct mindset of the game. We feel that our grassroots programme is on a strong wicket."

Varun added: "The programme caters to age-group from 7-16 years. It is the perfect time to identify talents for the future. Our ultimate goal is to provide our national team with a pool of talents that can represent the country at global level."

The OC adviser said: "Our grassroots initiatives are in line with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth's vision to enhance Sultanate of Oman's sporting capabilities. Under the dynamic leadership of His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, the support of the sports ministry has been vital to us in the growth of the game in the country."

KIRSTEN TO SPEAK ON 'ROLE OF PARENTS'

Elaborating on the forthcoming Gary Kirsten Camp, which will be held in coordination with OC for the second time, Varun said: "The camp is a high-performance camp for players to experience. It is an intense and focused programme that will be running for four days. We also will have coaches from Gary Kirsten Cricket (GKC) who would



Oman Cricket adviser Varun Khimji

be holding a day's session for young children as part of our focus on grassroots programme."

The young OC board adviser added: "We are delighted to host the legendary South African cricketer and a World Cup-winning coach, Gary Kirsten, during the camp.

"In fact, he has agreed to conduct a talk on 'The role of parents in sports'. All the parents and children who have registered for the camp will be invited for the talk, which will be held at 6.30pm on January 31, 2023 at the OCA premises. "The topic is of great importance and Gary Kirsten's inputs will certainly be of great importance. The role of parents is essential and a key ingredient in the success story of a child, not only in cricket but in any sport."

Varun, who is one of three members of Oman Cricket's advisory panel formed last year, said: "Our partnership with GKC is a long term one, with discussions on going for trips abroad to cricketing destinations where our players are exposed even further in the game. GKC's reputed profile as an academy will only benefit our cricketing knowledge and capabilities in terms of nurturing, coaching, and playing."

Meanwhile, Evert Laubscher, OCA manager and national team trainer, said: "Two reputed GKC coaches, namely Ryan Van Niekerk and Gareth Von Hoesslin, will be accompanying Gary Kirsten for the second camp in Oman, scheduled from January 31 to February 4."

Laubscher added: "More than 80 players have registered for the camp but there are few more seats available to register for young cricketers who are interested."

Both Van Niekerk and Von Hoesslin have been part of GKC's first camp that was successfully organised in October, 2022, which was attended by nearly 70 children and young players. The grassroots camp will be held on February 1 at the OCA in the evening while the best three days will be devoted to high-performance camp.

HM Cup quarterfinals today

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JAN 28

The first-leg quarterfinals for His Majesty's Cup 2022-23 championship will begin on Sunday. Al Suwaiq will host Al Bashayer in Al Rustaq Sports complex while Seeb Stadium will be the venue for Oman Club and Al Rustaq's clash. The matches of last 8 stage will continue on Monday as four-time winners Al Oruba will face Al Nahda in Al Buraimi Sports Complex while Seeb will take on Al Shabab at Seeb Stadium.

All the teams will look to register positive results in the first-leg match which will help them to attend the deciding game with better condition and less pressure.

After an absence of six years from the last title, Al Suwaiq will aim to rekindle their memories of 2016-2017 as they had lifted the coveted title. Essam al Subhi and his team-mates are in good shape after their win in the last round of Omantel League against Al Oruba. The northern



Batinah team had managed to defeat Dhofar in the round of 16 to secure a spot in the quarterfinals.

On the other side, Al Bashayer will target to do better in the HM Cup as the team is struggling in the top domestic

league. Despite the opponents leading in terms of technical performance and squad strength, the HM Cup matches have their own calculations and the Al Dakhiliyah team might snatch a positive result against Al Suwaiq today evening.

In another tight fixture, Oman Club will eye to take the maximum benefit from today's game against Al Rustaq as they will play the match at home in Seeb stadium.

Oman Club head coach Idrees al Marabat will depend on the team's star player Mahmood al Hasani who delivered top game for his team in last match against Al Ittihad in the league. Mahmood scored two goals in the match to help register crucial win for his team. Oman Club's squad features strong names including Yazeed al Rawahi, AbdulWahed al Hanai and Faisal al Buraiki among others.

Al Rustaq, last edition runners-up, will target for another accomplishment this season as the team is delivering top show till now. Al Rustaq beat Bahla in the league few days ago and they had defeated the same team in the round 16 in the HM Cup. Hence, the team is in very good shape to put up a good match. The second-leg matches of the last-eight stage will take place in the second week of February.

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SEASON 2022-2023

‘SPEECHLESS’ SABALENKA WINS FIRST GRAND SLAM CROWN

MELBOURNE: An emotional Aryna Sabalenka said it will take a “few more days” to sink in after battling back from a set down to win a maiden Grand Slam title at the Australian Open on Saturday.

The hard-hitting Belarusian collapsed to the court in tears after winning 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 against Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina in a high-quality 2hr 28min arm-wrestle on Rod Laver Arena.

The 24-year-old Sabalenka wiped away tears before getting a warm hug from Moscow-born Rybakina, who played a full part in a thrilling match between two of the most powerful hitters in the women’s game.

Sabalenka, the fifth seed and form player in 2023, then ran to her player’s box to celebrate with her team.

“Thank you, my team, the craziest team on the tour. We’ve been through a lot of, I would say, downs last year,” Sabalenka said, addressing her team after receiving the trophy.

“Thank you so much for what you are doing for me. I love you guys.”

Turning to beaten 22nd seed Rybakina, she added: “You’re such a great player and of course we are going to have many more battles, hopefully in finals of the Grand Slams.”

Sabalenka will now rise to second in the world rankings behind Poland’s Iga Swiatek, equalling her career high, having triumphed in her first Grand Slam final.

“I need a few more days to realise what just happened,” Sabalenka told Australia’s Channel Nine.

“Oh my god, I’m speechless, to be honest. I was super emotional at the end.”

The final — a fitting ending to two weeks of drama and shocks at Melbourne Park — was a match of brutal groundstrokes, precision serving and wonderful rallies from two players at the top of their game.

‘TAKE A DEEP BREATH’

Rybakina cruised through the first set

in 34 minutes but Sabalenka scrapped her way back in a 57-minute second set to take it to a nervy decider.

It was then a case of which of the big servers would blink first in a toe-to-toe battle.

At 3-3 Rybakina — who represents Kazakhstan — could not find enough first serves and though she saved two break points, a third was too much, and Sabalenka had the finish line in sight.

Another ace took her to 5-3 but the 23-year-old Rybakina held to force Sabalenka to test her nerves and serve for the championship.

She was up to the challenge, but needed four nerve-shredding match points after a display where she hit an astonishing 51 winners and 17 aces.

“I just kept telling myself that nobody said this is going to be easy. She’s going to fight, this is the final, just work for it,” Sabalenka said afterwards, describing how she got through those four match points.

“Take a deep breath and just work.

“I was just super happy that I was able to handle all the emotions in the last game, it was super tough for me,” added Sabalenka, who had reached three Grand Slam semifinals before this year but never gone farther.

She suffered nerves in the past and struggled badly with her serve last year.

“They were really tough matches and I just couldn’t understand until right now that I really needed that to understand what I have to change,” Sabalenka added.

“I now know what else I have to work on and I’m just super happy right now to break through this wall.”

Rybakina will have the consolation of breaking into the top 10 for the first time, after reaching her second Grand Slam final in seven months.

She was awarded no ranking points for her Wimbledon win because of the ban on Russian and Belarusian players there.

— AFP



Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka celebrates with the trophy after winning her Australian Open final against Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina. — Reuters

Ake goal brings win for City in FA Cup

ANDY JALIL
MANCHESTER, JAN 28

A solitary goal was enough to see Manchester City move into the fifth round of the FA Cup at the expense of Premier League leaders Arsenal. In what was largely an equally balanced match, City eventually scored almost halfway into the second-half.

City manager Pep Guardiola was delighted with his goal scorer Nathan Ake and said: “What a season he’s playing. He controlled one of the toughest opponents in the Premier League, because (Arsenal’s) Bukayo Saka is in an incredible moment. He’s an exceptional guy, there was a period where Nathan didn’t play (in the team) and he never complained once.”

He added: “Arsenal have taken

a step forward. It was a tight game and you realise how good a side they are. I did not expect the approach from them — man to man — it was difficult to build up, but we beat the team at the top of the league and are into the next round.”

Man-of-the-match Ake said: “It was the first one I ever scored with my right foot, so I’m pleased with that. This gives us confidence for the next game. There’s still more to come. They are a very tough team. We stayed strong and didn’t concede.”

City and Arsenal meet again in the league next month in a game that could have a significant impact on the outcome of the title race with City at present in second place, five points behind the leaders. Guardiola will be hoping this setback will knock Arsenal players out of their stride



Manchester City's Nathan Ake celebrates scoring their first goal. — Reuters

as the pressure gets to them in going for their first league title in two decades.

The one disappointment for City was the loss of centre-half John Stones to a hamstring injury just before half-time and Guardiola accused the England international of not being ready to play. The manager said: “He was not ready (fit). I saw it from the first minutes and when that happens you get injured.”

Arsenal began well and could have scored early when Trossard put through a pass to Takehiro Tomiyasu, but a powerful long-range shot was pushed away Stefan Ortega. After a goalless first half there seemed more urgency for both sides. City attacked from the start after the break and Erling Haaland beat Gabriel but put the ball over the bar.

The deadlock was finally broken with the winning goal in the 64th minute. A 25-yard firm low drive by substitute Julian Alvarez crashed against the post and rebounded to Jack Grealish who brilliantly beat two defenders to pass behind to Ake whose controlled shot across the goal went just inside the far post.

There was more pressure from Arsenal in the late stages and Eddie Nketiah would have equalised but for an excellent lunging interception from Laporte.

Arsenal manager, Mikel Arteta said: “We’re really disappointed. We could have got much more out of the game. It’s really difficult to win against this team, but we went head-to-head with them, in big moments, in big matches you have to make the difference. That’s how you win these games.”

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Saudi-Omani Industries Expo to spur bilateral trade

MUSCAT: The activities of the Saudi-Omani Industries Exhibition will begin next Wednesday in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, in conjunction with the start of the Saudi-Omani Investment Forum, with wide participation from government agencies and the most prominent Saudi and Omani companies, to display the products and industries of the two brotherly countries, and it will last 4 days.

The exhibition aims to strengthen the partnership between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as a culmination of the efforts made between the two brotherly countries. The exhibition includes Omani and Saudi products, as well as industrial presentations for making daggers and other events.

Several sectors are participating in the exhibition. Among them are petrochemicals, health, food,

logistics, the technical sector, the financial, banking and insurance sectors, the construction and furniture sectors, in addition to the manufacturing industries, handicrafts, and the elegance and beauty sector.

The exhibition includes 48 Saudi companies and 47 Omani companies, and the Omani sector (petrochemicals, oil and plastic products) leads the sectors, with the participation of 9 companies, then the perfume and frankincense sector with the participation of 8 companies. 7 companies participate in the food sector, 4 companies in the field of jewellery and ornaments, 4 companies in the food and pharmaceutical industries sector, 4 companies to present live shows at the exhibition, 4 companies in the field of health products, in addition to 3 companies in the field of fashion, as well as a company



from the sector logistical, as well as in the financial and banking sector.

The exhibition witnesses the participation of a number of government agencies in the two brotherly countries to review their specialised services in the Saudi-Omani economic and investment affairs. On the Omani side, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, Omani Investment

Authority, General Administration of Customs and a Oman's exports platform.

The volume of trade exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and Saudi Arabia until the end of October 2022 amounted to more than RO 2 billion, and the value of Omani imports from Saudi Arabia exceeded RO 1.496 billion, while the value of Omani exports to Saudi Arabia amounted to more than RO 734.741 million.

Saudi investments registered in the Sultanate of Oman amounted

to RO 1.477 billion during 2020 as direct investments, in which the trade sector leads by 44 per cent with 620 companies, then the construction sector by 24 per cent with 164 companies, then services by 20 per cent.

In another context, the work of the Saudi-Omani Investment Forum includes dialogue sessions to review prospects for promising investment sectors between the two countries, including: opportunities for integration in renewable energy and supply chains, tourism and real estate development, and other activities of common interest, which contribute to advancing and accelerating investment flows between the two countries, promoting trade exchange.

The forum's work is scheduled to include the conclusion of a number of agreements and memorandums of understanding in the fields of oil and petrochemicals, renewable

Oman's GDP grows 30.4% until September 2022



MUSCAT: The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rate at current prices of the Sultanate of Oman increased by 30.4 per cent to reach RO 32 billion until the end of September 2022, compared to the same period in 2021.

This came in the first edition of the 'Quarterly National Accounts Indicators' report issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). It reviews the most important indicators at current and constant prices, the growth rates of economic activities, and the most important indicators supporting an increase in gross domestic product until the end of September 2022.

The report attributed this rise to the high growth rate of oil activities until the end of September 2022 at current prices, by 72.5 per cent compared to the same period in 2021, which is the highest among economic activities, in addition to the high growth rate in manufacturing activities, achieving 65.6 per cent during the same period.

The report stated that the value of the GDP at constant prices of the Sultanate of Oman until the end of September 2022 recorded an increase of 4.5 per cent to reach RO 26 billion, compared to the same period in 2021.

This increase is mainly attributed to the growth of oil activities until the end of September 2022 by 12 per cent at constant prices, which is considered the highest among economic activities, in addition to the increase in the growth rate of service activities by 5 per cent.

Meanwhile, the growth rate of construction activity decreased by 2.2 per cent until the end of September 2022 at current prices compared to the same period in 2021. — ONA

PDO to open Rima water treatment plant on Wednesday

MUSCAT: Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) will celebrate on Wednesday the official opening of the Rima water treatment plant at a cost of RO 87 million.

The opening ceremony will be held by HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar.

The Rima water treatment plant represents an environmentally friendly alternative to the disposal of water associated with oil extraction, and will reduce gas emissions by 48,000 tonnes annually.

Vegetation is used to purify water from oil pollutants. This natural and environmentally



friendly treatment system will avoid the disposal of hydrocarbon-polluted water in the deep well aquifers.

Additionally, this project will enhance biodiversity in the desert and create a habitat for wildlife species providing sustainable living conditions for flora and fauna.

The Rima water treatment plant is capable of treating about 60,000 cubic metres per day of water associated with oil production operations, higher than the project's design capacity of 40,000 cubic metres per day. — ONA

شركة الدقم لتوليد الكهرباء ش.م.ش.
Duqm Power Company S.P.C.

Tender Announcement

Introduction
Duqm Power Company SPC (herein the "Employer" or "DPC") inviting proposals from qualified and experienced Vendors to supply, install and commission Marine Buoy for Seawater Quality Monitoring at Duqm Site and to provide maintenance services (on-call basis) for a period 2 years. The Employer invites Bidders to submit their proposals as described below.

Tender Number	Tender Title	Tender Description	Clarification Closing Date	Bid Submission Date
DPC-DPW-00-000-LE-TND-0038	Supply Installation and commissioning of Marine Buoy for Seawater Quality Monitoring at Duqm Site.	1. Supply Installation and commissioning of Marine Buoy for Seawater Quality Monitoring at Duqm Site. 2. Provide maintenance services (on-call basis) for a period 2 years	8 - February - 2023	12 - February - 2023

Request for proposal
The RFP will be made available in electronic form only from 9:00 AM, 30th January 2023 Oman time.

Suppliers Minimum Qualifications

- Similar Experience of supply and installation of Marine Buoy for Seawater Quality Monitoring - Bidder to submit references.

Interested Vendors shall contact DPC via email to tender@marafiq.om with the subject heading "Supply Installation and commissioning of Marine Buoy for Seawater Quality Monitoring at Duqm Site" to submit necessary prequalification information, and receive further instructions related to collection of RFP Package.

P.O. Box 80 P.C. 102
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
www.marafiq.om

Bank Muscat strengthens partnership with Omani Fishermen Association



MUSCAT: In line with its strong commitment to social responsibility, community service and keenness to contribute to national development, Bank Muscat the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has strengthened its partnership with the Omani Fishermen Association.

The bank recently provided 35 refrigerators to fishermen in the Wilayat of Sur at a ceremony organised at the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Sur under the auspices of Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Hilal al Busaidy, the Deputy Wali of Sur. The event was also attended by Dr Juma bin Mohammed al Maamari, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Omani Fishermen Association, and Abdullah bin Juma al Araiimi, Senior Regional Manager, Dakhiliyah and Sharqiyah, Bank Muscat.

Abdullah bin Juma al Araiimi, Senior Regional Manager, Bank Muscat, expressed his happiness with this partnership with the Omani Fishermen Association. He said that the bank was keen to strengthen its partnership with various civil society organisations

so as to provide the best services to different sections of society.

He added that this support would contribute to the further growth and development opportunities for fishermen in Sur and improve their overall quality of life. Abdullah al Araiimi pointed out the importance of fisheries as one of the promising sectors identified for further development under Oman Vision 2040.

He also expressed his thanks and appreciation to the Omani Fishermen Association for their efforts and hard work in aiding fishermen across the Sultanate of Oman, and wished them all success in their future endeavours.

On his part, Dr Juma bin Mohammed al Maamari, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Omani Fishermen Association, extended his sincere thanks to Bank Muscat for the effective role played by the bank in supporting various civil society organisations and institutions in Oman. He stated that the bank's initiative would play a positive role in bettering the livelihood of fishermen and strengthen the national economy.

LuLu launches 'India Utsav'

MUSCAT: LuLu Oman launched 'India Utsav' to celebrate and promote the rich and diverse culture, heritage, traditions and flavours of India in Oman.

The week-long festival, coinciding with the 74th Republic Day of India, will be a window to India's dynamic cultural universe and is part of Lulu's focused strategy to strengthen the cultural relations between the two countries.

The festival was inaugurated by HE Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, on January 25, 2023 in the presence of a host of officials from the Indian community and Lulu dignitaries at the Lulu Hypermarket, Bausher.

The festival will be held till February 1, 2023, at selected Lulu outlets across the Sultanate of Oman.



The festival, which is a kaleidoscope of culture, colours and cuisines of India, will provide customers a unique opportunity to experience Indian extravaganza in every category from lifestyle and fashion to food and drinks.

There will also be amazing promotions and offers on a wide range of Indian products on display. Special stalls will be set up to familiarise and promote Indian handicrafts, khadi products, and regional cuisines and snacks to people all over the world.

Speaking after the launch, Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, stated, "I am very happy to have inaugurated 'India Utsav', which is a very significant initiative taken by the Lulu Hypermarket to promote products from India. From foodstuff to fast-moving consumer goods, Indian products have always been well-received by both locals as well as expatriates in Oman.

Through this festival, Lulu

has also provided consumers an opportunity to enjoy a whole new range of products coming from the Indian market. I wish Lulu Hypermarket all the very best for all their future plans and projects in Oman."

Commenting on the promotion, Ananth A V, Director of LuLu Hypermarkets Oman & India, stated, "India Utsav is a vivid evidence of the cultural exchanges between Oman and India. The event will connect the people of the two countries and offer local residents and expatriates a chance to experience the typical cultural features of India."

"Our objective is that this event will further strengthen our longstanding ties, encourage new ventures, inspire further creativity, and spur innovation to achieve great things together. Above all, we hope, this event would lay the foundations for a new dynamic

relationship between the two countries for the future," he added.

Shabeer K A, Regional Director — Lulu Hypermarkets, Oman, remarked, "We are glad to organise 'India Utsav' to further strengthen the cultural relations and traditions of India among people from other nations of the world, while inculcating a sense of cultural pride amongst Indians living in Oman. The exotic delights of everything about India, including the culture, fashion, cuisine, and lifestyle, are always popular with expats from all walks of life and age groups. The festival will be an event to look forward to a truly delightful experience for all visitors, enhancing the overall Indian festive mood."

"The cultural extravaganza will include a series of entertaining events and fun-filled performances, along with finger-licking Indian culinary experience. The festival

will be a treat for the entire family, catering to every individual's taste. Authentic Indian apparel, genuine homeware, latest and most exquisite clothing collection, traditionally intricate jewelry and other trendy items will be on display to add to a wholesome Indian shopping experience," he added.

Festival essentials ranging from authentic food products, ethnic wear, gift sets, traditional sweets and much more will be available throughout the entire season. There will be cultural shows and events organised as part of the festival.

Shoppers can experience the genuine flavours of India in a variety of dishes that describe the authenticity and rich history of India. There will be special stalls for customers to savour a selection of melt-in-the-mouth Indian sweets and snacks.

First exclusive Bosch brand store opens at Oman Avenues Mall

MUSCAT: The first exclusive brand store dedicated to Bosch home appliances was inaugurated at Oman Avenues Mall in Muscat on Wednesday, January 25, 2023, showcasing an iconic German brand synonymous with quality, durability and inventive ingenuity.

High-level representatives of OTE Group, exclusive distributors of Bosch in the Sultanate of Oman, as well as BSH Home Appliances Corporation, Europe's No 1 home appliances manufacturer, were on hand to celebrate the grand opening of the Bosch Brand Store.

Present from OTE Group were Mohamed Saad Suhail Bahwan — Director and Sandeep Attri, Senior General Manager. In attendance from Bosch were Tomas Alonso — BSH Home Appliances FZE CEO, Irem Yazlar — Head of Brand Marketing, Sabrina Straube — Brand Marketing Manager, and Amit Behal — Regional Sales Manager.

Strategically located on the first floor of Oman's leading shopping and retail landmark in Bausher, the superbly designed store allows customers to explore the world of Bosch products and experience the brand's innovations up close.

On display is an impressive line-up of Bosch-branded



products from built-in appliances, free-standing refrigerators, dishwashers, and washers/dryers, to an array of small appliances, such as coffee makers, food processors, juicers and much more.

Unquestionably high quality, yet affordable, the Bosch range comes with the legacy of a 140-year-old brand that continues to win global acclaim for its application

of engineering and innovation in the design of products of everyday use — appliances designed to help us save time and energy, and most importantly, simplify our lives. Equally, they are durable, easy to operate and represent excellent value for money.

To celebrate the opening of the first flagship brand store, OTE Group has announced a 20 per cent discount on selected Bosch

products on display — an offer that runs until February 14, 2023. Included in the offer are high-end appliances that promise to transform the kitchen or laundry room space in any home.

"This exclusive BOSCH Brand Store is unique in that it aims to kindle in customers an enthusiasm for Bosch products, primarily for the unmatched quality that they represent. Customers can get hands-on with the products, get acquainted with their functionality and features, and hopefully make a closer connection with the Bosch brand. Our competent store staff are also on hand to address queries or assist in any way," said Mohamed Saad Suhail Bahwan — Director, OTE Group.

The name Bosch is known worldwide as a symbol of outstanding quality and reliability, backed by over 85 years of consumer manufacturing excellence. Bosch is Europe's leading household appliances manufacturer.

Its products are based exclusively on the real requirements of modern households. Thanks to trendsetting technology and surprisingly simple solutions, they effortlessly achieve perfect results and simplify everyday life.

UES and SAS-OWS announce strategic partnership

MUSCAT: A strategic partnership has been announced between United Engineering Services LLC (UES), the engineering arm of the MB Group LLC, and SAS Oil Waste Services LLC (SAS-OWS).

The partnership includes UES and SAS joining to locally manufacture and provide logistics support for SAS' unique oil waste treatment products. This new In-Country-Value partnership will deliver significant benefits to the oil & gas sector, including refineries and specifically drilling companies. The benefits to Oman's economy include knowledge and skills transfer to talented Omani Youth, in addition to local chemical manufacture and a host of other benefits along the value chain.

Tariq al Barwani, Managing Director of UES, said: "UES is always interested in delivering value to Oman's Oil and Gas sector. SAS' oil waste treatment products treat any produced drill cutting waste (Oil-Based Mud or Water-Based Mud), thereby enhancing oil and gas drilling and improving the overall operations performance.

"The Vision behind UES was to provide the Sultanate of Oman a truly global engineering solutions provider to companies in the world's most technically demanding industries. Oil and Gas is one of these industries, and I am pleased that UES can transfer a high-technology solution to our clients while delivering In-Country-Value. Additionally, we have been concentrating on aligning our operations with Oman's Vision 2040's priority 'Environment and Natural Resources'.

We aim to do our part to ensure the Sustainability of Natural Resources by using balanced methods and treating waste in a responsible manner."





An opportunity for logistics businesses to expand into customer satisfaction

STEFANO VIRGILLI
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The author is a member of International Press Association.

Setting up a logistics business can be a challenging but rewarding endeavour, and with a little bit of creativity it can transform customer experience.

It certainly requires careful planning, research and execution to ensure success, as for all businesses. In this column I tried to collate together some essential points to consider when setting up a logistics business.

- Understand your market:

Conduct market research to identify customer needs, demand and competition. This will help you understand the logistics services that are most in demand and how you can differentiate your business from others in the market.

- Develop a business plan:

A business plan is more than just a roadmap for your logistics business. It should include your mission and vision, target market, revenue projections and marketing strategy.

- Choose the right transportation and logistics partners:

Partnering with multiple vendors is key to providing efficient and cost-effective shipping to your customers. Choose partners that have a good reputation, experience and the necessary resources to meet your customers' shipping needs.

- Invest in technology:

Technology is essential for the success of any logistics business. Invest in a transportation management system (TMS) or warehouse management system (WMS) to streamline operations and improve visibility and control.

- Expand into customer services:

Logistics businesses can expand further by providing customer services as an outsourced service for other companies. This could include order fulfilment, customer support and returns management.

By taking on these services, you can provide an end-to-end

solution for your clients and increase revenue.

- Focus on customer satisfaction:

The key to success in the logistics industry is to provide excellent customer service and meet customer expectations.

By focusing on customer satisfaction, you can build long-term relationships and increase customer loyalty.

Customer service refers to the assistance and support provided to customers before, during and after a purchase. It includes activities such as answering questions, resolving problems and providing information.

Customer experience, on the other hand, encompasses all aspects of a customer's interaction with a company, including the customer service provided, the quality of the product or service, and the overall brand image and reputation. It is the sum total of all interactions a customer has with a company.

Customer satisfaction refers to a customer's overall satisfaction with a product or service. It is determined by comparing the customer's expectations with their perceptions of the product or service received. A customer who is satisfied with their experience is more likely to return and make future purchases.

There is a significant potential market opportunity for logistics companies that provide end-to-end customer service solutions.

With the rise of e-commerce and the increasing consumer expectations of seamless buying journeys, businesses are looking for logistics providers who can not only handle their shipping and fulfilment needs, but also provide comprehensive support to customers throughout the entire buying journey, from pre-sales queries to post-sales support, returns and complaints management.

This allows businesses to streamline operations, improve customer satisfaction and ultimately increase revenue.

By providing end-to-end customer service as an outsourced solution, logistics companies can also increase their own revenue streams and become a one-stop-shop for businesses looking for logistics and customer service solutions.

Furthermore, by providing these services, logistics companies can build long-term relationships with businesses and customers, and become an integral part of the customer's buying journey.

at Duqm (SEZAD), the free zones in Suhar, Salalah, Al Mazunah and the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn).

The full-day Forum will touch on, during its various activities and sessions, the tremendous efforts made by OPAZ and all its affiliated zones in the different sectors related to partnership and social development in general

Study moots 1,000 km hydrogen pipeline to serve North Oman

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JAN 28

A key study commissioned by Asyad Group – the integrated logistics provider of the Sultanate of Oman – envisions the potential for the development of a dedicated pipeline carrying hydrogen produced in the central and southern parts of the country to consumption centres in the north.

Titled, 'Potential of the Hydrogen Transition for Ports in the Sultanate of Oman', the report was released last month as the product of a collaborative effort involving the Oman Hydrogen Center (OHC) – part of the German University of Technology (GUtech), and Dii Desert Energy, a prominent international think-tank.

According to the study, a dedicated hydrogen pipeline becomes viable if gas-based power generation plants and some industries as well switch to low-emission hydrogen as an alternative to natural gas.

It has outlined in this regard the potential for a roughly 1,000 km-long pipeline, of 40–42-inch diameter, running from the south of Oman to the north, and with a flow rate of 2 million m³/hour of hydrogen. This equates to roughly 500,000 tonnes of hydrogen/annum, which translates into 16.5 terawatt-hours (TWh) of low heat value.

"If the energy supply reaches



the levels while the demand is still high or even increasing, there is a possibility to build a second pipeline," the report noted.

"The investment costs for the pipelines described above would amount to about \$3 billion, depending on the routing, landscape and elevation profile, compression, and the material to be used such as green steel."

However, hydrogen transportation costs could be reduced by leveraging existing pipeline networks, particularly those owned and operated by OQ Gas Networks (OQGN), says the report.

OQGN, a subsidiary of OQ Group, is understood to

be weighing the feasibility of repurposing its vast pipeline network with the goal of enabling the transportation of a blend of natural gas and hydrogen. While a 5-per cent blend with hydrogen is generally considered technically feasible and safe without network modifications, it can however pose challenges to some end-users that may not be able to use blended mixtures, the report warns. In any event, low blending ratios offer minimal emissions-saving benefits and are not considered a viable option, it further points out. Another option is to upgrade the existing natural gas pipeline network to support the

transportation of hydrogen.

This option, while technically possible, would however require the pipeline system to be internally coated as a safeguard against corrosion. However, once upgraded, it can no longer transport natural gas, necessitating thus a carefully-timed decision that coincides with the complete phase-out of gas from the pipeline grid, it states.

Significantly, the proposed hydrogen pipeline, while serving as a transport system, will also double as a storage system itself, given its length and capacity. It can also be further optimised as a buffer storage tank, the report adds.

Mideast CEOs confident of economic growth in 2023: PwC

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 28

CEOs in the Middle East are confident in regional growth and are transforming their businesses embracing new technologies, investing, driving cost efficiencies, moving on deal activity and mitigating the risk of climate change, a report said.

However, CEOs hold a pessimistic view on the outlook for the global economy with 73 per cent of global CEOs and 82 per cent of regional CEOs expecting a decline in global growth over the next 12 months, according to the Middle East findings of the 26th edition of PwC's global CEO survey.

Just 21 per cent of North American CEOs and 18 per cent of European CEOs are confident in revenue growth in their own markets. This contrasts sharply with the picture in the Middle East where 63 per cent of regional CEOs are confident about their own companies' revenue growth over the next 12 months, with 71 per cent of senior executives confident about their outlook for the next three years.

Hani Ashkar, PwC Middle East Senior



Partner, said: "In last year's survey, CEOs in the region were optimistic about their near-term economic prospects. Today, macroeconomic volatility and geopolitical tensions are undoubtedly impacting the confidence of global CEOs' outlook for the

year ahead. "However, responses from Middle East leaders for our 26th Annual CEO Survey paint an encouraging picture for 2023, with almost 61 per cent of Middle East CEOs expecting regional economic growth to improve in 2023."

He added: "Our survey outlines key takeaways on how CEOs in the region are moving ahead to future-proof their companies and stay ahead of longer-term challenges." Transforming business to ensure long-term viability: CEOs in the Middle East are actively preparing for a dynamic period ahead with 58 per cent of CEOs already transforming and strengthening their businesses.

Unlike their global peers, regional business leaders are proactively accelerating M&A activity with 76 per cent not delaying deals vs 60 per cent globally.

Nor are they slowing down on investments with 58 per cent of regional CEOs continuing to invest vs just 40 per cent globally. Middle East executives are also focused on building efficiencies and resilience around their supply chains, with more than 70 per cent looking to push through price increases and 84 per cent seeking to reduce operating costs.

Partnership and Development Forum kicks off on Tuesday at OPAZ

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 28

The Partnership and Development Forum, organised by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), will kick off on Tuesday (January 31), with the participation of a group of employees and specialists from OPAZ, the Special Economic Zone



and In-Country Value (ICV) in particular.

As well, it intends to highlight the initiatives introduced to support and empower the Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

In addition, the participants will review and discuss views, plans and initiatives related to

supporting ICV initiatives in the zones.

Overall, the Partnership and Development Forum serves as a platform for exchanging experiences and enhancing cooperation in developing business plans for partnership and community development activities for OPAZ and its affiliated zones for the year 2023.

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The Mapping Lady of Oman

Old timers in Oman know her as the ‘The lady who reads the news on Oman TV’ during the 1980s. However, Miriam Anne Malin’s main occupation was as a cartographer who helped create maps and presented Oman to the world. ‘A to Z’ book was her very first publication in Oman to be copyrighted in April 1998. CNN interviewed her when ‘A to Z’ was published in 1998 and she is getting ready to release her book later this year... **P20**

10 Mummified Crocodiles Emerge From an Egyptian Tomb

AT FIRST GLANCE, you may think it's a picture of living crocodiles moving stealthily through mud. But the animals in the photo are mummies, possibly dead for more than 2,500 years and preserved in a ritual that likely honoured Sobek, a fertility deity worshipped in ancient Egypt. The mummies were among 10 adult

crocodiles, likely from two different species, the remains of which were unearthed recently from a tomb at Qubbat al-Hawa on the west bank of the Nile River. The discovery was detailed in the journal *PLoS ONE*. The crocodile has long played an important role in Egyptian culture. In

addition to being linked to a deity, it was a food source, and parts of the animal, like its fat, were used as medicine to treat body pains, stiffness and even balding. Mummified animals, including ibises, cats and baboons, are relatively common finds in Egyptian tombs. Other mummified crocodile remains have been dug up, but most have been juveniles or hatchlings; additionally, the ones discovered in this new study were in great shape. “Most of the time I’m dealing with fragments, with broken things,” said Bea De Cupere, an archaeozoologist at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences and an author of the study. “To hear you have 10 crocodiles in a tomb. That’s special.” She was called to the Qubbat al-Hawa site by a research team led by Alejandro Jiménez Serrano, an Egyptologist in Spain. In 2018, researchers uncovered seven small tombs under a Byzantine-era rubbish dump. In one of the tombs — sandwiched between the dump site and four human burials believed to be from around 2100 B.C. — were the mummified crocodiles. — NYT/SAM JONES

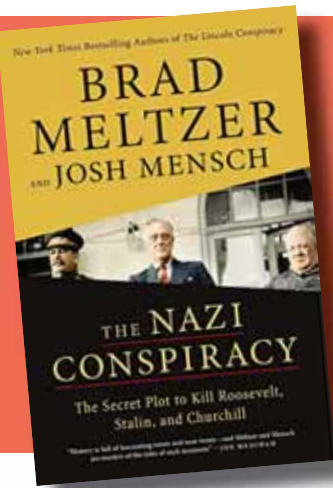


READ

THE NAZI CONSPIRACY

BY BRAD MELTZER AND JOSH MENSCH

The story of a Nazi plot to kill President Roosevelt, Joseph Stalin and Winston Churchill.



ART

Artist Daya Bhatti puts the finishing touches to a decorated rickshaw artwork which forms part of the South Asia Gallery of Manchester Museum ahead of its reopening after a long refurbishment, in Manchester, northern England. — AFP



DISCOVERY

People work during excavations, looking for the “first mile” of the Appian Way, the first and most important highway of ancient Rome, are seen in this undated handout image obtained by Reuters. — Italian Culture Ministry





How to Travel the World While Putting Nature First

Before the recent UN Biodiversity Conference in Montreal, the World Travel and Tourism Council, a nonprofit organisation of travel businesses, issued a report on “nature positive travel,” a new term that describes travel that supports and protects nature.

Julia Simpson, President and Chief Executive of the WTTC, called the report “a big shout-out for nature.”

Alarminglly, the report notes that 1 in 4 species worldwide faces the threat of extinction (as assessed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature), and that species abundance — the number of individuals of each species in a particular location — has fallen 68% since 1970, according to the World Wildlife Fund.

To combat these declines, the report, which has been endorsed by the Secretariat of the UN Biodiversity Conference and the World Commission for Protected Areas, offers recommendations that include raising traveller awareness of the importance of biodiversity, auditing travel companies and those that supply them for their impact on nature, collaborating with local communities as guardians of nature, and investing in species protection and habitat reconstruction.

While the WTTC has already published a road map to net-zero carbon emissions for the travel industry by 2050, Simpson calls nature-positive tourism “a practical guide for our industry” to protect nature and encourage biodiversity while awaiting more powerful solutions to decarbonise travel, particularly aviation. She recently answered questions on nature-positive travel. The following are excerpts from the interview, edited for

length and clarity.

Q: WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF NATURE-POSITIVE TOURISM?
A: As we’re seeing the devastating effects of climate change on our world, with horrendous fires and floods and tornadoes, everybody’s more and more aware of what we can do to lessen the impact. Eighty per cent of all travel involves the traveller going into some form of nature. It could be a beach, it could be mangroves, it could be skiing, it could be mountaineering. We used to talk about leaving a lighter footprint. But now I think people actually want to have a positive footprint, like collecting plastics on the beaches of Bali that arrive there from other parts of the world.

Q: THE REPORT RECOMMENDS RECONNECTING PEOPLE TO NATURE. HOW?
A: Some hotels in the tropics are connecting the consumer with the nature around them; often, even food will be sourced locally. Nature-positive tourism is also about connecting people within communities that can safeguard nature. For example, in Colombia, they had a terrible problem with the drug trade, and they tried to pivot their economy to a peaceful economy based on tourism. You actually had former FARC guerrillas become guides. And in South Africa, where the poaching of rhinos has been a really big problem, many organisations, including government agencies, private conservancies and safari lodges, have incentivised people so that local communities actually can earn more by protecting their rhinos. You’re seeing this happen also in Rwanda, where the government is working with local communities to take back land that had been converted to agriculture to rebuild some of the forests that the gorillas live in.

Q: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO INVEST IN NATURE, WHICH THE REPORT RECOMMENDS?
A: There is now a lot of green investment where people are planting things like mangroves and restoring reefs that were destroyed by development. So, it’s not just about protecting, it’s also about rebuilding. I was just at a resort in Bali that is using 3D printers to print coral and plug it back into places to start rebuilding the reef and protecting the fish stock.

Q: THE REPORT RECOMMENDS SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE VALUE CHAINS. WHAT IS THAT?
A: If you are a hotel, you look at where your energy is coming from, and how to buy energy that’s been sourced in a more sustainable way. Another concern: Where are you buying your food from? Is it imported?
A hotel doesn’t exist in isolation. It is supplied by a lot of people, and when they source things, the vehicles they use should be green. The goal is to try to spread that sustainability footprint through your whole supply chain, from transportation to food, energy and water.

Q: HOW CAN A TRAVELLER BE NATURE POSITIVE?
A: The solution needs to be at all levels. It has to be government led. It has to be led by the industry. And, obviously, all of us as individuals when we travel should be mindful and ask questions and challenge standards. At hotels, you don’t need to get your sheets or towels changed every day. If hotels have plastic, ask why. In a hotel with small plastic bottles of shampoo, drop an e-mail to the hotelier and say, “You guys could do better.” Buffets generate a lot of food waste. So, it’s looking at those kinds of things and, in general, being a conscious traveller.

FASHION

Heart Accessories, Love Them or Hate Them



DON'T SEARCH FOR heart-shaped rings on the Internet. It leads you to a series of failed celebrity romances and presumably to a trail of tears: Lady Gaga and Taylor Kinney, Gwen Stefani and Gavin Rossdale, Nicki Minaj and Meek Mill.

As a design element, the heart is more like dots or stripes than it is a visual shorthand for romantic love. If you want romance, try lace or oysters or dead-stock mid-century Valentine’s Day cards or inside jokes engraved on the back of a Swiss-made watch.

Hearts can feel bold and fresh: Think the boxy black Supreme shirt with red heart prints that Timothée Chalamet wore on a late-night talk show several years ago. (If that fact excites you, follow @readytimmywear on Instagram.) Another way to wear your heart on your sleeve would be a Nirvana “Heart-Shaped Box” allover print tee, recently going for four digits on Etsy.

To add just a little heart to your life, try a Deborah Pagan heart-shaped hair pin for Gucci Westman or a Blumarine belt with a heart-shaped buckle. Loewe has sunglasses with heart-shaped lenses, and like everything Jonathan Anderson designs, they’re surreal enough that you can feel safe that no one will mistake you for paying homage to Kubrick’s “Lolita.” You might try to track down some of Chanel’s chunkier costume jewellery with hearts. On the RealReal, you can find things like a red Chanel blouse with a black bow and a quilted heart from the Karl Lagerfeld years.

Even if you don’t celebrate Valentine’s Day, here are some hearts for the romantics and pragmatists alike.

TIFFANY & CO.
Hearts can lean a little bit cutesy, even skewing twee. If you’d rather die alone than give someone a candy heart, or are the kind of person who hates anything sweet (literal or figurative), try this jade pendant with an 18-karat gold mesh chain from the Elsa Peretti Open Heart collection for Tiffany. The fresh green of the jade contrasts so well with the slinky 28-inch chain. Wear it with a beat-up vintage denim shirt buttoned so low even Bernard-Henri Lévy would blush. (\$4,900)

ALAÏA
Remember when Rihanna wore that Yves Saint Laurent heart-shaped fur in 2016? Or maybe you bought the Erin Fetherston for Target heart-shaped bag in 2007? I was just doing some shopping reconnaissance and came across Alaïa’s Le Cœur bag. It’s small enough not to look gimmicky, but large enough to actually carry necessities. The shade of red is the right balance of cool and warm. Or you might consider a less obvious gold or blue one that comes on a gold chain. (from \$1,170)

YVES SAINT LAURENT
No one understood the use of hearts as a design tool like Yves Saint Laurent, who drew them a little asymmetrical and off kilter. Re-See, the Paris-based designer resale site, has the best selection around, particularly the jewellery Robert Goossens designed for YSL. While you’re browsing, there’s a gold heart brooch with “Yves Saint Laurent” printed on it in script — brooches are about to get big again — that would look great on a man. But the coolest present would be a poster from 1989, said to be “from the private collection of one of Saint Laurent’s most loyal collaborators.” Bonus: It’s framed. (€2,100 euros, or about \$2,300)

STEPHEN DWECK
Stellene Volandes, the editor-in-chief of Town & Country, who knows a lot about jewellery, said she was “a heart-jewellery skeptic for years” but is now drawn to them, pointing to lines like Foundrae and Briony Raymond. In that same vein, jeweller Stephen Dweck, who used to design for Geoffrey Beene, makes the most decadent pair of earrings. You know when people ask you what your love language is? Here’s mine: “Pink Tourmaline, Conch Shell and Diamond Earrings in 18K Gold.” (\$28,865)

PACO RABANNE
A hood made of linked metal hearts looks like something you’d see in the armour section of the Met, but also like something model Pat Cleveland would have worn to a club in the 1970s. (650 euros, or about \$700)

MONDO MONDO
Hearts were big in the late 1980s, with bold, unapologetically big jewellery from Christian Lacroix or Chanel or Yves Saint Laurent. Natasha Ghosn, the designer of the Los Angeles jewellery-fragrance-candle line Mondo Mondo, may be the real heir to that aesthetic. So it’s not surprising that she has a lot of heart motifs. One necklace looks like a piece of jewellery a scorned woman in a Jackie Collins novel would have ripped off her neck and thrown out a window after being betrayed by her man. It comes in silver and gold plate, but the silver feels a little less obvious and little more tender. (\$250)



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AROUND THE WORLD

RECIPE

Brothy Thai Curry With Silken Tofu and Herbs



THERE'S A REASON THIS dish was one of New York Times Cooking's top recipes of 2022. Built on a foundation of red curry paste and coconut milk that infuse tender blocks of tofu, it's cozy and revitalising, everything you want a simple soup to be.

Yield: 6 servings
Total time: 30 minutes

- Ingredients:
- 2 (14-ounce) packages silken tofu, drained
 - 2 tablespoons neutral oil, such as grape-seed
 - 2 shallots, peeled and minced
 - 3 garlic cloves, peeled and sliced
 - 1 (1-inch) piece ginger, scrubbed and grated
 - 3 tablespoons red curry paste
 - 1 (14-ounce) can cherry tomatoes or fresh cherry tomatoes
 - 1 quart vegetable stock
 - 1 (13 1/2-ounce) can full-fat coconut milk
 - Salt and black pepper
 - 1/4 cup soy sauce
 - 1 1/2 cups mixed fresh herbs, such as cilantro, basil and dill
 - 2 scallions, thinly sliced
 - 1 lime, cut into wedges, for squeezing

- Preparation:
1. Pat the tofu blocks dry with a clean kitchen or paper towel. Cut each block into 3 slices.
 2. Heat a medium Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high. Add the oil and shallots, and stir until softened, 2 minutes. Add the garlic, ginger and curry paste, stir, and cook until fragrant and the paste turns deep red, 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes, stir and bring to a simmer. Simmer until the tomato juices thicken slightly, 4 minutes.
 3. Pour in the vegetable stock, stir, increase the heat to high and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium and simmer to slightly reduce the liquid, 10 minutes. Stir in the coconut milk, season to taste with salt and remove from the heat.
 4. While the broth is simmering, divide the soft tofu into 6 bowls. Break each slice into 4 or 5 pieces. Season each bowl of tofu with 2 teaspoons of soy sauce and a few cracks of black pepper, and top with about 1/4 cup of the fresh herb mix.
 5. Ladle the hot broth and tomatoes over the bowls of silken tofu. Top with sliced scallions and serve hot, with lime wedges for squeezing.

LIFESTYLE

Small businesses, big dreams: Iraq's women entrepreneurs



THE SEWING MACHINES and fabric that surround Alaa Adel at her "Iraqcuture" studio in Baghdad are testament to her success in deeply patriarchal Iraq. Adel, 33, counts herself among a limited number of female entrepreneurs in a country where most women don't work outside the home. "We have a social tradition that prevents many women from working," Adel said at her studio in Baghdad's Karrada commercial district. Even for those who do, "it is not always that easy," she added. The International Organization for Migration said in an October report that "prevailing customs and traditions... limit women's activities to their domestic and nurturing role". Adel said such prejudices, as well as practical difficulties, posed a challenge to fulfilling her dream. A graduate of the University of Baghdad who specialised in fashion and design, Adel wanted to create her own fashion house. "I want to see the patrons of organisations that support art and culture. But my idea was systematically rejected because I had no experience in the conception of projects," she said. Thanks to an Iraqi foundation, The Station, and its "Raidat" (Female Entrepreneurs) programme financed by the French Embassy in Baghdad, Adel got training which, she said, gave her the confidence to start her own business.

OBSTACLES Iraq's private sector is still embryonic, making more tedious and lengthy the steps to set up a company. The country, which is trying to move past four decades of war and unrest, is also plagued by endemic corruption, widespread unemployment and a poverty rate of around 30 per cent. Almost 38 per cent of people with jobs work in Iraq's public sector — one of the highest rates in the world, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Adel eventually secured a loan from a private bank, and created her "Alaa Adel" brand last summer. At the beginning, she had to deal with sexism from some fabric suppliers who were reluctant to do business with a woman, she said. Then there was a lack of public childcare facilities, in a country where tradition says children should be taken care of at home — by the mother — until they go to school.



Adel got help from family members who look after her two boys, aged nine and four, while she is at work.

'COMPLICATED' Iraq has 13 million employment-aged women "yet only around one million are working", said ILO country coordinator Maha Kattaa, presenting a report in July last year. The female labour force participation rate "was particularly low" at 10.6 per cent, the ILO report said, compared with 68 per cent for men. In contrast, neighbouring Saudi Arabia — until a few years ago one of the world's most restrictive countries for women — had a female workforce participation rate of 35.6 per cent in the second quarter of 2022. Most of Iraq's working women are teachers or nurses. A rare few are members of the police or armed forces.

For Shumoos Ghanem, men "dominate numerous sectors whereas women are relegated to the margins". The 34-year-old is the owner of a dietary food business and founder of the Iraqi Women in Business initiative, which provides professional guidance to women online. She is also a mother to a 14-month-old son. Ghanem says most of those she advises are mothers who have been out of the workforce and

"wonder if society will accept them" again as working women. Over the past five or six years, Iraqi women have had increased opportunities, she said, but the space for them "to develop is very limited still". "Some regions are more traditional than others," she added, which further restricts women's chances to have "careers or to open projects". Surrounded by men, Ghanem said she herself experienced sexism and was worried about harassment. "When I went to see suppliers for the first time, I really saw how complicated it was," she recalled. Now she works from home, but she too has a dream — to have her own health-conscious restaurant where she can help bolster the ranks of female Iraqi businesswomen. "I want to make it a place to support women who want to work in this sector," she said. — AFP

DISCOVERY

Unlocking the Genes That Made Whales Into Giants



WITH NAMES like titanosaurus and giganotosaurus, you'd be forgiven for thinking that dinosaurs were the most massive animals to ever live. But if you're after gargantuan creatures, chartering a boat is better than building a time machine: The largest animals to ever exist are whales, topped off by the truly titanic blue whale. Maxing out at almost 100 feet long and 190 metric tonnes, the blue whale dwarfs the competition.



Despite whales being well known for their enormous size, big bodies actually came into fashion relatively recently among them — only 5 million to 10 million years ago, practically yesterday in geologic time. The first whales were the size of wolves and sea lions, a far cry from the submarine-size behemoths that swim the seas today. A prehistoric boom of ocean nutrients and the freedom from gravity that water provides played a role in making whales so large, but the actual genetic changes underpinning their ballooning have remained a mystery. To examine how changes to whale DNA over time may have caused their gigantism, Mariana Nery, a biologist at the State University of Campinas in Brazil, and colleagues used a targeted approach. The results, published in *Scientific Reports*, implicate genes that have functions in growth hormone and insulin pathways in causing the enormousness of whales. — NYT/DARREN INCORVAIA

The Mapping Lady of Oman

By Liju Cherian
@lijucherianoman

The popular 'Oman Map & Guide' currently on sale in Oman is possibly the most detailed tourist map to date, comprising 20 maps compiled over many years.

This and other regional maps are thanks to a British lady, a long-time resident of Oman.

That's Miriam Anne Malin, a cartographer and designer, who has worked laboriously over many years, travelling and mapping Oman.

Cartographers typically collect and verify data used in creating maps. This is what Anne has been doing for the past 37 years, having been resident in Oman since 1978.

She specialises in tourist maps though has done corporate and thematic maps for companies and various ministries.

As a cartographer, she has been pivotal in collecting, measuring and interpreting geographic information to create and update maps and charts in various Governorates of Oman.

From paper maps to the digital age, times have changed.

Anne recalls how, without a doubt, completing the Muscat Atlas & Gazetteer (A to Z) with 280 pages was by far the most challenging project, which really tested her strength.

It was her late husband, Bevis's idea, to do the street guide, which was very well received. The couple employed six surveyors to map the whole of the governorate. However, they had to lay them off halfway through when Bevis passed away in July 1996. Anne managed to finish the mapping and the book when completed which captured worldwide attention.

During the first 14 years of mapping, maps were done totally by hand. The map outline of Oman was obtained from the National Survey Authority, which was traced, and then created their own design.

Anne received excellent backing from the Municipality of Muscat, the National Survey Authority, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the Ministry of Information and the Royal Oman Police (ROP), all of whom produced 'No Objection' letters in Arabic and English for the project.

Having been through the hardest grind, Anne recollects the huge difference between mapping in 1986 when she began, to what it is today.

Recalls Anne, "Our early maps were a massive body of work as they were in Arabic and English. We used the old 'cut and paste' method onto transparent sheets using light tables — a laborious task requiring endless patience. Errors had to be carefully scraped out using a scalpel.

"Thousands of way, street and area names were pasted. There were separate layers for seas and wadis, roads, text, images, symbols and mountains," she says.

Only a fellow cartographer could appreciate the amount of work involved, as well as the patience required in those days using this method until the turn of the century.

The mapping looked considerably empty in their first editions, as there were far fewer roads back then. Today, all her projects are done on the computer and contain much more information, as there have been enormous strides in every field of development across Oman.

Later, from time to time, the then Ministry of Tourism (now the Ministry of Heritage & Tourism), requested she create tourist maps of new areas they wished to promote.

Anne did as much research as possible before travelling to the governorates and staying for however long it took.

Whilst mapping Dhofar, she enjoyed driving along every road and track from Hasik to Dhalkout.

They had an old map to work from but there was so much information to add to produce a very detailed map. Maps of Salalah and Dhofar have been updated many times over the years.

"Mapping Al Jabal Al Akhdhar was an absolute joy," Anne says, as she was invited to stay at the newly opened Sahab Hotel. The Supreme Committee for Mapping assisted in supplying elevations. "It was won-

derful exploring every twist and turn on the mountain and every village," she recollects.

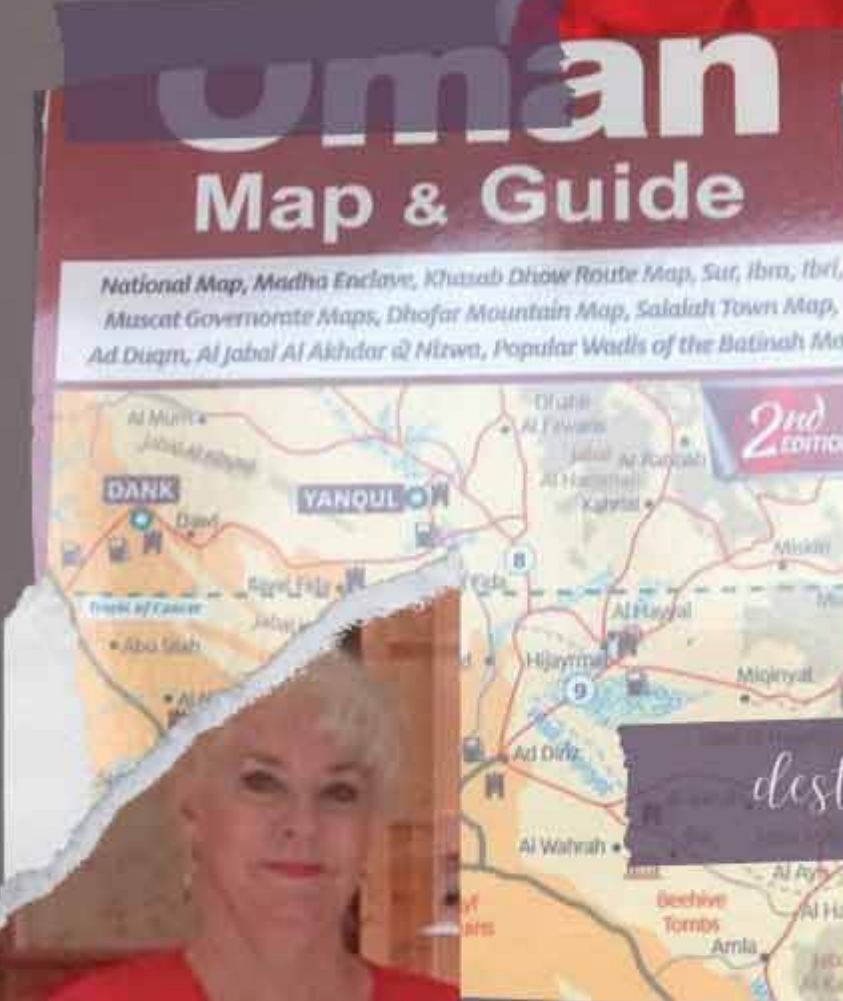
She was a guest at the newly opened Alila Resort that had requested a branded map of the mountain. She later did six trekking maps around the resort.

About 15 years ago, the Ministry of Heritage & Tourism needed a map and guide of Musandam, a very interesting area, which entailed three trips.

She flew to Khasab and drove along all the streets, mountain roads and tracks as far as she could go and then took the coastal road to the UAE, stopping at each village on the way.

Anne returned to Muscat and later drove to Daba in the south of Musandam to stay there. She drove along Wadi Khab Ash Shamsi and the beautiful resort of Zaghy Bay as well as exploring villages in Wadi Bih. The third trip entailed mapping the tiny enclave of Mad'ha where residents were delighted that she was putting their place on the map.

In the future, Anne looks forward to mapping the Al Dhahirah Governorate. As well as doing a couple of thematic maps, which require sponsorship. "My ideas eventually do come to fruition. I just have to be patient," she confides.



explore oman