

HM greets Ghana President

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Nana Akufo-Addo of the Republic of Ghana, on his country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Akufo-Addo and the people of Ghana further progress and prosperity.



P10

QATAR EDGE OMAN IN U17 FRIENDLY IN DOHA



P14

THE DATA PARK SIGNS PACT WITH SAUDI TECH FIRM



P20

SUSTAINABLE AND ECO-CONSCIOUS PIECES WIN SHADES OF WHITE EXHIBIT



MUSCAT

REVERSE OSMOSIS PLANT INAUGURATED

The Wilayat of Shaleem and Al Halaniyat Islands in the Governorate of Dhofar on Tuesday celebrated the opening of Reverse Osmosis Plant designed to deliver 1,500 cubic metres per day. The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar. The plant will contribute to the development of the wilayat by covering the needs of residential neighbourhoods of Hoqqa, Zakher, Ajarit and adjoining areas. The station will rid the residents of the need to get water supplies transported by tankers over long distances, besides improving the quality and supply of fresh water.

BRUSSELS

EU PLANS TO BOOST DEFENCE SPENDING

Top European Union officials unveiled plans to boost the continent's arms industry, arguing Russia's war in Ukraine showed member countries should increase joint purchases of weapons and devote more spending to European firms. The European Commission proposed spending \$1.63 billion to give countries incentives to buy jointly from European firms and encourage industry to raise capacity and develop new technologies. "In the past two years, we've faced a situation of a defence industry without sufficient production capacity to meet the sharp increase of demand," Margrethe Vestager, a vice president of the Commission, told reporters in Brussels.

DETAILS ON P7

OPINION

P8



Li Lingbing

Together we work for shared future of mankind...

P9



Ahmed al Mukhaini

Architects of digital transformation

OMAN'S PAVILION AT ITB BERLIN CONVENTION OPENS

Targets 15-20% rise in German tourists

BERLIN: The Sultanate of Oman received 4 million visitors last year, which had a positive economic impact and this has encouraged the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism to implement various promotion programmes, including participation in this global exhibition.

This was stated by Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, as the Sultanate of Oman's pavilion at ITB Berlin 2024 was opened on Tuesday, with the participation of about 70 companies and tourism and hotel establishments.

The pavilion showcases Oman's tourism attractions and landmarks that abound in different governorates, as well as the services offered by travel and tourism companies to inbound visitors.

The event also provides an opportunity for Oman to



Dignitaries opening Oman's Pavilion at ITB Berlin.

explore investment opportunities available in the tourism sector. The exhibitors allocate galleries in the pavilion for adventure tourism and Omani culinary arts, along with related products of small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Kai Wenger, Mayor of Berlin and attended by Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of

Deal with Cruise Arabia Alliance

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism signed a cooperation programme with the Cruise Arabia Alliance to accelerate promotional efforts for attracting companies operating cruise ships.

The cooperation programme was inked on the sidelines of ITB Berlin Convention 2024 by Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry

of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism, and members of Cruise Arabia Alliance (who are officials of departments and authorities concerned in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Bahrain). Khalid bin Mohammed al Azri, Director of Tourism Patterns at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said that ITB Berlin offers a real opportunity to conclude such an agreement.

DETAILS ON P 2

Oman's evolution in sustainable tourism

In this edition of The Correspondent, the team looks at Oman's proactive approach to preparing for the future of tourism by investing in infrastructure development and promoting sustainable practices.

It also explores how technology, particularly augmented and virtual reality, is enhancing the visitor experience by offering immersive encounters with Oman's cultural heritage and landscapes.

At the heart of the magazine is an in-depth look of initiatives



to independently explore the the Sultanate of Oman including its marine ecosystems by diving and vast deserts through a once-a-lifetime expedition. It also offers insight from one of Oman's prolific traveller/ blogger sharing his list of off-the-beaten-path destinations.

The Correspondent can be downloaded for free on [www.omanobserver.om](#) or through the app.

Heavy rains in governorates as low pressure gains momentum



Heavy rains are reported from many governorates.

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
[@lakshmioman](#)

Due to the expected heavy thundershowers associated with downdraft, fresh winds and hail starting from this afternoon until Wednesday over the governorates of Al Dhahirah, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Sharqiyah North, Al Sharqiyah South and Al Wusta, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) advises all to take precautions during thundershowers, avoid crossing wadis and low-laying areas, as well as avoid venturing into the sea during alert period. Expected precipitation will be

Classes suspended in 4 governorates

The Ministry of Education has decided to suspend classes in all public, private and foreign schools on Wednesday in the governorates of Al Dhahirah, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Sharqiyah South and Al Sharqiyah North, due to expected heavy rains. The educational directorates in the rest of the governorates evaluate and follow developments in the weather situation and take the appropriate decision regarding their affiliated schools.

ranging from 20 mm to 50 mm which will cause flash floods and varying intensity of rainfall over the northern governorates.

Meanwhile, wadis across the governorates flowed with intense strength on Tuesday as the low pressure gained momentum. The low pressure system also brought in cool temperatures across the governorates.

Thunderstorms were also reported from areas of Muscat Governorate and Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, later extending to include Al Sharqiyah North and Al Sharqiyah South governorates.

SEE ALSO P2

Gaza's children need aid: UN

GAZA: The United Nations on Tuesday called on the international community to "flood" Gaza with aid amid reports that children are dying of starvation in the war-torn Palestinian territory.

"With children starting... to die from starvation, that should be an alarm like no other," Jens Laerke, spokesman for the UN humanitarian agency, told reporters in Geneva.

The health ministry in Gaza



A Palestinian girl packs cooked food in Rafah. — AFP

has reported that 15 children have starved to death in a single hospital, and the UN has said famine is "almost inevitable" in the territory, under assault by Israel since the October 7 attacks into southern Israel.

The UN's World Health Organisation reported "grim" findings and scenes of starving children after reaching two northern hospitals with aid last weekend for the first time since October.

SEE ALSO P6



The cooperation programme was inked on the sidelines of ITB Berlin Convention 2024 by Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism and members of Cruise Arabia Alliance. – ONA

MoHT and cruise companies ink cooperation pacts

BERLIN: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) signed in Berlin on Tuesday a cooperation programme with the Cruise Arabia Alliance to accelerate promotional efforts for attracting international companies operating cruise ships.

The cooperation programme was inked on the sidelines of ITB Berlin Convention 2024 by Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism and members of Cruise Arabia Alliance (who are officials of departments and authorities concerned in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Bahrain).

Khalid bin Mohammed al Azri, Director of Tourism Patterns at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said that ITB Berlin offers a real opportunity to conclude such an agreement aimed at consolidating cooperation among GCC

states in the field of marine tourism.

Al Azri said that the number of tourists arriving onboard cruise ships in Oman in 2023 was more promising, compared to the figures registered in the pre-pandemic period. He explained that the number of visitors to Oman onboard cruise ships stood at more than 321,000 during 2023.

Al Azri pointed out that the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism seeks to allocate 11 seaports in Oman for cruise ships and yachts of various sizes.

He added that the Ministry recently finalised preparations for a special study on marine tourism sector in Oman. “It will be the first integrated study of its kind and it is bound to bolster the growth of cruise ship and yacht visits, maximise economic benefits and generate new employment opportunities”, Al Azri said. — ONA

Council of Oman participates in PUIC session

ABIDJAN: The Council of Oman took part in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation 18th Session of the PUIC, being held in Abidjan in the Republic of Côte d’Ivoire on March 2 to 5.

On the sidelines of the conference, Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash’shura and head of the participating delegation, delivered a speech in which he stressed that climate change is one of the most important global issues that receives great attention and serious follow-up by many countries and organisations due to its importance and harm to humanity.

Al Maawali added that the Sultanate of Oman pays great attention to climate change and follows up on its developments. Climate change is an important issue that is being monitored



The Council of Oman took part in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation 18th Session of the PUIC in Abidjan

by His Majesty the Sultan. The Sultanate of Oman has taken important steps to reduce climate change most importantly: the national strategy realise zero-neutrality by 2050, adopting an environmental policy for the energy sector, establishing the Oman Sustainability Centre, shifting to renewable energy, enhancing interest

in sustainable cities and the green economy, encouraging innovative sources of energy and the efforts to reduce emissions in the industrial sector.

Al Maawali called for taking effective practical and immediate steps to enhance efforts, address the climate change phenomenon, cut traditional energy emissions

and adhere to the necessary steps taken in this aspect.

The chairman of Majlis Ash’shura pointed out that wars, aggressions and the use of prohibited weapons are among the causes of climate change. He added that the people in Gaza and Palestine in general are suffering in front of the world and in full view of everyone amid detestable and unjustified silence.

The participating delegation is comprised of: Mohammad bin Salim al Harthy, member of the State Council, Ahmed bin Munshar Ba lahaf, member of Majlis Ash’shura, Hussain bin Mohammad al Lawati, member of Majlis Ash’shura, Salim bin Hamad al Mahrouqi, member of Majlis Ash’shura, Said bin Mohammed al Saadi, member of Majlis Ash’shura and Sulaiman bin Amer al Rajhi, member of Majlis Ash’shura.

Oman, UAE explore cooperation in higher education

ABU DHABI: The Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates explored opportunities for cooperation in the fields of higher education, scientific research, innovation and vocational training.

The two sides also discussed an array of topics related to the development of the educational system. They also reviewed the best educational and research practices as well as ways to enhance bilateral



The two sides also discussed an array of topics related to the development of the educational system. – ONA

cooperation and hold joint activities, most notably the establishment of the Oman-UAE Knowledge Dialogue Forum to align higher education

institutions in both countries.

This took place during a meeting between Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher

Education, Research and Innovation with Dr Ahmed Belhouli al Falasi, UAE Minister of Education, during her visit to the United Arab Emirates.

The two-day visit aims at discussing possible areas of cooperation between the two countries and exploring future opportunities in the sectors of higher education, scientific research, innovation and vocational training. — ONA

Targets 15-20% rise in German tourists

FROM PAGE 1

He added that the programmes offered by the ministry in cooperation with its partners in the tourism sector will appeal to various segments of visitors to Oman.

Speaking on the occasion, Maitha said: “The Sultanate of Oman’s participation in this global exhibition contributes to increasing the number of arriving tourists due to its attractive and encouraging features for tourists from European countries, especially the Republic of Germany.”

She stressed that Oman is considered one of the advanced countries in terms of the diversity of different tourism experiences, and it is an opportunity to introduce it in this international tourism exhibition.

Meanwhile, the CEO of Oman Airports, Shaikh Ayman bin Ahmed al Hosni, said that the company seeks to attract more international airlines to Oman through various measures, including meetings that will bring together representatives of partner firms.



TENDER

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR PROVISION OF AD-HOC TECHNICAL CONSULTANCY SERVICES

Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (PWP) is responsible for procuring new capacity for power and water in the Sultanate of Oman in accordance with the requirements of the law for the regulation and privatization of the electricity and related water sector promulgated by Royal Decree 78/2004 as amended and the OPWP license.

Tender Description	PWP is looking to hire a qualified and experienced third party consultant(s) under ad-hoc consultancy service contract(s) to provide technical support and to investigate any major incidents of concern in the power and/or water projects or to assess and/or evaluate claims related to the Power and/or Water Purchase Agreements.
Tender Number	OPWP/2024/006
Tender Purchase Period	3 March 2024 up to 12 March 2024
Tender Fee	100 OMR / Free of charges for (SME) with a valid Riyada card.
Submission date	22 April 2024 at 12:00 PM Gulf Standard Time GST
Collection & Payment Methods	The tender documents are available for purchase in an electronic format through PWP website: (https://www.omanpwp.om/new/Default.aspx) The payment is done electronically through PWP website. In case of any queries, please send an email to: E-tendering.support@nss.nama.om / procurement.officer@Omanpwp.nama.om
Bank Guarantee	A Tender Bond (in the form set out in the tender documents) or a bank certified cheque of OMR 1000 to be valid for a period of 120 days from the submission deadline date referred to above. The tender bond or certified cheque shall be enclosed as part of the bid.

HEAVY RAINS IN GOVERNORATES AS LOW PRESSURE GAINS MOMENTUM



Wadis across the governorates of Oman flowed with intense strength on Tuesday as the low pressure gained momentum. The low pressure system also brought in cool temperatures across the governorates. By 7 pm on Tuesday, the governorates of Al Dhahirah, Al Batinah North, Al Batinah South, the northern parts of Al Wusta Governorate and the desert areas of the Dhofar Governorate were witnessing rain of varying intensity, accompanied by active winds and hailstones.



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TOURISM COMMUNICATION CONFERENCE Oman shares experiences with GCC



MAI AL ABRI
KUWAIT, MARCH 5

The Kuwaiti Ministry of Information organised the Tourism Communication Conference on Tuesday to explore successful tourism experiences in the Arabian Gulf region and engage with local specialised authorities.

According to Nasser Ahmed Nasser Muhaisen, Kuwaiti Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information, this marks the first tourism conference held in Kuwait whose primary audience is the nearby Gulf countries, sharing a common identity, history, and traditions.

The conference aims to examine how to establish the right foundations to enhance tourism sector in Kuwait by studying similar experiences in the region and presenting ideas to attract investors from within and outside to invest in Kuwait's natural and human resources.

Muhaisen emphasised that the tourism sector is now a significant industry



representing a crucial economic sector for any country indicating that investing in the available resources in the country correctly and aligning them with tourism requirements would yield positive results, as seen in the experiences of Gulf countries.

Representatives of Oman from the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism highlighted the reasons qualifying Oman for distinctive features that enabled growth in the tourism sector.

Said al Obaidani, Director General of tourism development in the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, confirmed that mega

investment project for Kuwait in Oman in the future, stressing that this collaboration will bring prosperous chances to both countries.

Basma bint Abdulaziz al Maiman, Regional Director for the Middle East at the United Nations Tourism Organisation, expressed concern about the future of tourism in the region.

She mentioned a qualitative shift in the tourism sector to better support and accelerate tourism recovery and sustainable development. Basma highlighted the growing consensus among tourism stakeholders and the need to balance the needs of people, planet, and prosperity.

Discussing airport statistics

until the end of 2023, Basma pointed out significant increases in the number of passengers in Gulf Cooperation Council countries, indicating a transformation into global flight centres.

Dubai International Airport attracted 86.9 million passengers, Hamad Airport in Doha 45.9 million passengers, King Abdulaziz Airport in Jeddah 42.7 million passengers, Kuwait Airport 15.6 million passengers, Muscat Airport 12.6 million passengers, and Bahrain Airport 8.7 million passengers.

The conference, attended by Gulf officials, academics, specialists, private sector officials, and civil society institutions interested in tourism and its economic aspects, will discuss topics within a scientific framework during its working sessions.

These sessions will address significant topics, including Gulf tourism experiences, empowering tourism (vision and future), and the relationship between tourism and civil society.

Oman-US military committee holds meeting

MUSCAT: The Omani-US Joint Military Committee held its 17th meeting at Muaskar Al Murtafaa in Muscat on Tuesday.

The Omani side was chaired by Dr Mohammed bin Nasser bin Ali al Za'abi, Secretary-General at the Ministry of Defence, while the US side was chaired by Daniel Shapiro, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Middle East.

The meeting discussed a set of topics listed on the agenda.

It was attended by a number of senior officers at the Ministry of Defence and the Sultan's Armed

Forces (SAF), as well as the US ambassador-designate to Oman and some US officials.

Meanwhile, Daniel Shapiro and his accompanying delegation today visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC).

Upon their arrival at the MSC, members of the US delegation were received by Commodore Adil bin Hamoud al Busaidy, Head of the MSC.

They were briefed on the tactical roles and tasks carried out by the centre in the safety of the Omani maritime environment.

— ONA



‘Walking in rain is beneficial’

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, MARCH 5

People, generally, associate rain with property damage and loss of lives following thunderstorms, but moderate harmless rain can provide several benefits, especially when it comes to mental and physical health.

Unless in windy or extremely wet conditions, walking in the rain has several benefits. It has been proven that rains clean the air of any pollutants it carries, whether pathogens such as bacteria and viruses or smoke exhaust and harmful gases.

This is so especially during this period when Oman has been getting some rains. Weather forecast indicate that thundershowers accompanied by downdraft, fresh winds, and hail reported from various parts of the country will continue until Wednesday afternoon over different governorates of Oman.

According to an article published by the Psychologist website, which specialises in mental health, plants release perfumes during rainy weather. These scents improve memory, make you feel calm, and improve your mood.

In addition, rain empties the streets and public places of people,



Remember not to go out in stormy weather or heavy rains to avoid damage

or the number of people outside decreases, and going out at that time relieves pressure when you walk in wide spaces with a small number of people around you, according to what the British newspaper, The Guardian, reported.

There are some ideas that will achieve the maximum benefit for you when you go out during the rain. According to a report by the ‘Psychology’ website, there is a need to breathe calmly and deeply while walking in the rain, as breathing in this way clears the mind, removes stress, and gets rid of distracting thoughts.

The report says people should try not to think about anything that bothers them so as not to lose the benefit of relaxation.

Invitation and Agenda to the Annual Ordinary General Meeting of The Pearl REIF (the “Fund”)



The Fund Management Body of the Fund is pleased to invite the unitholders to attend the Annual Ordinary General Meeting which will be held at 3:00 pm on Wednesday 20th of March 2024, via the electronic platform for general meetings which may be accessed through Muscat Clearing and Depository's website (www.mcd.gov.om). In the event that the quorum to convene the Annual Ordinary General Meeting is not complete, the second general meeting will be convened at 3:00 pm on 27th of March 2024, to discuss and consider the following agenda:

1. To consider and approve the Fund' annual report for the financial year ended on 31 December 2023 (as per the attached annexure).
2. To consider and approve the auditor's report on the financial statements of the Fund for the financial year ended on 31 December 2023 (as per the attached annexure).
3. To consider and approve the proposed distribution of cash dividends to the unitholders registered on the date of the Annual Ordinary General Meeting of an amount of [4.5] baizas per unit for the financial year ended on 31 December 2024.
4. To ratify the sitting fees paid to the Fund Management Body and Shariah Supervisory Board for the financial year ended on 31 December 2023 and determine the fees for the financial year ending on 31 December 2024 (as per the attached annexure).
5. To consider and approve the proposed distribution of remuneration of an amount of OMR [7,500] to the Fund Management Body for the financial year ended on 31 December 2023.
6. To notify the general assembly of the related party transactions entered into by the Fund during the financial year ended on 31 December 2023 (as per the attached annexure).
7. To appoint the external auditor for the financial year ending on 31 December 2024 and to determine its remuneration (as per the attached annexure).

Pursuant to the Fund's Articles of Association and the Rules for Attending General Meetings and Voting via Electronic Systems issued by the Capital Market Authority, we would like to bring your attention to the following:

1. Juristic persons shall have the exclusive right to appoint a natural person to attend the Annual Ordinary General Meeting and vote on their behalf via electronic means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in Muscat Clearing and Depository Company.
2. Voting on any of the items on the agenda shall commence no more than three days before the date of the general meeting and until the voting process ends on the day of the meeting. If a unitholder's balance is increased or decreased, the voting process will be cancelled, and the unitholder must cast his vote again on the day of the general meeting.

To prevent delay in starting the meeting, unitholders are requested to attend the meeting at least half an hour before the scheduled meeting time.

For any clarification regarding the matters mentioned in the above agenda, please contact Mr. [Kumail Ali Moosa] by telephone [24761938] or email [Kumail.Moosa@soharinternational.com].

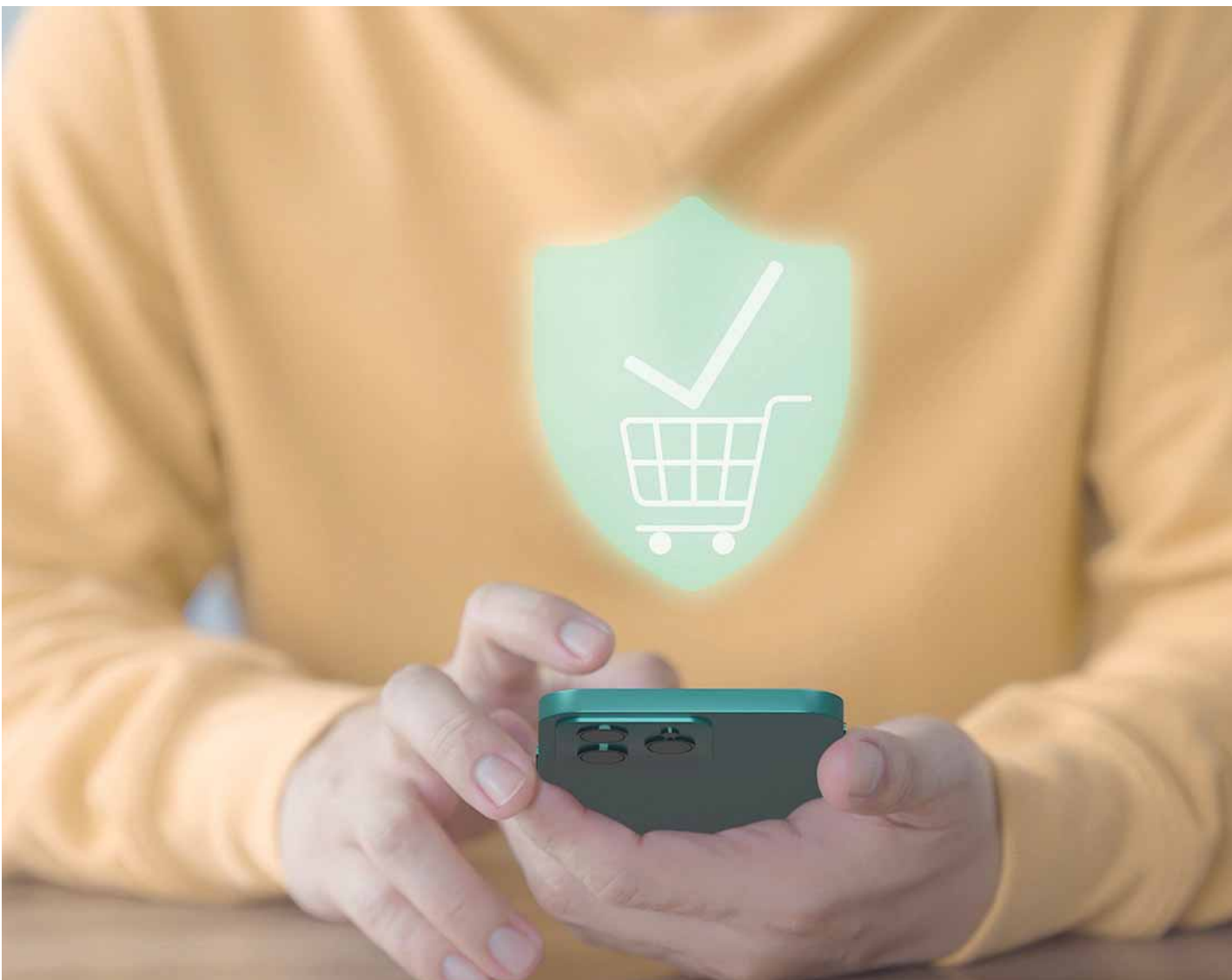
Togetherness Company announces selling the following lands and properties:

- 1- R/C Land with an area of 2934 m² in Ghala Heights.
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- 3- R/C Building with an area of 1883 square meters in Saham, with a commercial Showroom on it.
- 4- R/C Building with an area of 547 square meters in Buraimi, a building containing 8 shops and 10 apartments
- 5- Residential Plot in the state of Bidiyah - area 96,847 square meters.
- 6- Farm with Well & Tourism permit with area 45,000 square meters at Bidiyah.
- 7- R/C shops, with an area of 1944 square meters, it includes a market consisting of 19 shops in wilayat bidiyah.
- 8- R/C Land with an area of 1044 square meters and an existing Running hotel in the Wilayat of Mahut/Haji.
- 9- R/C building, with an area of 1,572 square meters, it includes hotel apartments and shops (running condition) in wilayat bidiyah.
- 10- R/C Land in Masairah located at centre with area 600m².
- 11- 4 Industrial plots in Duqm, total area 30,000 square meters.
- 12- R/C Land with an area of 750 square meters in Duqm.

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Online shopping is going from strength to strength. But a large number of people are shy of e-commerce as they want to feel the product physically before buying it. Others stay away from online buying due to its risks of fraud and breach of privacy. One must be careful while purchasing products or services online. Before entering any personal or financial information, you must

verify that the site is genuine and safe. Make that the connection phrase 'https' is at the beginning of the site address. If you do not see the letter 's' at the end of 'http', this means that the site is not encrypted and your private data will be at risk. To ensure safe e-shopping, the Consumer Protection Authority launched an awareness campaign last month to foster digital markets that ensure consumer rights in online commercial transactions. The CPA also explained as there are many complaints from

digital consumers similar to regular shopping there are plans to address them in e-commerce regulations. There is another major change that is evident in consumer behaviour in online shopping. Consumers conduct research and read the product reviews before purchase. The consumer can also learn about the product's features, characteristics, and benefits as if s/he were holding it in his/her hands. In the past, consumers did not have the luxury of postponing payment at a later time. But now

one need not pay for the product at the time of purchasing thanks to credit cards and instalment facilities. There are many reasons to buy online. It's not just convenient. Now you can compare prices and find offers. You can also verify the quality through product reviews. Despite the presence of all these advantages, one must be careful before making the purchase. Here are a number of tips that consumers should follow while shopping online, 1. Ensuring that the store or the

account is licensed. 2. Research and comparing prices of goods and services 3. Read and understanding the terms and conditions 4. Verify exchange, refund and warranty rules 5. Keep the invoice and other papers related to the product in a file. 6. Beware of fake offers 7. Read reviews of other customers before purchasing a specific product 8. Use safe and secure payment methods, and track the shipment in order to

know its whereabouts and when it will arrive. The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion had issued Ministerial Resolution No. 499/2023 regarding regulations of e-commerce. The decision comes within the national plan for e-commerce, with the aim of creating a legal and regulatory environment to develop and promote e-commerce. It aims at reducing scams and fraud related to e-commerce. These regulations keep pace with best practices in developed countries.



Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, with winners of Gulf Robot Olympiad

Gulf Robot Olympiad wraps up

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 5

The Ministry of Education (MoE) and in the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States, concluded the Gulf Robot Olympiad under the auspices of Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education and in the presence of Dr Abdulrahman bin Mohammed al Asmi, Director-General of the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States.

The minister and guests toured the exhibition and listened to the students about their work.

In his speech Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education, said: “Nurturing innovators, paying attention to them, and supporting them as they are the true wealth of the nations is one of the most important priorities of the Gulf Cooperation Council



Students explain their work to the MoE minister and Dr Abdulrahman al Asmi, Director-General of the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States.

countries and Yemen. We celebrate today the first edition Gulf Robot Olympiad, which is hosted by Oman. Today, we are witnessing the end of the brilliant journey of the Gulf Robot Olympiad, which based its competitions on three main themes: the robot challenge, scientific innovation, and societal impact, to perform its mission in achieving its humanitarian goals in accordance with modern

scientific methodology in its latest version of scientific knowledge to enhance the application of artificial intelligence for sustainable solutions, as well as promoting social responsibility.”

Sultan al Fahdi, a student of Abu Ubaida Basic Education School in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, spoke on behalf of students. “It is a great honour to stand among you today, welcoming your

honourable gathering in the land of knowledge, science, love, and harmony. It is an opportunity to convey my and my fellow participants’ thanks, appreciation, and gratitude for the countless initiatives of the Arab Education Bureau for the Gulf States, which indicates the Bureau’s keenness and interest in school students, and providing them with programs, skills, and advanced technologies in various sciences.”

Dr Madeeha honoured the winners of the Gulf Robot Olympiad.

In Robot Challenge, Kuwait came first followed by Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. In Innovation, the Qatar team came in first place, Bahrain came second and Oman third. In the Community Impact, Bahrain won the award, the UAE team won the Effective Communication Award and the Expressive Poster Award was won by Yemen.

International conference on neurosurgery held



MUSCAT: Apollo Hospital Bengaluru In association with Muscat Family Physicians’ Group & Global Treatment Service organised an International conference on the use of artificial intelligence in treating stroke and advance technologies in brain & spine surgeries in Muscat last week.

Dr Satish Satyanarayana of Apollo Hospital, Bengaluru, in his presentation emphasised how new technologies have helped surgeons in better outcome with least complications for the patients.

He presented the latest gadgets which are used like Neuro-microscope, O-Arm, Neuro-Navigation, High speed Pneumatic drills, Neuro-endoscope, Stereotaxy, Intra-Op Neuro-monitoring, Helical CT, MRI, IMRI, MRS & Endovascular surgery.

Dr Gurucharan Adoor of Apollo Hospital, Bengaluru presented some very interesting cases of stroke needing interventions. He also spoke extensively on the role of AI in the diagnosis and treatment in some complicated stroke cases.

Meeting was attended by over 65 eminent neurosurgeons, neurologists, orthopaedic surgeons, internists, paediatricians, anaesthetics, A&E specialists, family physicians, homeopaths and ayurvedics.

“Knowing recent advances in the Healthcare is very important for practicing doctors. That exactly is the intention for arranging such International Medical Conferences,” said Dr Sanjay Dalal, moderator, while concluding the meeting. He thanked the visiting team and all the doctors who attended.

MoHERI opens registration for Strategic Research Programme

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 5

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) has announced the opening of registration for the new health sector challenges of the Strategic Research Programme until April 30.

This year, the Ministry of Health has identified the topics “Mental Health” and “Health Systems Financing” as research priorities. For the Mental Health research priority, interested applicants should focus on tackling the challenges posed by mental health conditions and related illnesses, elevating the welfare of the community

and the standard of care provided, advancing decision-making processes that are informed by scientific evidence, and fortifying collaborations across various disciplines to meet health objectives.

As for the Health Systems Financing research priority, the focus is on enhancing the efficiency and performance of health systems, boosting transparency, accountability, and fairness, augmenting patients’ interactions and experiences with the healthcare system, increasing the quality of and access to healthcare services, bolstering decision-making processes informed by evidence and fortifying collaborations.



Ministry of Health
(SUHAR HOSPITAL)

NOTICE

(Auction No. 1/2024)

The Ministry of Health (Suhar Hospital) would like to invite sealed bids for the Lease for shop of cold and hot drinks of Suhar hospital. Offers should be submitted in sealed envelopes.

Specialized Companies and establishments may collect the documents and specifications of this Auction from the department of Purchase & contracts at Suhar hospital for Fee (25 O.R) between 8.30am and 12.30 pm during official working hours on or before 14/March/2024.

A Bank Guarantee or a Certified Cheque valid for 90 days issued by a local bank for (500) Oman Rial 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 department of purchase and contracts providing the title of the auction Viz: “Auction No. 1/2024”. Envelopes shall not bear any sign that refers to bidder’s name or identity.

Offers shall be deposited at department of Purchase and contracts in Suhar hospital by on or before 9: 00 am on Monday, the 01/April/2024. Offers submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

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



Taghleef Industries SAOC

P.O. Box 38, PC 327, Sohar Industrial City, Sultanate of Oman - Tel: 26751823/24, Fax: 26751822

Invitation and Agenda of the Annual Ordinary General Meeting of Taghleef Industries SAOC (the “Company”)

The Board of Directors of Taghleef Industries SAOC is pleased to invite the shareholders to attend the Annual Ordinary General Meeting to be held on Wednesday, 27th March 2024 at 2:00 pm via the electronic platform for general meetings which may be accessed through Muscat Clearing and Depository’s website (www.mcd.gov.om). In the event that the quorum to convene the Annual General Meeting is not complete, the second general meeting will be convened on Sunday, 31st March 2024, at 4:30 pm to discuss the following agenda:

1. To consider and approve the Board of Directors’ Report on the activities of the Company and its financial status for the financial year ended on 31 December 2023.
2. To consider and approve the Board of Directors’ Report on the organization and management of the Company for the financial year ended on 31 December 2023.
3. To consider the Auditor’s Report on the financial statements of the Company for the financial year ended on 31 December 2023.
4. To notify the general assembly of the related party transactions entered into by the Company during the financial year ended on 31 December 2023.
5. To consider and approve the related party transactions which will be entered into by the Company during the financial year ending on 31 December 2024.
6. To consider and approve the proposal to distribute cash dividends (by the date of AGM) for the financial year ended on 31 December 2023 at the rate of RO 0.750 for each share from retained earnings to the shareholders.
7. To appoint Auditors for the Financial Year ended 31 December 2024 and specify their fees.

Pursuant to the Articles of Association of the Company and the Rules for Convening General Meetings of Closed Joint Stock Companies issued by the Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, we would like to bring your attention to the following:

1. Only juristic persons shall have the right to appoint a proxy to attend the Annual Ordinary General Meeting and vote on their behalf via electronic means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company.
2. Voting on any of the items on the agenda shall commence no more than three days before the date of the general meeting and until the voting process ends on the day of the meeting. If a shareholder’s balance is increased or decreased, the voting process will be cancelled, and the shareholder must cast his vote again on the day of the general meeting.

To prevent delay in starting the meeting, shareholders are requested to attend the meeting at least half an hour before the scheduled meeting time.

For any clarification regarding the matters mentioned in the above agenda, please contact **Mr. Khalid Kharousi on 26650229 or Mr. Zacharias Chacko on 26650268.**

Chairman



الجامعة الوطنية
National University
Science & Technology العلوم والتكنولوجيا

Establishing a Rehabilitation & Physiotherapy Center in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman

Invitation for Consultancy Services

The National University of Science & Technology (NU), Oman, plans to establish a **Neuro Rehabilitation & Physiotherapy Center** providing inpatient as well as outpatient services in the Muscat Capital Region.

The University invites proposals from competent and experienced firms/Individuals for conducting a comprehensive Feasibility Study and to prepare a Project Report for establishing a state-of-the-art Rehabilitation Center. The scope of services includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Market Analysis
- Infrastructure and Resource Assessment
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Financial Viability of the Project
- Regulatory and Compliance Review

Preference will be given to proposals from entities who have established Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation centers.

Interested persons/companies are invited to submit their proposals to the office of the DVC (A&FA) at **cfo@nu.edu.om** before **24th March 2024**

For further details, please contact.
s.m.khusaibi@gmail.com



Diplomatic push for Gaza ceasefire intensifies

GAZA: International mediators were with Palestinian negotiators in Cairo on Tuesday for talks on a truce to pause nearly five months of fighting in Gaza before the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which begins early next week.

Envoys from the Palestinian groups and the United States were expected to meet with Qatari and Egyptian mediators for a third day of negotiations on a six-week truce, the exchange of dozens of remaining captives for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners and increased aid to Gaza.

Israeli negotiators have so far stayed away from the talks, despite growing diplomatic pressure for a truce to take effect before Ramadan.

Israeli media reported that the country's negotiating team boycotted the talks after Hamas did not provide a list of living captives.

Senior Hamas leader Bassem Naim said that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was to blame for obstructing the talks and said it was for the United States to stop the war before Ramadan, saying the "ball is in their court".

Israel has said it believes 130 of the 250 captives taken in the October attack that triggered the war remain in Gaza, but that 31 have been killed.



Palestinian children wait to receive food cooked by a charity kitchen amid shortages of supplies, in Rafah. — Reuters

As conditions in the besieged Palestinian territory deteriorate and the spectre of famine looms, Israel has faced increasingly sharp rebukes from its top ally the United States.

Vice President Kamala Harris expressed "deep concern about the humanitarian conditions in Gaza" during talks in Washington on Monday with Israeli war cabinet member

Benny Gantz. Fighting in Gaza continued, with authorities reporting dozens of Israeli air strikes near the European Hospital in Hamad, near Gaza's main

southern city of Khan Younis.

The Israeli army said it was conducting targeted raids in Hamad and had captured dozens of Palestinian fighters who were hiding.

Envoys from the Palestinian groups and the United States were expected to meet with Qatari and Egyptian mediators for a third day of negotiations on a six-week truce

Its jets had struck 50 targets across the Gaza Strip in the past day, the army said.

The health ministry in the territory said 97 people had been killed overnight, mostly women and children.

Khan Younis residents described finding decomposing bodies lying in streets lined with destroyed homes and shops.

Tensions between Israel and the United Nations erupted on Monday, with Israel recalling its ambassador over the handling of allegations of assault by Palestinians during the October attack.

Israel accused the United Nations of taking too long to respond to the claims, as the world body published a report on Monday that said there were "reasonable grounds to believe" assaults were committed in the attack. — AFP

8,000 patients need evacuating from the desperate enclave, says WHO

GENEVA: An estimated 8,000 patients need evacuating out of the Gaza Strip, the World Health Organization said on Tuesday, voicing frustration that few have so far been transferred outside the besieged territory.

The WHO said moving such patients out of Gaza would relieve some of the strain on the medics and hospitals that are struggling to keep functioning in a war zone.

"We estimate that 8,000 Gazans need to be referred outside Gaza," Rik Peepkorn, the WHO representative in the Palestinian territories, told a press briefing in Geneva via video-link from Jerusalem.

Of those, an estimated 6,000 are related to the conflict, including patients with multiple trauma injuries, burns and amputations, he said.

The other 2,000 are regular patients, he said, noting that before the war began, 50 to 100 patients a day were referred from Gaza to East Jerusalem and the West Bank, of which around half were cancer patients.

Israel's retaliatory bombardment and ground offensive in Gaza have killed more than 30,600 people, most of them women and children, according to the territory's health ministry.

Only 2,293 patients were referred outside Gaza for medical treatment between October 7 and February 20.

Peepkorn said the process involved not just the WHO but also the authorities in Gaza, Israel and Egypt, plus the hospital directors.



Palestinian children suffering from malnutrition receive treatment at a healthcare centre in Rafah. — AFP

He said the WHO had been pushing for a streamlined medical evacuation system since November and "we don't

The WHO said moving such patients out of Gaza would relieve some of the strain on the medics and hospitals that are struggling to keep functioning

understand... why is it essentially not happening".

He said Egypt, other Middle Eastern countries and some in Europe had offered to receive patients and their companions.

"We would like to see, and are pushing for, an organised, sustained medevac. First of all for the patients who need it, and deserve to get better treatment," said Peepkorn.

"But it would also help to relieve some of the enormous stress these collapsing health services are under in Gaza."

Peepkorn said that 23 out

of 36 hospitals in the Gaza Strip were not functioning, with the rest only partially or minimally operational.

Since the start of the conflict, 1,500 amputations have been performed, he added, pointing to numbers from the Gaza health ministry. Back in early November, after the first evacuations of wounded patients, the WHO said Al Arish Hospital, in the closest major Egyptian city to the border, would be the main first referral hospital, with onward referrals to second-line hospitals in Egypt. — AFP

Cargo planes airdrop more aid for Gaza

GAZA: American cargo planes airdropped more than 36,000 meals to Gaza on Tuesday in a joint operation with Jordan, the US military said, as the international community scrambles to curb a growing humanitarian crisis there.

The United Nations has warned of famine in Gaza, while the World Health Organization said a recent aid mission to two hospitals found horrifying scenes of children dying of starvation in the territory's north.

"US Central Command and the Royal Jordanian Air Force conducted a combined humanitarian assistance airdrop into Northern Gaza on March 5, 2024, at 2:30 pm to provide essential relief to civilians affected by the ongoing conflict," the military command said in a statement.

"US C-130s dropped over 36,800 US and Jordanian meal equivalents in Northern Gaza, an area of great need, allowing for civilian access to the critical aid," CENTCOM

said. The United States began airdropping aid on Saturday into Gaza, which has faced relentless bombardment by Israel.

The amount of aid brought into Gaza by truck has plummeted during nearly five months of war, and Gazans are facing dire shortages of food, water and medicines.

Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said on Monday that between 30 to 120 trucks per day had delivered aid to Gaza in the past week.

Meanwhile, Belgium sent a military transport plane to join an international operation to drop aid in war-ravaged Gaza also involving the United States, France and Jordan, officials said.

"We are not deciding when we go in. We are being told when we can go in and we will abide by that," said Colonel Bruno Beeckmans, the commander of the air base outside Brussels from where the aircraft took off. — AFP



Packages fall towards Gaza as seen from Israel's border with Gaza in southern Israel. — AFP



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WEDNESDAY | MARCH 6 | 2024

7

In brief

■ TOKYO



JAPAN PM TO ADDRESS US CONGRESS ON APRIL 11

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has been invited to address a joint session of the US Congress during a visit next month, congressional leaders said. The April 11 speech will be the first by a premier of the close US ally since the late Shinzo Abe did so in 2015.

The Senate's Democratic Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said Kishida's visit and address would "deepen the diplomatic and security relationship."

"At a time when democracy is under threat from authoritarian regimes around the world, it is now more important than ever for the US to show our support and maintain relationships with our allies," he said. — AFP

■ BEIJING



CHINA BOOSTS DEFENCE SPENDING IN 2024

China announced on Tuesday it would boost its defence spending in 2024. The 7.2 per cent increase, identical to last year's figure, was announced at the start of the annual meeting of the country's parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC).

China will spend 1.665 trillion yuan (\$231.4 billion) on defence in 2024, according to the budget report that lays out the government's financial plans for the year ahead.

China will maintain "reasonable growth" in its defence budget to "safeguard its security and development interests", NPC spokesman Lou Qinjian said. — AFP

■ JOHANNESBURG



FRESH VIOLENCE IN MOZAMBIQUE DISPLACES OVER 100,000

The number of people who fled their homes in northern Mozambique has peaked to over 112,000 in the last two months due to violence, with 60,000 being children.

"More than 61,000 children have fled a new wave of violence" in the Cabo Delgado province in the last two months, "the highest number uprooted in such a short period", the children's charity said.

Fresh unrest broke out in the lawless province a few weeks ago, according to local reports and figures. The UN migration agency IOM on Monday placed the total number of displaced people at 112,894. — AFP

EU proposes defence plan to boost production

BRUSSELS: EU officials on Tuesday unveiled an ambitious proposal to massively boost weapons production and procurement in the bloc to shift from a reliance on US arms and in reaction to Russia's attack of Ukraine.

The European Commission says the 27-nation bloc is facing a new "security paradigm" with an expansionist Russia operating a wartime economy as it presses into year three of the conflict with Kyiv.

"To counter the return of high-intensity war on our border, we have decided to kick up a gear," EU internal market commissioner Thierry Breton told reporters in announcing the new initiative.

The European Defence Industrial Strategy aims to give incentives to European arms manufacturers to invest more, make their production more agile and to collectively catalogue what they have available.

"We must take more responsibility for our own security, while, of course, remaining fully committed to our Nato alliance," said European Commission Vice President Margrethe Vestager.



EU officials give a press conference after the college meeting on the European Defence Industrial Strategy and the European Defence Investment Programme at the EU headquarters in Brussels. — AFP

"We need to get that transatlantic balance right, irrespective of electoral dynamics in the US," she told reporters, in a nod to Republican White House hopeful Donald Trump casting doubt on the US commitment to its Nato allies should he win reelection.

Breton has spoken of an

ultimate need for some 100 billion euros for the European Union to rival the Pentagon and US defence industry.

To kickstart the project, the commission plans to set aside 1.5 billion euros from the EU's current budget that runs to 2027 -- an amount Vestager acknowledged "is not a lot of money" given the

scale of the initiative.

The EU's proposed strategy aims to have trade of weapons within the bloc reaching 35 per cent of total value of the EU defence market by 2030.

Member states will also be encouraged to procure European weapons to a level of at least 50 per cent of their defence budgets

The strategy aims to give incentives to European arms manufacturers to invest more, make their production more agile and to collectively catalogue what they have available.

by 2030 and 60 per cent by 2035.

A defence industrial readiness board would be created to bring together member countries, the commission and the EU's top diplomat, currently Borrell, to coordinate.

One mechanism would be set up for common arms procurement across the bloc, and another to support defence cooperation including through potential tax breaks.

Importantly, Ukraine would be treated as a "quasi member" of the initiative, which would open the way for it to more easily purview and tap arms production and supplies in the EU -- should its war against Russian troops be ongoing then. — AFP

Ukraine says destroyed another Russian warship in Black Sea



A Ukrainian serviceman holds an artillery shell at a position in a frontline, near the town of Kreminna, Ukraine.

— Reuters

KYIV: Ukraine said on Tuesday its forces destroyed a Russian military patrol ship in the Black Sea near annexed Crimea, the latest naval attack on Moscow's fleet in the key waterway.

Kyiv also said it was behind a drone hit on an oil depot in a Russian border region, as Ukraine flexes its ability to strike Russia from the air and at sea with its troops struggling on the front lines.

The Black Sea has been a vital battleground in the two-year war. Ukraine claims to have destroyed more than two dozen Russian ships since Moscow attacked in February 2022.

Ukraine's GUR military intelligence unit on Tuesday released a black and white video of what it said was the overnight attack on the Sergei Kotov, a

Ukraine's GUR military intelligence unit on Tuesday released a black and white video of what it said was the overnight attack on the Sergei Kotov

94-metre Russian military patrol ship.

The footage showed a naval drone approaching the side of the vessel, before a large explosion can be seen sending fire, smoke and debris into the sky.

"Another very successful operation. Great news," said GUR spokesman Andriy Yusov.

The attack happened near the Kerch Strait, off the Crimean peninsula that Moscow annexed in 2014.

Officials in Kyiv revelled in the hit, a much-needed boost for its forces with Moscow in the ascendancy on the battlefield.

"One Russian ship has been upgraded to a submarine," Ukraine's defence ministry said in an ironic post on X.

Delays to Western aid — a \$60-billion US aid package and European artillery shells — have left Ukraine's troops outnumbered and outgunned across the sprawling front lines.

There was no official response from Moscow, but Russian military bloggers with close ties to the armed forces confirmed the strike. Some were scornful of the Russian navy's inability to defend

itself.

Kyiv says it has disabled at least 25 Russian vessels since Moscow attacked — more than a third its pre-war Black Sea fleet.

"Russia's Black Sea Fleet is a symbol of occupation. It cannot be in Ukrainian Crimea," the Ukrainian president's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, said on Tuesday.

Moscow has moved many military ships from its historic Sevastopol naval base in Crimea to the port of Novorossiysk, further to the east, amid the spate of Ukrainian attacks.

A Ukrainian intelligence source said that its forces were behind a drone strike on an oil depot in the Russian border region of Belgorod on Tuesday that set storage tanks ablaze.

— AFP

German FM urges Bosnia to adopt EU-sought reforms

SARAJEVO: Visiting German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock urged Bosnia on Tuesday to adopt key reforms needed as the Balkan nation opens accession talks with the European Union.

"There are always moments in history when opportunities must be seized," Baerbock told a press conference in Sarajevo.

Her visit came ahead of the next European Council meeting in Brussels — on March 21 and 22 — which will likely be the last chance for Bosnia to open EU membership negotiations before June's European elections. Bosnia "is at a crucial crossroads on the road" to the EU, she said.

"We both have children. One day they will ask us: 'Why didn't you succeed?'"

"We want to do everything we can to ensure that we can take this path to the European Union," she added addressing her Bosnian counterpart Elmedin Konakovic.

Bosnia has been an official candidate for EU membership since December 2022 but must implement a string of major reforms before opening accession negotiations with the 27-member political bloc.

It has adopted a Brussels-backed anti-money laundering law but tackling more sensitive judicial reforms is still on its agenda.

As an audio leak of senior military personnel discussing the war in Ukraine has embarrassed the German government, Baerbock warned against Russian "rhetoric" in Bosnia.

She made a clear reference to Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik who is a Kremlin ally and was recently decorated by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"We can see that this war of division waged by Putin in Europe is also a war of narratives, that language is used as a weapon of division," Baerbock said. — AFP



Germany's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Annalena Baerbock (L) and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Elmedin Konakovic (R) walk in the historical centre of Sarajevo. — AFP

A journey inward for clarity, growth, fulfilment



Hyesha Barrett
@coach_hyesha

Hyesha is a certified Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner based in Muscat. She is affiliated with the Whispers of Serenity Clinic

As we go about the daily grid, it's easy to get caught up in the whirlwind of activities and obligations, often neglecting the crucial practice of self-reflection and introspection. Yet, in the quiet moments of self-awareness lies a profound source of growth, clarity and fulfilment.

Reflection, the act of looking back on past experiences allows us to gain insights into our actions. Moments pondered on and gained only in hindsight, entails us sifting through the layers of our thoughts and feelings. Whether through journaling, meditation or simply sitting in solitude, reflection grants us the opportunity to learn from our triumphs and setbacks, to recognise patterns in our behaviour and to identify areas for improvement.

Introspection is the process of examining our inner thoughts, beliefs and values. It's a journey inward — a quest to understand ourselves more profoundly. Through introspection, we confront our fears, biases and insecurities. We peel back the layers of societal conditioning and peer expectations to uncover our authentic selves, our true desires and genuine aspirations.

Together, reflection and introspection form a powerful duo, guiding us on a path of self-discovery and personal growth. They help us make sense of our experiences, providing clarity in times of confusion and direction in times of uncertainty.

Cultivating mindfulness, fostering empathy and compassion, this inner journey enables us to live more intentionally and authentically. As we improve our emotional intelligence and gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and others, we will strengthen our inner resilience to navigate life's challenges with more grace and courage.

In a world that often glorifies busyness and external achievements, the importance of carving out time for self-reflection and self-introspection cannot be overstated.

Honouring our experiences, both the joyful and the painful, as valuable lessons in our journey of self-discovery is vital for our happiness. Moreover, the benefits of reflection and introspection extend far beyond individual growth as we will communicate more clearly and effectively, make decisions more thoughtfully and cultivate healthier relationships.

Neglecting reflection and introspection can

WHETHER THROUGH JOURNALLING, MEDITATION OR SIMPLY SITTING IN SOLITUDE, REFLECTION GRANTS US THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN FROM OUR TRIUMPHS AND SETBACKS, TO RECOGNISE PATTERNS IN OUR BEHAVIOUR AND TO IDENTIFY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT.

result in a lack of self-awareness, repetitive negative patterns, limited growth and development, missed opportunities for learning, emotional avoidance, difficulties in relationships and a lack of direction or purpose.

Daily intentional reflection and introspection allows us to understand our strengths, weaknesses, values and beliefs while empowering us to make better informed decisions and take deliberate actions aligned with our true selves.

These essential practices will build resilience, foster personal growth while gaining clarity and perspective. By embracing these habits, you will undoubtedly embark on a journey of self-discovery and transformation, leading to a more fulfilling life.

The power of reflection and introspection lies in their ability to connect us with our innermost selves, guiding us on a journey of self-discovery and deeper understanding.

In a world that often pulls us outward, these practices anchor us inward, reminding us of the richness and depth of our own being. Here's to embracing the silence, the stillness and the transformative power of looking within.

Ten years after MH370 vanished, families in limbo

M JEGATHESAN

Ten years after her mother disappeared on Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, Grace Nathan still struggles to accept that she is gone.

Grace was 26 and at university when the plane carrying 239 people vanished from radar screens on March 8, 2014, after taking off from Kuala Lumpur bound for Beijing.

Despite the largest search in aviation history, which combed 120,000 square kilometres of the sea floor of the southern Indian Ocean, only a few fragments of the Boeing 777-200ER plane have been found.

“Every year that goes by that the plane is not found is only just another agonising year in wait,” said Grace from Malaysia, who wanted to be known by her first name. Ahead of the 10th anniversary of the aviation disaster, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said he was prepared to reopen the search for the missing plane if “compelling” evidence emerged.

In the meantime, relatives of the passengers and crew of MH370 deal with the uncertainty of what happened to their loved ones.

Liu Shuang Fong's 28-year-old son Li Yan Lin was returning to Beijing because his parents wanted to introduce him to a prospective bride. He never met her.

“We decided to move out of our house to a new place to help with our emotions,” Liu, 67, told AFP during a gathering of families in Malaysia on Sunday to mark the 10th anniversary of the plane's disappearance.

“I still have sleepless nights waiting for his knock on our door. I think of my son every day,” she said. For others, the pain felt over the past decade is many times worse than their initial grief.

“I don't dare to think back to the road leading up to now from the past 10 years,” said Jiang Hui, whose mother was on the plane.

“The torment and damage from the past 10 years, all of this secondary damage to the relatives has far surpassed the initial damage done from the initial incident. Not two times or three times worse, but ten to a hundred times worse,” he said in Beijing.

Jacquita Gonzales, whose husband was a member of the cabin crew, said the only way to resolve their grief was to find the plane.

“That's why it is important to search on,” Gonzales told Sunday's gathering near Kuala Lumpur.

— AFP

Together we work for shared future of mankind and create a better world



Li Lingbing

The author is China's Ambassador to Oman

Not long ago, I participated in Beijing the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs, and I deeply felt the importance of this conference. Xi Jinping, President of China, attended the conference and delivered an important address, which presented a systematic review of the historic achievements and valuable experience of Chinese diplomacy in the new era and gave a profound exposition on the international environment and historical mission of China's external work on the new journey.

As important outcome of the conference, it was clarified that promoting the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind is the noble goal pursued by Chinese diplomacy.

For the present and coming periods, under the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, particularly Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy, China's diplomacy will adhere to the goals and tasks of Chinese-style modernisation, follow the principles of self-confidence and self-reliance, openness and inclusiveness, fairness and justice, and win-win cooperation. It also call for an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalisation.

In building a community with a shared future for mankind, the goal is to build an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world of lasting peace, universal security and shared prosperity, the pathway is promoting global governance that features extensive consultation and joint contribution for shared benefit, the guiding principle is to apply the common values of humanity, the basic underpinning lies in building a new type of international relations, the strategic guidance comes from the implementation of the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilisation Initiative, and the platform

for action is high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

On this basis, we seek to bring countries together to meet challenges and achieve prosperity for all, and usher in a bright future of peace, security, prosperity and progress for our world.

The proposal to build a community with a shared future for mankind has received positive responses from countries around the world in the past 10 years. It has expanded from a Chinese initiative to an international consensus, and from a beautiful vision to rich practice. At the same time, we must also see that the world today is facing a series of major issues and challenges, and there is a long way to go to build a community with a shared future for mankind. How can we gather global efforts to build a community with a shared future for mankind? The meeting gave the answer, which is calls for an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalisation.

It was pointed out at the conference that an equal and orderly multipolar world is one in which all countries, regardless of size, are treated as equals, hegemonism and power politics are rejected, and democracy is truly promoted in international relations. To keep the progress toward greater multipolarity generally stable and constructive, the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter must be observed by all, the universally recognised, basic norms governing international relations must be upheld by all, and true multilateralism must be practiced.

A universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalisation is one that meets the common needs of all countries, especially the developing countries, and properly addresses the development imbalances between and within countries resulting from the global allocation of resources. It is important to resolutely oppose the attempt to roll back globalisation and abuse the concept of security,

oppose all forms of unilateralism and protectionism, firmly promote trade and investment liberalisation and facilitation, overcome the structural problems hindering the healthy development of the world economy, and make economic globalisation more open, inclusive, balanced and beneficial to all.

China and the Arab countries account for about a quarter of the world's population, and both are essential members of the developing world and major forces in the international stage. Over the years, the Chinese and Arab civilisations interacted with and inspired each other across the Asian continent, leaves a splendid chapter in mutual learning, and mutual help. In December 2022, the first China-Arab Summit was successfully held. China and Arab states jointly issued the Riyadh Declaration, in which both sides agreed to make all-out efforts to build a China-Arab community with a shared future in the new era, deepen China-Arab strategic partnership, advocate multilateralism, and strengthen cooperation within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Oman is an important country in the Middle East and the Gulf region and a strategic partner of China. Over the past 45 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations, China has always regarded Oman as a good and trustworthy friend. In the face of international situation changes, the two countries have insisted on mutual support, close cooperation, complementarity and common development, and have developed exchanges and cooperation in various fields on the basis of mutual respect, equal treatment and mutual benefit.

China attaches great importance to developing relations with Oman and is willing to work with Oman to jointly build the “The Belt and Road” with high quality, deepen practical cooperation, and promote the construction of a China-Oman community with a shared future!

Feel relaxed with flowers...

It's no hyperbole that flowers are the most beautiful things in the world and that everyone, from poets to writers, has made mention of them for decades. Flowers have always been an integral part of human life. Says French poet Gerard de Nerval, "Every flower is a soul blossoming in nature."

Every flower mesmerises us with its sheer beauty and effortlessly conveys a host of human emotions. Just imagine feeling happier, more relaxed, and calm throughout your day by adding colour to your surroundings without using any antidepressants or engaging in long meditation sessions. This is exactly what flowers can do for you!

Researches have revealed that flowers provide an infinite number of benefits, including physical and mental health benefits, as a result of their impact on the environment around them.

A behavioural study by psychologist and researcher Nancy L Eckhoff at Harvard Medical School notes that living with flowers reduces feelings of anxiety and depression. Participants in the study simply felt less negative after staying around flowers in their homes for just a few days.

A study by Rutgers University found that the relationship between flowers and life satisfaction is much more influential than previously thought.

According to the Get Green Sustainable Living website, the presence of flowers at homes increases the sense of general happiness and reduces depression and anxiety. The website also notes that flowers enhance emotional connection with friends and family in the home or environment to which they are added.

Studies have also shown that a person receiving a bunch of flowers or even a single bloom responds with surprise, joy, or gratitude. Flowers help to connect and bond, and the positive feelings evoked continue to benefit the recipient for a few hours.



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyp

The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

Look at roses; they have long held the power to enchant and inspire with their delicate beauty and intoxicating fragrance. In all parts of the world, the rose is considered the queen of flowers due to its popularity, beauty, and rich history.

The Pharaohs were believed to be the first to discover the magic of flowers, so they used them for many things in their lives, such as decoration, perfume, and treatment for minor ailments.

Several years ago, the British-German physician Edward Bach rediscovered the secret of roses, but this time as a means of treatment for daily psychological problems. In a span of a few years, Bach identified 38 floral remedies and developed a method.

Around the 1930s, he had developed 38 flower remedies and grouped them under seven predominant negative emotions, including grief, fear, envy, indecision, rigidity, fatigue, and selfishness.

Oman already has a reputation for its rich floral biodiversity and cultivating flowers. The central and southern regions are among the top 35 regions in the world known for plant diversity.

Rose cultivation is an integral part of the culture and heritage of the Sultanate of Oman. Thousands of rosebushes flower each year across Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, also known as the green mountain. In all parts of the world, the rose is considered the queen of flowers due to its beauty and sweet scent.

Every year, many villages in the valley come alive with rose blooms. During the harvesting period between March and April, the valley attracts a large number of tourists to the area. Adding to the charm, the sweet scent of the unique variety of rose pervades the air.

After all, flowers are indeed precious signatures of heaven's artistry that heal with their myriad colours, fragrances, and medicinal properties! Gardening and floral cultivation help manage stress, depression, and anxiety.

OMAN IS KNOWN FOR ITS RICH FLORAL BIODIVERSITY AND CULTIVATING FLOWERS. THE CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN REGIONS ARE AMONG THE TOP 35 REGIONS IN THE WORLD KNOWN FOR PLANT DIVERSITY

FEEDING ITS BABY!



A great cormorant feeds its chicks in a nest at Sankey Tank Lake in Bengaluru, India, on Tuesday. – AFP

Architects of digital transformation and national progress

As the Sultanate of Oman strides towards Oman Vision 2040, its young and technologically savvy population stands out as the undeniable driving force behind the nation's desired transformation, emphasising the significant potential held by this dynamic demographic.

It acts as a catalyst for embracing and promoting e-governance, mainstreaming institutional development, and transforming the economy, ultimately serving the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Oman's youth, raised in the digital age with technology seamlessly integrated into their daily lives, emerge as champions of e-governance. Their technological fluency, coupled with their inherent adaptability, positions them as champions of e-governance. Embracing digital platforms and solutions can streamline bureaucratic processes, enhance transparency, and promote efficiency in public services. By attuning the modus-operandi of the government to the digital era, we pave the way for an inclusive and accessible system, where youth are the main agents of change.

E-governance is about the use of information technology to raise the



Ahmed Al Mukhaini

The writer is a Muscat-based policy analyst and international interlocutor

OMAN'S YOUTH, RAISED IN THE DIGITAL AGE WITH TECHNOLOGY SEAMLESSLY INTEGRATED INTO THEIR DAILY LIVES, EMERGE AS CHAMPIONS OF E-GOVERNANCE

quality of services governments deliver to citizens and businesses. It is hoped that it will also reinforce the connection between public officials and communities thereby leading to a stronger, more accountable and inclusive public administration.

Moreover, e-governance aligns perfectly with Oman Vision 2040 objectives, which aim to build a diversified, resilient, and knowledge-based economy. As a catalyst for transforming the modus-operandi of the Omani economy, e-governance opens the floodgates for innovation, entrepreneurship, and foreign investment. It fosters an environment that nurtures technological start-ups, attracts digital industries, and amplifies Oman's presence on the global stage. Harnessing the potentials of e-governance to mainstream institutional development is equally crucial. This process ensures that government entities and institutions are equipped to adapt to the digital world. It requires a holistic approach, focusing on digital literacy programmes, upskilling initiatives, and creating a supportive ecosystem for

innovation. By empowering public servants with the necessary skills and tools, we pave the way for a more agile and responsive government.

The benefits of e-governance extend beyond administrative efficiency. It empowers citizens, giving them a voice and a platform to engage in decision-making processes. Transparent and accessible digital channels facilitate citizen participation, enable real-time feedback, and ensure

accountability. As e-governance becomes ingrained in our society, it promotes trust, enhances civic engagement, and strengthens the social fabric of Oman.

To seize this opportunity, strategic investments in digital infrastructure, connectivity, and cybersecurity are imperative. The government must nurture partnerships with the private sector and collaborate with international technological leaders to leverage their expertise. As we

embark on this transformative journey, we must remain mindful of digital inclusion, ensuring that every segment of society has access to and benefits from e-governance initiatives. Oman's young and technologically savvy population carries both the torch of innovation and the essence of Oman's ambitious Vision 2040. As we embrace and promote e-governance, we empower our youth to shape the nation's future. Together, we can forge an Oman where institutional development, economic prosperity, and the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040 become a reality.

Catalysing the transformation, Oman's young and technologically savvy population serves as the driving force behind embracing and promoting e-governance, mainstreaming institutional development, and transforming the modus-operandi of the Omani economy.

Their digital prowess and inherent drive for progress make them the architects of a digital transformation that will shape the future of the Sultanate of Oman, ultimately realising the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.



E-governance aligns perfectly with Oman's Vision 2040 objectives.

sport

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HM Sultan Cup competitions continue in Barka



Hamad al Omari (L), the car winner in 1st human rider race



WALEED AL JAHWARI
BARKA, MARCH 5, 2024

‘Latha’, ‘AL Fares’, ‘Al Dhabi’, ‘Huthor’ and ‘Al Naser’ claimed car prizes at the His Majesty Sultan Cup for Camel Race at Royal Camel Corps Racing Track in Barka on Tuesday.

The final race of the season is supported by Royal Court Affairs represented by the Royal Camel

Corps (RCC), and organised by Oman Camel Racing Association. The RCC will buy the best camel that records the best time.

The event includes 62 rounds in different categories to win valuable prizes including 27 cars and 18 icons including the cups.

The second day was for the ‘Lagaya’ category, three-year-old, for 5 km divided into 10 races in the morning with cash prize for

the top 10. In addition, there will be competitions for human riders, three races for 2 km.

The winner will receive a SUV car and cash prizes for the top 10. Six main races will start in the afternoon, six cars for the winners and cash prizes up to 10th place.

The afternoon competitions were very exciting between 240 of camel’s owners and trainer to win the five SUV cars, while ‘Latha’

owned by Mohammed bin Salem al Wahaibi, grabbed the first car. ‘AL Fares’ owned by Abdullah bin Bakhit al Owaisi, snatched the second car.

‘Al Dhabi’, owned by Yasser bin Al Saghir al Maliki, claimed the third car. ‘Huthor’ owned by Hamad bin Shatit al Wahaibi, finished first in the fourth round. ‘Al Naser’ was the champion to have the fifth car, owned by

Hamad bin Shatit al Wahaibi.

In human rider rounds for 2 km, ‘Shawshara’ achieved first place and the car was owned by Ahmed bin Hamad al Omari. ‘Mishal’ owned by Nawaf bin Yaqoub al Jahwari was the champion in the second round.

Hurriya’ finished first in the third round, owned by Saeed bin Ali al Hajri.

The third day (March 6) will be

for the ‘Yathaa’ category, 4-year-old, for a 7-km race, three of them with car prizes and the other four winners will get cash prizes.

On the same day, there will be two races for the ‘Thanaya’ category, 5-year-old, for a distance of 8 km. And three races are allocated for the ‘Al Hawl’ category, 6 years and above. Both categories will have cash prizes for the top 10.

Qatar edge Oman in U17 friendly in Doha

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MARCH 5

Oman Olympic (U17) football team suffered a 1-0 defeat against Qatar team in a preparatory match at Aspire Academy in Doha on Monday. The warm-up match is part of the Oman team’s external camp in Qatar in preparation for the AFC Asian U17 Cup qualifiers which will be held in mid of October.

Despite the loss, Oman players took the utmost technical outcomes from this game as the coaching staff headed by coach Anwar al Habsi gave chances for many players in the squad to take part in the match and implemented different tactics during the encounter.

Oman national U-17 football team will play another friendly

match against Qatar in Doha on Wednesday ahead of the camp conclusion on Thursday. The eight days camp featured various morning and evening training sessions that varied between physical and technical training sessions. Oman team, coached by the national coach Anwar, aims to shape the players properly ahead of the future assignments including the AFC Asian U17 Cup qualifiers in October. The AFC U17 Asian Cup will be held in April 2025, while the qualifiers draw will take place in June and the hosts of the finals will be unveiled in June too. In the qualifiers, the topper of the groups beside the best four second placed teams in all the groups will advance to the finals, beside the host country who confirmed their seat in the finals.



This is the second abroad camp for the team after they had an external camp in UAE, as the team had played two preparatory games against the hosts UAE. The first warm up match ended in a 1-1 draw as Al Yazen al Balushi scored Oman’s goal. In the following warm up match, the hosts UAE

defeated Oman 1-0. Ahead of UAE camp, Oman players went under a comprehensive internal camp in Al Buraimi.

Coach Anwar selected 24 players for the eight days external camp. OMAN U-17 SQUAD: Qusai al Mashaikhi, Fahad al Mashaikhi, Ziyad al Mtaani, Osama al Maamari, Ali al Suwaidi, Saad al Maamari, Ali al Awaini, Ibrahim al Shamsi, Mudathar al Batrani, Yazin al Khaldi, Abdullah al Saadi, Muadh al Hinai, Al Yazen al Balushi, Firas al Saadi, Mohammed al Salhi, Al Waleed al Baradi, Mohammed al Salhi, Al Waleed al Baradi, Yazeed al Musheifri, Ahmed al Mayyahi, Said al Abadi, Mazin al Yarubi, Ibrahim al Tamimi, Sulieman al Kharousi, Al Hassan al Qasmi and Qais Ameen.

Britain’s Kenny has only slim chance of racing at Paris Olympics

LONDON: Five-time Olympic champion Laura Kenny’s chances of being able to compete in the Paris Games this year are fading, according to British Cycling’s Performance Director Stephen Park.

The 31-year-old suffered a miscarriage in 2021, needed surgery following an ectopic pregnancy in 2022 and then gave birth to her second child last year.

She has stated her ambition to ride in Paris but has not raced since the 2022 Commonwealth Games and her window of opportunity is closing. The 2024

Olympics will be held from July 26-August 11.

“She has a slim chance of being in Paris,” Park told reporters at a briefing in Manchester.

“The situation with Laura is no different to the run-in to Glasgow (2023 world championships), which is the first challenge is for her to be in a position where she feels she is going to be competitive and therefore put her hand up to be selected for events that will allow her to get the UCI points she needs to qualify.

“Then she has to qualify for the team by being competitive in

a team that is more competitive than it’s ever been.

“Both of those are fairly significant hurdles.”

Kenny, who is married to British sprint great Jason Kenny, would have to compete at the Nations Cup event in Milton, Canada next month to have any chance of gaining the required UCI points that would keep her in the frame for selection.

She is currently not training with the rest of the British team but following her own programme.

“We have ongoing and continual dialogue with Laura and

we are supporting her in terms of her return to training and she is still optimistic about the world championships (in Denmark in October),” Park said.

“But the time is approaching where she is going to have to be pretty clear about whether she wants it (Olympics) or she will miss the opportunity. Nobody knows better than Laura about what you need to do to win a medal in women’s track.

“I’ve got no doubt if she felt she was physically and mentally in the right place to make up ground, she would do. — Reuters



England’s Laura Kenny celebrates after winning gold in the women’s 10 km scratch race.— REUTERS

Lakers rout Thunder, Lillard’s 41 helps Bucks sink Clippers

LOS ANGELES: D’Angelo Russell scored 26 points as the Los Angeles Lakers produced a dominant defensive display to upset the Oklahoma City Thunder 116-104 on Monday.

Russell and Anthony Davis (24) combined for 50 points while LeBron James added 19 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists in an ultimately comfortable win for the 17-time NBA champions.

Oklahoma City went into the game as leaders of the Western Conference and they started smoothly, opening up a 12-point lead early in the first quarter.

But some stubborn defending and Russell’s hot hand hauled the Lakers back into contention, and a big second-quarter — outscoring the Thunder 27-18 — gave them a lead they held for the remainder of the contest.

“Early on they made some shots and we turned the ball over, but we didn’t totally collapse,” Lakers coach Darvin Ham said.

“We continued to defend. I told the team at half-time: ‘That’s the best defensive half I’ve seen all season.’

“Kudos to our guys — they stepped up and defended really, really well.”

The Lakers defence restricted Thunder star Shai Gilgeous-Alexander to 20 points, while Chet Holmgren finished with 15 and Josh Giddey 13.

The defeat knocked Oklahoma City (42-19) out of top spot in the West, with the Minnesota Timberwolves taking over first place. The Lakers improved to 34-29 to sit in ninth.

Elsewhere, Damian Lillard produced a dazzling 41-point display as the Milwaukee Bucks shrugged off the injury absence of Giannis Antetokounmpo to defeat the Los Angeles Clippers 113-106.

- ‘Embraced it’ -

But Lillard and Bobby Portis caught fire in the fourth as the Bucks outscored the Clippers 40-25 to pull clear and seal the win before a fired-up Milwaukee crowd.

Lillard finished with four rebounds and four assists along with his 41 points, while Portis stepped up with 28 points and 16 rebounds.

Milwaukee improved to 41-21, leaving them second place in the Eastern Conference behind Boston (48-12).

“We’re just playing together on both sides of the ball,” Lillard said.—AFP



Luguentz Dort (5) moves to the basket against Spencer Dinwiddie (26).— USA TODAY Sports

OMAN CHAMPIONS IN ICC U19 ASIA TOURNAMENT



Oman U19 - Champions

MUSCAT: A dominating performance by Oman boys was capped with a spectacular victory in the final of the ICC Men’s U19 Asia Division 2 Qualifier as they routed Hong Kong, China by 100 runs at the TERDThai Cricket ground in Bangkok, Thailand, on Tuesday.

Both Oman and Hong Kong, China, had already qualified for the ICC Men’s U19 Asia Division 1 ahead of the final. Tuesday’s victory for Rahil Habibulla-led Oman meant that the boys kept a clean slate in the tournament, winning a total of five games on the trot.

In the final, Oman’s Saumya Sampat stood out with his all-round performance as he missed a half-century (48 off 80 balls) in the team’s total of 249/5 in the allotted 50 overs.

Saumya then excelled with the ball as he picked up three wickets for 25 to be deservedly named the player of the final as Hong Kong, China, were restricted to 149/9.

Opting to bat first, Oman, coached by Syed Aamir Kaleem, rode on two century partnerships to set up a total to defend.

First, it was a 108-run second-wicket stand between Jeet Shah (50, 99 balls) and Saumya and then it was the unbroken 104-run sixth-wicket partnership between Nitish Nadendla (51 n.o., 35balls) and Rohan Ramachandran (49 n.o., 53 balls) that saw Oman post a total of 249/5.

Both Rohan and Nitish took over the run-charge after the fall of Rahil in the 37th over and slammed more than 100 runs in the next 13 overs with ten boundaries and a six.

Harry Hodgson and Arya Panjwani claimed two wickets each for Hong Kong.

Chasing a tough target, Hong Kong stumbled early on as they were down to 17/2 in the fourth over. Two quick wickets by the tenth over had Hong Kong reeling at 45/4 with Saumya, Varshieth Dinesh, Puladieth Ralalage and Prathiesh Ramesh among wickets.

Mathew Clayton fought a lone battle with a half-century (50) as Oman bowlers picked wickets at regular intervals to restrict their rivals to 149/9 in 50 overs.

Aareez Dar (28), Arya Panjwani (15), and Rishan Shah (18) were the only other batters to get to double digits.

Oman tried out as many as eight bowlers and seven of them were successful with Saumya taking three. Varshieth, Puladieth,

Arya Sampat, Prathiesh, Gaurav Dinesh and Rohan Ramachandran claimed a wicket apiece.

Earlier, Oman had topped Group B with three straight wins as they beat Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, China and Bhutan to make it to the semi-finals. In the semi-finals, Oman got the better of Malaysia before coming up with yet another stellar display to keep their winning streak.

Oman’s Nitish Nadendla was adjudged Player of the Tournament for scoring 164 runs in 5 innings.

Brief scores: Oman 249/5 in 50 overs (Jeet Shah 50, Saumya Sampat 48, Rohan Ramachandran 49 n.o., Nitish Nadendla 51 n.o.; Harry Hodgson 2/45, Arya Panjwani 2/51) beat Hong Kong, China 149/9 in 50 overs (Aareez Dar 28, Mathew Clayton 50; Saumya Sampat 3/25).

Oman share honours with PNG in international series

MUSCAT: An entertaining and exciting two-match one-day (50-over-a-side) series between hosts Oman and Papua New Guinea (PNG) ended level with both sides winning a game each.

PNG bounced back from a four-wicket loss in the opening match on Sunday to win the second game by a similar margin the next day in the unofficial one-day international series.

In the opening game, Duleep Mendis’ men, who are warming up for two major international assignments in April and June, got off to a flying start with all-rounder Ayaan Khan coming up with a stellar display with bat and ball.

However, in the second game, PNG came back strongly as they reached the 243-run target set

by the hosts with four wickets remaining. Lega Siaka (70) and Hiri Hiri (66 n.o.) notched up half-centuries in the chase as the visitors reached 249/6 with five balls to spare.

For Oman, skipper Zeeshan Maqsood was the most successful bowler with a spell of 2/33 while Ayaan Khan, Samay Shrivastava and Muzahir Raza took a wicket apiece.

Batting first, Shoaib Khan played a responsible knock of 59 off 53 deliveries to help hosts reach a modest target of 243 in 49.1 overs with Khalid Kail (42) and Ayaan Khan (35) chipping in with crucial contributions.

Oman’s decision to bat first seemed to have backfired in the second one-dayer as they were

struggling at 32/3 in seven overs following the dismissals of Pratik Athavale, Jatinder Singh and Kashyap Prajapati.

It was left for the middle order, led by Maqsood (33), to halt the collapse and the skipper along with Kail, gradually helped the team recover. Ayaan and Shoaib then ensured the hosts put up a challenging target of 243 in 49.1 overs to defend, but that wasn’t enough.

Chad Soper and Sese Bau picked three wickets each while Assad Vala claimed two.

The series began on Sunday and Oman captain Maqsood won the toss and put the tourists to bat first.

Oman’s opening pace duo of Kaleemullah and Bilal Khan



tasted success soon and PNG were reeling at 30/4 in nine overs. Ayaan Khan joined the wicket-taking party and picked up two, including the key wicket of skipper Assad Vala (47).

However, a fighting knock by wicketkeeper Kiplin Doriga, who made a 68-ball 67, saw PNG reach 184 in 47.5 overs.

Bilal Khan was too hot to handle as he picked up three for 31 while Kaleemullah, Ayaan and Aqib Ilyas had two wickets each in their kitty.

Oman’s chase wasn’t smooth as Prajapati, Ilyas and Maqsood were back in the hut with the score at 32/3 in nine overs. Athavale’s departure for 29 meant the hosts were down to 58/4 in 14th over. Khalid Kail’s run out for 19 didn’t

make thing easier for Oman as they were five down for 67 two overs later.

It was a gritty knock from Ayaan, who scored an unbeaten 68-ball 53, and a 68-run sixth-wicket partnership between Ayaan and Shoaib Khan (38) that put Oman back on course of victory.

Shoaib’s exit left the onus on Ayaan to shepherd the chase and he along with Rafiullah (28 n.o.) took the team home as the hosts reached 188/6 in 38.3 overs.

Kabua Morea took two wickets for 27 while the other wicket-takers were Semo Kamea, John Kariko, and Jack Gardner.

Following the unofficial one-day international series, the teams will feature in three T20Is, starting from Wednesday.



ARSENAL HIT SHEFFIELD UNITED FOR SIX TO KEEP PACE WITH LEADERS

SHEFFIELD: Arsenal matched their biggest Premier League away win with a 6-0 pummelling of Sheffield United on Monday after scoring five times in the first half when they tore the home side apart and have closed within two points of leaders Liverpool.

Mikel Arteta's team are third with 61 points after 27 games, a point behind Manchester City but with a much better goal difference than their title rivals. The Blades remain rooted to the bottom on 13 points, 11 adrift of the safety zone.

The Gunners are the first Premier league team with seven wins in a row this season and appear to be gaining momentum at just the right time to keep the pressure on the top two.

"A great performance and a big result for us again with the amount of goals we scored and the clean sheet," said delighted Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta.

"The team shows signs of wanting more, very positive. The energy is really good at the moment. When you are winning everything is easier, we have to maintain momentum now."

Arsenal were ruthless as they sliced through United's defence with ease from the start. Captain Martin Odegaard opened the floodgates with his fifth-minute goal, firing home from the middle of the box after a cute cutback from Declan Rice.

There was more misery to come for United goalkeeper Ivo Grbic on a night that saw six different names on the scoresheet.

Jayden Bogle put through his own goal in the 13th before Gabriel Martinelli struck two minutes later, sending scores of weary United fans to the Bramall Lane exits, while Kai Havertz (25th minute), Rice (39), and Ben White (58) also netted.

"We won 6-0 today and recently we've won a lot, but the work we do without the ball from the front to the goalkeeper is really good and it's a pleasure to be a part of," said Odegaard.

EARLY FIREWORKS
Arsenal's early fireworks had the 9-0 Premier League scoring record looking in jeopardy, but Blades fans were spared more misery partly due to Arteta's substitutions including forward Bukayo Saka heading to the bench after an excellent 45 minutes.

Arsenal were denied a seventh goal thanks to an excellent save from Grbic who batted away a curling shot from substitute Gabriel Jesus that looked destined for the far corner.

They matched their best Premier League away win set in the 6-0 rout of West Ham United on Feb. 11 and record six-goal away victory margin in a 7-1 top flight win over Aston Villa in 1935.

The Gunners did make history on Monday though by becoming the first English side to win three consecutive away matches by a margin of five or more goals.

They also became only the second English team to score at least five goals in three successive top flight away matches after Burnley in September 1961.

United have lost their last four games at Bramall Lane in all competitions having conceded 21 goals and scored two.

Coach Chris Wilder said it had been a painful season for his "damaged group of players. They've had to take some big hits.

"(Arsenal) cut us wide open, they are doing that to a lot of teams, I'm not saying that makes us feel better because that is another long night for this club.

"Saka took us to pieces down that (right) side, whatever you need to do you have to try and stem the tide, especially when they are in full flow.

"We didn't have an answer to anything they had. The result is what the result is and we have to live with it." — Reuters





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Resource assessment underway at Hydrogen Duqm site

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MARCH 5

An evaluation of solar and wind resources – a critical first step in the development of any green hydrogen project – is currently underway in Block Z1-02 allotted to Hydrogen Duqm LLC in the Wilayat of Al Duqm, according to a high-level official associated with the project.

Christophe Comte, Senior Business Development (Hydrogen) at global low-carbon energy developer ENGIE, which is co-leading the Hydrogen Duqm project along with Korean steel conglomerate POSCO, said the landmark venture is a further affirmation of ENGIE's long-standing commitment to Oman's energy sector.

Participating in a panel discussion held as part of the Oman-French Energy Forum, hosted recently by the Oman-French Friendship Association (OFA), Comte stated: "ENGIE is very happy to see the very prudent and wise development of Oman in the field of green hydrogen.

In the last few years, ENGIE's purpose has been to accelerate the transition towards a low carbon economy, not only with regard to its own activities, but also those of our partners and our



Key executives of leading French energy companies sharing their thoughts on the clean energy supply chain in Oman.

stakeholders."

He further added: "Here in Oman, our intention is to be aligned with Oman Vision 2040, and when we saw how the market was going to be structured, we really were very interested.

We have already looked at hydrogen development for the last 10 years, and ENGIE has been one of the founding members of, the Hydrogen Council in Europe."

Hydrogen Duqm LLC targets the production of 1.2 million tonnes per annum (tpa) of green ammonia for export to POSCO's facilities in Korea. Around 5 GW of solar and wind capacity, supported by a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), will provide renewable electricity for

a 200,000 tonnes per annum hydrogen plant.

Hydrogen output will be transported by pipeline to the Port of Duqm where it will feed an ammonia production facility. Besides ENGIE and POSCO,

Hydrogen Duqm LLC is also comprised of Samsung Engineering, Korea East-West Power Co (EWP), Korea Southern Power Co (KOSPO), and FutureTech Energy Ventures Company Ltd (a subsidiary of PTTEP).

"We are starting the resource assessment in the 300 km2 of land that is there," said Comte, adding that ENGIE is also keen to discuss opportunities for collaboration across the entire

ecosystem, extending from the generation of clean renewable energy to trading in green molecules or its derivatives.

Furthermore, Hydrogen Duqm will also seek to support start-ups that come up with innovations to optimise hydrogen production, he noted.

A Final Investment Decision (FID) is anticipated by 2027, with the start of production and export targeted by 2030.

"The project duration, from the start of operation, is 40 years, so we're looking really on a long term

basis to develop the best possible project," Comte added.

Also taking part in the panel discussion were: Philippe Marion, Hydrogen Line Director – EDF; Nayana Mady, ME Head of New Energies Business Development, Vallourec; Patrick Thienpont, Head of Water Department – Veolia, and CEO – Barka Desalination; and Ali Almoosawi, General Manager – AL SIG Oman (Air Liquide).

Lionel Rabin, Founder & Managing Director – Haltiq, was the Moderator.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C invites interested companies to participate in the following tenders:

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Tender Type	Site Visit	Tender Price (OMR)
NESC/ 03/2024	Colocation of Disaster Recovery Site.	11/03/2024	25/03/2024	Specialist	Public (Local)	N/A	52.500
NESC/ 04/2024	Supply, Delivery, Configuration, And Support of New High Availability Firewall, WAF & Load Balancer.	10/03/2024	18/03/2024	Specialist	Public (Local)	N/A	52.500
NESC/ 05/2024	Unit Rate for Supply and Delivery of IT Equipment and Network Structure Cabling Contract for Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C.	14/03/2024	03/04/2024	Specialist	Public (Local)	N/A	52.500
NESC/ 07/2024	Supply and Delivery of 80 Laptops for Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C.	14/03/2024	03/04/2024	Specialist	Public (Local)	N/A	52.500
Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	DCRP Certificate Grade	Tender Type	Site Visit	Tender Price (OMR)
NESC/ 06/2024	Disconnection and Reconnection Services for Nama Customers.	14/03/2024	03/04/2024	D & Above	Public (Local)	N/A	1,575

The table below shows the instructions for participation:-							
Participation	- Companies registered with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and in I Supplier with Nama Groupe may obtain Tender documents. - The amount specified above is including 5% VAT. - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from Tender fees. - The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply). - To obtain the tender document and payment procedure, please contact us by email Tender@supply.nama.om. - Tender purchase will be in working ours between 08:00 AM till 02:00 PM except on Thursday will be between 08:00 AM till 12:00 PM .						
Enquiries	- Any inquiry can be sent to Tender@supply.nama.om. - Any request for clarification received after the above-mentioned period will not be considered. - For tender no NESC/03/2024: Last day of receiving clarifications on 18/03/2024. - For tender no NESC/04/2024: Last day of receiving clarifications on 12/03/2024. - For tenders no NESC/05/2024, NESC/06/2024and NESC/07/2024: Last day of receiving clarifications on 28/03/2024.						
Tender Submission	Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER mentioned in the Prime Document.						
Guarantee	- The Tender should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of (1%) of the tender value valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF MINOR TENDER COMMITTEE, Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C. - The bid bond should including 5% VAT. - The bid bond should be submitted as seprate envelope. - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from bid bond requirements. - Any tender not accompanied by a Tender Bond shall be rejected.						
Terms and Conditions	- The Tender shall be valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission including any extension thereof. - If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date. - NESC is not bound to accept the lowest (or highest) Tenderer. - Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization - NESC gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. - Failure to comply with the instructions in tender document may lead to disqualification.						



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Tender Announcement

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG invites Bidders to submit their proposal for the below detailed tenders:

Tender No.	Description	Tender Fee (Non-refundable) OMR	Tender Purchase Deadline	Clarification Deadline	Tender Submission Date
TENDER/ 2024/03/ ENG/005	Construction of New Filling Station at Hail Al Awamir in Muscat Governorate	50/-	12.03.2024	14.03.2024	20.03.2024
TENDER/ 2024/03/ ENG/006	Revamping of Filling Station at Dhank in Al Dhahirah Governorate	100/-			

Bank Name & Account Number
Bank Muscat (0423005687760617)

The Conditions:

- Collection of Tenders:** Interested, specialized companies and establishments registered under grade 3 and above (in C.R) with minimum of 3 years' experience in the same field. Bidders can collect the tender documents from the procurement department by sending a copy of the payment slip to procurement@almaha.com.om
- Bank Guarantee:** The bidder should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value, with a validity of (90) Days from the last date of submission and addressed to Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG.
- Offer Submission:** Tender bid should be submitted a sealed envelope and addressed to the Chairman of Tender Committee, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG marked with tender number and subject. Other marks or any reference must not be printed outside the envelope. The exterior of the envelope containing the tender document must not reveal the identity of the bidder.
- Submission Location:** The bid should be deposited in the tender box at Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG head office located in Ghala before 01:00 PM on the submission date.
- Any bid received after the specified date or if it does not meet the conditions will not be considered.
- Each bid shall be signed and stamped with the signature of the authorized person.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to accept, reject or cancel the tender without giving any reasons.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to add or cancel some of the works mentioned in the tender if necessary.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG is not bound to accept the lowest bid or any other bid without giving any reasons.
- For any enquiry email us at (procurement@almaha.com.om) or by calling 24610289/24610287/24610355

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co. (SAOG)
PO Box No: 57, PC: 116, Mina Al Fahal, Sultanate of Oman

800,000 units of Geely Coolray sold globally

MUSCAT: The Geely Coolray, also known as Binyue in China, is one of the best products sold by Geely Auto. Since its model release in 2018, there have been already 800,000 units sold globally in over 40 countries worldwide.

From Americas, Middle East, Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia Pacific, the Geely Coolray has dominated markets, becoming the favourite choice of consumers in the subcompact SUV segment.

According to the market sales data, Geely Auto International sold 63,000 units of Coolray around the world from Janury to December 2023. It is now one of the best-selling models in the current lineup.

The Coolray is becoming one of the top choices for the B-SUV



The Coolray is the subcompact SUV built on Geely's new B-Segment Modular Architecture (BMA), it stands out for its sporty design and aggressive lines.

segment customers.

In Eastern Europe Region, Coolray sales had a great performance, with its retail sales increasing by more than 190 per cent compared to last year. Saudi Arabia also saw an increase, posting an 18.8 per cent increase versus its performance last year.

In 2023, we also saw Geely Auto International launch the New Coolray when they launched it in various markets such as Chile, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Lebanon, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Paraguay, Ecuador and Mexico. It garnered a lot of

positive reviews from local media and is now gaining popularity among customers as the demand for this powerful subcompact SUV has increased.

The Coolray is the subcompact SUV built on Geely's new B-Segment Modular Architecture (BMA).

It stands out for its sporty design and aggressive lines, featuring the powerful air intake front grille, LED headlights with Energy Pulse Three-way daytime running lights and tail lamps, as well as 17- or 18-inch wheels and quad exhaust outlets.

Inside, it offers a dynamic and trendy interior partnered with premium seats.

It stands out for its integrated dual digital display, which

combines the 10.2-inch colourful instrument panel, and the 12.3-inch high-definition infotainment touchscreen, along with a panoramic sunroof. It is powered by a 1.5-litre turbocharged engine for all trims, delivering 172 horsepower and 214 lb-ft of torque.

This engine is mated to a 7-speed DCT dual-clutch transmission, ensuring unbeatable response while accentuating its sporty styling.

In Oman, Geely vehicles are brought to you by Towell Auto Centre LLC. Avail of the Ramadhan Offers on Coolray with an EMI of RO 86/month, plus 5 years/150,000 km manufacturer warranty and 3 Years AAA Roadside Assistance.

Ooredoo appoints new Chief People Officer



MUSCAT: Ooredoo is delighted to announce the appointment of Khawla al Amri (**pictured**) as its new Chief People Officer (CPO). The forward-thinking CPO will oversee Ooredoo's human capital, the backbone of the tel-company's long-term sustainable success.

Khawla will play a strategic role in successfully managing Ooredoo's highly engaged team and their skills while onboarding, developing, and retaining talent that drives Ooredoo's innovation and its customer-centric approach.

With over 20 years of experience in human resources (HR), strong analytical and business acumen, robust people skills, and an exceptional eye for talent, Khawla brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to Ooredoo.

In 2023, the World Women Leadership Congress honoured her for her skills in the area of HR management.

Prior to joining Ooredoo, Khawla held leadership positions at renowned companies, including be'ah, Oman Environmental Services Holding Company, Omantel, and Oman DryDock.

She has a Master's Degree in HR Management from the University of Bedfordshire, in the United Kingdom.

The Data Park signs partnership agreement with Saudi tech firm



The agreement will enhance digital infrastructure and security offerings in the region.

MUSCAT: The Data Park (TDP) signed a strategic partnership with Saudi GO Telecom during the LEAP tech event in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the period on March 4-7, 2024 in an effort to enhance digital infrastructure and security offerings in the region.

The agreement was signed by Eng Maqbool bin Salem al Wahaibi, CEO of The Data Park (TDP) and Yahya al Mansour CEO of GO Telecom.

The signing ceremony was attended by Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Sultanate of Oman's Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communication and Information Technology.

By this agreement, The Data Park (TDP) in cooperation with GO Telecom will provide cloud services, managed services and co-selling to achieve mutual beneficiary for the two parties in the booming cloud managed services market at the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The signed business deal between the two leader companies will contribute to expanding the global portfolio of The Data Park (TDP) as well as strengthen the services of GO Telecom, which is reputed for its capabilities in building solutions that enable the beneficiaries of its services to enjoy the highest quality interactions with their customers through its malty functions channel solutions including over voice, instant messaging, email, SMS and social media services.

On this occasion, Eng Maqbool al Wahaibi, CEO of The Data Park (TDP), expressed

his pleasure with the Under-Secretary's presence, saying, "We are honoured to have the Under-Secretary facilitate this momentous partnership between The Data Park (TDP) and Go Telecom," adding, "We are delighted with our partnership with GO Telecom, whose service is at the top of the industry for reliability, connectivity and professional customer service, while The Data Park (TDP) is one of the leaders companies, that provides a variety of cloud infrastructure data services through the third-level data centre, including a wide range of cloud applications, and operates the only virtual data centre in the country."

For his part, Yahya al Mansour CEO of GO Telecom stated, "What sets GO Telecom apart from our competitors is that we pride ourselves on striving to hit a 5-star rating from every customer as a reference for future sales, as GO Telecom aims to hit that level of excellence with our customers, we believe that our new strategic relation with ODP will open new future horizons for us in GCC countries. "The Data Park (TDP), the prominent player in cloud services and cyber security in the region, plays an integral role in supporting the digital transformation of Oman, through their offering of an all-in-one solution of computing, cloud computing, data storage, networking, web hosting and network security services. TDP also offers the Sultanate of Oman's first Artificial intelligence-ready cloud infrastructure – Nebula AI powered by Nvidia.

NBO and Muzn Islamic Banking promote children's financial literacy

MUSCAT: In a strategic move to elevate customer experience, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has established a crucial alliance with Habib Bank Limited (HBL), Pakistan, marking a significant milestone in the banking industry.

Commencing in March 2024, NBO will introduce instant fund transfers to Pakistan at competitive exchange rates through a direct corridor partnership with HBL. This collaboration aims to streamline international remittances to Pakistan, enabling a more efficient and timely service.

Tariq Atiq, General Manager and Chief Retail & Digital Banking Officer at NBO, said: "Our partnership with Habib Bank Limited reinforces our commitment to delivering innovative financial solutions and enhancing the overall banking experience for our customers.

With its status as the oldest, largest, and inaugural commercial bank in Pakistan, HBL brings a wealth of experience and an extensive network within the Pakistani banking sector. Our dedication to expatriates is evident in our efforts to deliver swift, secure, and convenient remittance options through the instant fund transfer service to Pakistan."

The instant fund transfer service, available to



At the Muscat Book Fair, NBO and Muzn Islamic Banking hosted a dedicated exhibit to promote financial literacy.

Pakistan residents at all NBO branches in Oman, ensures a rapid and seamless remittance experience. Customers can enjoy 24x7 access to instant fund transfers, benefit from competitive exchange rates, and easily utilise the service through the NBO App or across the entire NBO branch network, enhancing overall convenience.

Commenting on this collaboration, Khaqan Mohammad Khan, Head of GRB & Strategy at HBL, said, "We are extremely proud of this partnership with National Bank of Oman, one of the largest banks in Oman, to provide secure and cost-effective cross-border payments via NBO digital channels.

Bank Muscat introduces training and job opportunities to SQU career fair's visitors

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, is keen to cooperate and partner with various educational institutions to achieve Sustainable Human Development Goals.

In this context, the Bank participates in the 24th edition of the Career and Training Fair organised by Sultan Qaboos University during the period from 4 to 6 March 2024, along with a number of private and government institutions representing various sectors.

The annual Fair serves as a link between university students and labour sectors. It allows the participating institutions to learn about the academic level, skills and abilities of students. At the same time, it familiarises students and graduates with the available job and training opportunities and mechanism to apply for them, and raise their professional awareness.

The Fair is also an opportunity for future students to choose their university specialties and learn more about the most in-demand majors in the labour market and related work environment.



Bank Muscat is keen to participate annually in the Career and Training Fair, as it is an opportunity to meet with students and introduce them to the Bank's recruitment policy, available vacancies, the areas of human resources development and the programmes provided by the Bank in this field.

The Bank's annual participation in the Fair confirms its commitment to the long-standing partnership with Sultan Qaboos University, in particular, and government and private institutions in general as part of its strategy aimed at supporting various events and

activities that serve all segments of society.

During the opening ceremony, Dr Muna bint Salim al Jardaniyah, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Vocational Training, the patron of the event, visited Bank Muscat's pavilion in the Fair and was briefed about the various job and training opportunities the Bank offers annually, and the mechanism to applying for them.

Bank Muscat has achieved more than 93% Omanisation rate with a total number of employees exceeding 4,000 in the different branches and departments.

During 2023, more than 340 Omani employees joined the Bank.

With regard to the training aspect, the Bank provided about 580 training opportunities for male and female students in cooperation with various educational institutions.

Moreover, the Bank offered a number of local and international scholarships for competent employees. Bank Muscat allocates considerable resources to enhance the capabilities of its workforce where training plans and programmes are approved annually for all employees.

Since the very moment of joining the Bank, employees are enrolled in appropriate training and development courses to enable them to perform their jobs to the fullest.

The Bank is committed to provide a professional working environment based on fair distribution of opportunities among all employees, utilise the latest technology and follow the best global banking trends that contribute to the development of job performance.



Oil prices slip as China reforms underwhelm despite Opec+ support



LONDON/MUSCAT: Oil prices slipped on Tuesday as concern over China's plan for growth and uncertainty over the pace of US interest rate cuts offset the prospect of a tighter market due to continued Opec+ supply restraint.

China set an economic growth target for 2024 of around 5%, similar to last year's goal and in line with analysts' expectations, but the lack of big ticket stimulus plans to prop up its struggling economy disappointed investors.

Brent crude fell 42 cents, or 0.5%, to \$82.61 a barrel by 1213 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) was down 39 cents, or 0.5%, to \$78.38.

"Public enemy No 1 of a protracted rally and the \$90 oil price is the uncertainty surrounding interest rate cuts," said Tamas Varga of oil broker PVM.

Meanwhile, the price of Oman oil witnessed a decrease of \$ 1.32 yesterday with \$81.80 per barrel compared to the price on Monday, which amounted to \$ 83.12.

The monthly average price of Omani crude oil for delivery this March amounted to \$78.75 per barrel, an increase of \$ 1.54 per barrel compared to the price for delivery last February.

— Reuters/ONA

Nature-based carbon removal solutions key to decarbonisation: Climate lawyer

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MARCH 5

International climate lawyer and Forbes 30 Under 30 awardee, Anete Garoza, captivated the audience at the Oman Conference on Environmental Sustainability 2024 (OCES) in Muscat last week with her insightful speech on the path to decarbonisation.

Emphasising the importance of embracing nature-based solutions and a triple-bottom-line approach, Garoza shed light on key strategies for sustainable environmental practices.

In her address, Garoza stressed the critical need for increasing awareness and directing climate finance towards nature-based solutions. She highlighted the vital role these solutions play in supporting life on Earth, extending well beyond merely addressing carbon emissions.

Nature-based solutions such as reforestation, afforestation, soil carbon sequestration, and ocean-based projects provide environmentally friendly and efficient ways to extract carbon from the atmosphere.

These methods not only help in preserving biodiversity and aiding local communities but also offer sustainable means of combating climate change, biodiversity decline, and ensuring fair development by leveraging the capabilities of ecosystems and natural mechanisms.

Nature-based carbon removal solutions, exemplified by the groundbreaking work of IMTN, were a focal point of



Bamboo absorbs approximately 40% more carbon and releases 35% more oxygen than the average tree.



Anete Garoza gives her keynote speech during the Oman Conference on Environmental Sustainability 2024 held in Muscat last week.

her presentation. The IMTN carbon project focuses on removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere by strategically planting bamboo, renowned for its rapid growth and exceptional

carbon sequestration capabilities.

Garoza emphasised that bamboo absorbs approximately 40% more carbon and releases 35% more oxygen than the average tree.

NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS SUCH AS REFORESTATION, AFFORESTATION, SOIL CARBON SEQUESTRATION, AND OCEAN-BASED PROJECTS PROVIDE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY AND EFFICIENT WAYS TO EXTRACT CARBON FROM THE ATMOSPHERE.

Moreover, IMTN's ambitious mission includes the restoration of 1 million hectares of highly degraded land in East Africa by 2030, aiming not only to mitigate carbon emissions but also to enhance ecosystem services such as water purification, flood control, soil fertility, and biodiversity in the region.

This nature-based carbon project stands out for its comprehensive approach, creating sustainable jobs and implementing a carbon benefit-sharing model that empowers local communities by improving socioeconomic conditions.

At the core of IMTN's strategy is a triple-bottom-line approach, focusing on People, Planet, and Profit. Garoza explained how this approach aims to make a positive impact on both the environment and society while also benefiting shareholders.

By aligning their strategies with this concept, businesses can contribute significantly to decarbonisation efforts and drive tangible impact.

An essential aspect Garoza addressed was the need for robust monitoring systems in effective carbon removal projects. She highlighted how technological advancements, such as satellite data, offer transparency and monitoring capabilities on a global scale.

While digitalisation levels in various countries can impact the ease and speed of project initiation, Garoza emphasised that the challenges can be overcome with a genuine willingness to undertake projects seriously.

Furthermore, Garoza underscored the importance of Voluntary Carbon Markets as crucial financing mechanisms in advancing decarbonisation efforts. She emphasised the significance of regulatory clarity and access to capital for carbon projects to thrive in the market.

Oman Broadband inks pact to boost terrestrial connectivity with Saudi Arabia



Officials of Oman Broadband and Saudi's Dawiyat at the agreement signing.

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 5

Oman Broadband, a key player in Oman's telecom landscape, has entered into a strategic cooperation agreement with Dawiyat Integrated Telecommunications & Information Technology Company of Saudi Arabia.

The agreement was inked by Eng Sultan bin Ahmed al Wahaibi, CEO - Oman Broadband, and Eng Wael al Ghamdi, CEO of Dawiyat Integrated Telecommunications & Information Technology Company. The signing ceremony took place during Oman Broadband's participation in LEAP 2024 tech event, which began in Riyadh on Monday, March 4, 2024.

The accord seeks to bolster international connectivity by providing the essential infrastructure for the development of fibre optic networks between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This collaborative effort is anticipated to unlock new horizons for both Omani and Saudi operators, facilitating the realisation of economic and commercial advantages.

Eng Sultan al Wahaibi of Oman

Broadband, said the pact will enable the extension of the fibre optic network to seamlessly link the borders of the two countries, fostering terrestrial connectivity that would pave the way for mutual strategic benefits.

He emphasised that the collaboration will not only bolster international connectivity but also provide an opportunity for knowledge exchange and experience-sharing in the field of fibre optics.

Moreover, the partnership aims to enhance the products and services offered by both companies through collaborative efforts in designing and developing communications and information technology.

This will not only meet market and regulatory requirements but also allow for a greater focus on innovation, research, and development.

In addition to improving overall communications and information technology, the agreement is set to foster the exchange of emerging technologies and innovations. Both companies are poised to establish joint research and development projects, furthering advancements in the field, particularly in terms of fibre optics.

HIBBA AL KIDI
MUSCAT, MARCH 5

Have you ever been tempted to quit your job but had to stay on for monetary reasons? Well, perhaps there's a solution for you.

"Quiet quitting" refers to a phenomenon where employees limit their scope of work, sticking to the bare minimum and refusing to go beyond what is expected of them.

According to Professor Anna Scheyett of the University of Georgia, the term gained popularity in 2021 when a TikTok video by career coach Brian Creely went viral.

In his video, Brian shared that there has been a shift in how individuals view work and their relationship with work arrangements over the last few years. He attributed the phenomenon as a reaction to multiple issues, including toxic work environments, long hours, poor pay, or personal issues.

I spoke to a few individuals in Oman to see if anyone is quitting quietly.

When I approached 43-year-old Mohammed, who holds a managerial position at a public institution, he was unaware of the term. However, soon after explaining it to him, he exclaimed that he's doing it at the moment.

According to Abdullah, he was

met with disdain when he brought the matter to management.

"Instead, I decided to do the bare minimum while actively looking for another job. The moment I decided to stop caring so much, I felt so much better."

30-year-old journalist Laila shared that she had to quit quietly at different times during her career to take care of her mental health.

"I think due to the demanding nature of my job and the lack of mental health laws within the workspace in Oman, I started to experience burnout."

"As a result, I had to drastically adjust my productivity levels to match my mental capacity at the moment. After speaking to my therapist, we both agreed that I should not centre my life around my job."

"There are lazy people, and then there are those employees who had to resort to quiet quitting due to circumstances.

In his case, he decided to "quietly quit" a previous corporate job due to an unfair rewarding system. "I lost belief in the reward system. I stopped putting in as much effort. I went to work when I was expected and delivered the kind of performance that was expected of me. But nothing beyond that."

Adam added, though, that he didn't quit his post quietly until he thought he had gained all the necessary knowledge from it.

He shared that he did not mind going above and beyond at the beginning of his employment.

"I was fine with doing a lot of things without extra because I was trying to build my credentials. Actually, it's what made it possible for me to land a better, higher-paying job."

"However, it was hard for me, as I am a naturally driven person. But the burnout was exacerbating some of my mental health symptoms and affecting the quality of my life. So, work had to take a backseat."

While speaking to the *Observer*, 40-year-old media executive Adam emphasised that a line must be drawn between laziness and quiet quitting.

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In his case, he decided to "quietly quit" a previous corporate job due to an unfair rewarding system. "I lost belief in the reward system. I stopped putting in as much effort. I went to work when I was expected and delivered the kind of performance that was expected of me. But nothing beyond that."

Adam added, though, that he didn't quit his post quietly until he thought he had gained all the necessary knowledge from it.

He shared that he did not mind going above and beyond at the beginning of his employment.

"I was fine with doing a lot of things without extra because I was trying to build my credentials. Actually, it's what made it possible for me to land a better, higher-paying job."

"However, it was hard for me, as I am a naturally driven person. But the burnout was exacerbating some of my mental health symptoms and affecting the quality of my life. So, work had to take a backseat."

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Empowering Oman’s farmers is key to strengthening food security



QASIM AL MAASHANI

The author is head of Business section in *Oman Daily Observer*

The backbone of any nation’s food security is its agricultural sector. But in the Sultanate of Oman, farmers are facing an array of challenges that threaten not only their livelihoods but also potentially impair the country’s ability to strengthen its food security goals.

From inadequate infrastructure to unfair competition and the looming spectre of climate change, Omani farmers face daunting challenges.

Roads turn into mud pits when it rains, making it costly and time-consuming to transport produce. Cost-competitive warehouses and packaging centres are a rarity, leading to food spoilage and waste. Meanwhile, cheap imported



commodities flood the markets, undercutting local farmers who can’t compete without government support.

This isn’t just about economics; it’s about Oman’s future. Climate change is already wreaking havoc on the country’s rainfall patterns

and temperatures. Farmers, often lacking the knowledge and resources to adapt, watch their crops wither. If we don’t act now, the situation will only worsen. But let’s be clear — putting the onus solely on farmers to fix this is misguided. The Omani

government needs to step up and take bold action. Investing in roads, warehouses, and modern collection centres is imperative. It’s time to level the playing field by protecting local produce from foreign competition.

And we can’t combat climate change without supporting research into resilient crops and sustainable farming practices.

Some might say this is protectionism, but I call it common sense. It’s about empowering Omani farmers to compete, ensuring they aren’t left at the mercy of global market fluctuations.

It’s about investing in a future where Oman can feed itself, not one where it relies on imports that could vanish overnight.

This isn’t about charity for farmers either. This is about

ensuring the availability and affordability of fresh, local food for all Omanis. It’s about strengthening the nation against external shocks. It’s about building a more robust, self-sufficient Oman.

The government must also work to streamline bureaucracy, making it easier for farmers to access funding, permits, and vital resources. And let’s not forget the power of awareness campaigns — educating consumers about the value of buying local products can make a world of difference.

The challenges facing Omani farmers are undeniable, but they are not insurmountable. With astute leadership and targeted investment, Oman can transform its agricultural sector into a source of national pride and resilience.

Company insolvencies in UK hit 30-year high



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

Business groups are calling on the Chancellor to cut taxes in the Budget after the number of companies going bust hit a 30-year high. In a grim update ahead of Jeremy Hunt’s upcoming fiscal statement, the Insolvency Service said 25,158 companies in England and Wales collapsed in 2023 as higher borrowing costs took their toll.

That was the most since 1993 and came amid warnings that a growing tax burden and rising prices have ‘left businesses on the cliff-edge’. A separate report from Lloyds Bank offers some hope for the New Year, however, with business confidence at the start of 2024 at the highest for two years.

Analysts hailed signs of ‘green shoots of recovery in the housing market’ after mortgage lending rose for a third month in a row.

Industry bodies are urging the Chancellor to inject more ‘much needed energy into the economy’ with tax breaks in the spring Budget – despite warnings from the International Monetary Fund against tax cuts.

UK Hospitality chief executive Kate Nicholls said the sector, which includes pubs, restaurants and hotels, is facing ‘relentless cost pressures and an unsustainable tax burden’ that has stymied investment.

She said: “It is now a case of supporting the sector or losing many businesses for good. It’s clear that endless price rises and an ever-growing tax burden have left businesses on the cliff-edge, and has deterred investment.”

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) said Hunt

should reduce National Insurance (NI) bills for companies to boost employment.

National chairman Martin McTague said: “This approach strikes a powerful balance, warding off a looming surge in unemployment, empowering employers, and injecting much-needed energy into the economy.’ UK Hospitality — which said 6,000 venues closed last year — echoed calls for help with NI and also urged the chancellor to ease the business rate burden.

And a lower 12.5% VAT rate for hospitality, leisure and tourism businesses would be ‘the single greatest catalyst for growth in the sector, the group said.

But while many businesses are struggling, the report by Lloyd’s shows confidence among companies is at its highest point since February 2022. Morale has been boosted by sharp falls in inflation and hopes of cuts to interest rates and taxes.

Hann-Ju Ho, a senior economist at Lloyds, said: “Businesses are feeling more confident following the cautious end to 2023, with this being the strongest start to a year since January 2016.

The reduction in inflation, albeit with the recent uptick, and the belief that interest rates may have peaked is likely driving the rise in confidence among companies.” Figures from the Bank of England showed 50,459 mortgages were approved in December.

Ashley Webb, an economist at Capital Economics, said the data ‘suggests there are green shoots of a recovery in the housing market and perhaps the wider economy.’ The Government recorded its largest monthly surplus in January, helping borrowing in the year-to-date come in over £9bn below forecasts.

According to figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the government banked a surplus of £16.7bn in January. This was more than double the surplus recorded in 2023 and the highest since records began in 1993, although it was slightly lower than the £18bn surplus expected by the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR).

China sets robust economic growth goal but no big bang stimulus

KEITH BRADSHER &
CHRIS BUCKLEY

China’s top leaders on Tuesday set an ambitious target for economic growth but signalled only modest stimulus measures, not the aggressive support for China’s domestic economy that many analysts believe is necessary to halt a steep slide in the housing market and ease consumer malaise and investor wariness.

Premier Li Qiang, the country’s No. 2 official, after Xi Jinping, said in his report to the annual session of the legislature that the government would seek economic growth of “around 5%.”

That is the same target that China’s leadership set for last year, when official statistics ended up showing that the country’s gross domestic product grew 5.2%.

The country’s programme for state spending showed little change.

Li said that the central government’s deficit would be set at 3% of economic output, but that the government was ready to issue another \$140 billion worth of bonds to pay for unspecified projects of national importance.

The more the government borrows, the more it can spend on initiatives that could boost the economy.

China had also set the deficit at 3% early last year, before raising it in October to 3.8% when the government approved \$140 billion in additional bonds to pay for disaster relief and prevention measures after severe summer flooding.

Conspicuously missing from the premier’s agenda for this year was a move to shore up the country’s social safety net or introduce other policies, such as vouchers or coupons, that would directly address Chinese consumers’ very weak confidence and unwillingness to spend money.

“There’s a lot of positive noises for the economy, but not a lot of concrete proposals for how to resolve the country’s growth



Workers on Nio’s vehicle assembly line in Hefei, China. – The New York Times

difficulties,” said Neil Thomas, a fellow at the Centre for China Analysis of the Asia Society.

Some economists question whether growth was actually as high last year as China claims.

In addition, last year brought a modest rebound because stringent “zero-Covid” measures were in place until December 2022. Achieving the same growth this year, without the benefit of that rebound, could be much harder.

Consumers and investors have been sceptical about the prospects for a lasting recovery. Stock markets in China fell heavily in January and early February, before recovering over the past four weeks, as the government took steps to encourage stock buying. But Li maintained that China was on the right track.

China has “withstood external pressures and overcome internal hardships,” Li told the National People’s Congress, a Communist Party-controlled body that approves laws and budgets. “The economy is generally rebounding.”

The National People’s Congress, a choreographed

week-long event, typically focuses on the government’s near-term initiatives, especially economic objectives. China’s growth goal, and the ways that the government is attempting to achieve it, are under intense international scrutiny this year.

Communist Party leaders are trying to restore confidence in China’s long-term prospects and to harness new drivers of growth, such as clean energy and electric vehicles.

Li’s report also flagged new spending on artificial intelligence and a plan to “step up research on disruptive and frontier technologies.” But those efforts could be dragged down by a tangle of problems around the housing sector: a glut of apartments, debt-troubled property companies and local governments, and homebuyers reluctant to sink money into real estate when values are declining.

Achieving China’s growth target this year may be difficult without another big round of debt-fuelled state spending. The amount in the report, said Eswar Prasad, a Cornell University economist, “is not a massive

amount for an economy of China’s size, but I think they are being cautious about opening the taps too wide before seeing if this type of financing has the desired effects.”

Economists and global lending agencies have long recommended that China strengthen its safety net, a shift that could improve weak consumer confidence and persuade Chinese households to save less and start spending more.

But officials have been leery of increasing social spending when they already need to figure out how to cope with an aging society with fewer workers to support each senior.

China’s birthrate has nearly halved since 2016 and about 15% of the population is age 65 or older — a figure likely to grow to more than 20 per cent by 2030.

For each of the past four years, China has retroactively revised its initial economic growth numbers slightly lower. That makes it easier for the government to say the next year that the economy has grown in line with official targets. But it does not fix underlying economic troubles.

— The New York Times

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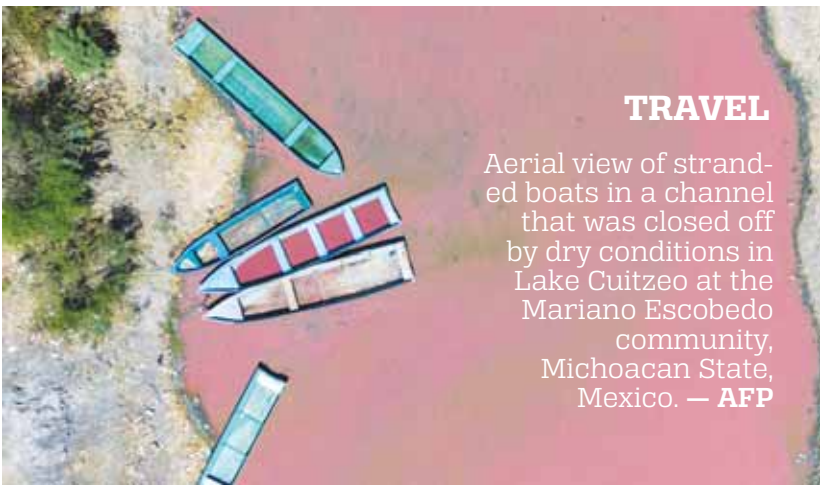
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TRAVEL

Aerial view of stranded boats in a channel that was closed off by dry conditions in Lake Cuitzeo at the Mariano Escobedo community, Michoacan State, Mexico. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

A farmer looks at flattened wheat crops following heavy rain and strong wind, at a field on the outskirts of Amritsar. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

Bollywood actor, director and writer Randeep Hooda attends the trailer launch of his Indian Hindi-Marathi language biography film 'Swatantrya Veer Savarkar' in Mumbai. — AFP



FASHION

US model Gigi Hadid presents a creation by Chanel for the Women Ready-to-wear Fall-Winter 2024/2025 collection as part of the Paris Fashion Week, in Paris. — AFP



CULTURE

Riders compete in the traditional Central Asian sport of Kok-Boru (Gray Wolf) or Buzkashi (Goat Grabbing) in the village of Uch-Emchek, some 30 kms from Bishkek. — AFP

art & life

WEDNESDAY | MARCH 6, 2024 | SHAABAN 25, 1445 AH | OMAN OBSERVER | www.omanobserver.om | features@omanobserver.om

SUSTAINABLE & ECO-CONSCIOUS PIECES WIN SHADES OF WHITE EXHIBITION

The “Shades of White” art exhibition features diverse interpretations of white by 20 artists. Curated by Matti Sirvio, it highlights the versatility of the colour through paintings, sculptures and installations. ... **P20**



LIFESTYLE

Philippine ‘library home’ stacked with books to inspire reading

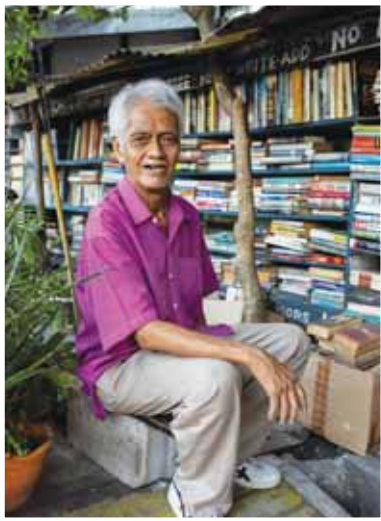
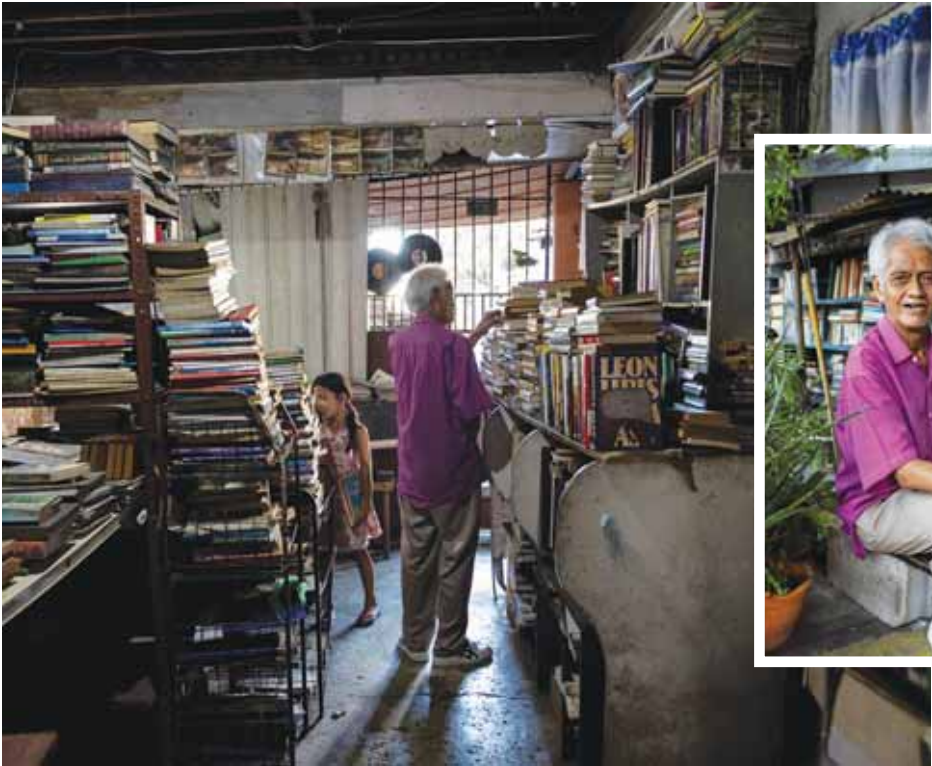
“A GOOD BOOK is easy to find” reads the sign on Hernando Guanlao’s two-storey home located on the outskirts of the Philippines’ main financial district which he has turned into a public library where anyone can borrow books for free.

Called the Reading Club 2000, Guanlao’s library showcases a wide variety of books he hopes will inspire people, especially young curious minds to read, especially at this time when reading ability among Philippine students remains low.

“The books that one can see here are those used in K-12 (elementary books), novels which students and enthusiasts can make use of,” the 72-year-old Guanlao said at his home crammed with thousands of books in stacks.

“There are also spiritual books for those who are looking for religious knowledge, hardbound and softbound books, autobiographies, and many different genre’s that one can enjoy, all for free,” he said.

What started as a 50-book display on the sidewalk fronting his home more than two decades ago, Guanlao’s



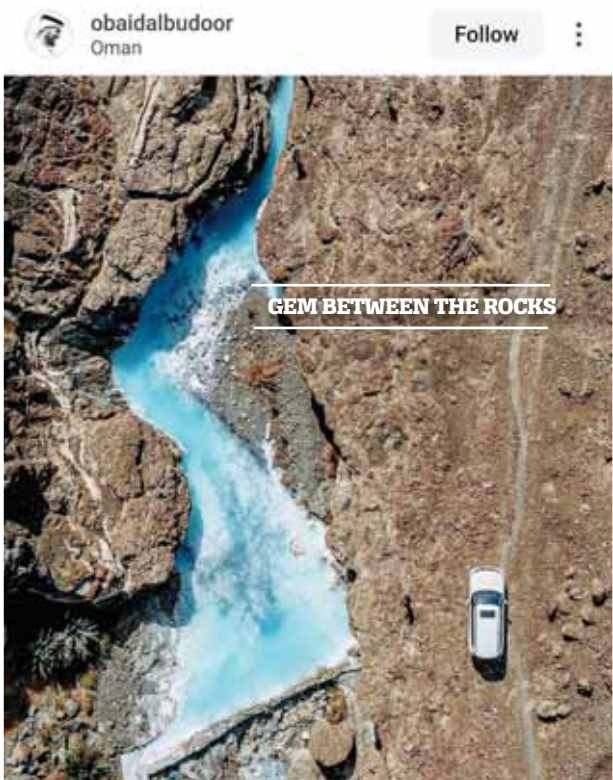
collection has grown exponentially over the years, thanks to a steady supply of books from donors, some of whom opted to stay anonymous.

“They just leave boxes of books outside my house,” said Guanlao, who has also started shipping reading material to public schools in far-flung communities.

Philippine students are facing learning setbacks with math, science and reading scores among the lowest in the world, according to the Program for International Student Assessment.

“My mission is to give away used and donated books to others at no cost and to promote education through literature,” Guanlao said. — **Reuters**

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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WITH HUNDREDS OF major new commissions and premieres by internationally renowned artists and the most extensive education, talks, and thought-leadership program of any international art fair, Art Dubai buzzed with activity, with hundreds of people ebbing and flowing throughout the different galleries. It was easy to get lost in the labyrinthian maze that demanded attention.

"Our programme this year reflects the increasingly diverse and multicultural communities of our home city, providing more opportunities than ever for artists from across the Global South. Dubai is a place of relentless reinvention, possibility and opportunity, and these commercial and institutional partnerships are central to all our activity, supporting our world-class non-commercial programs," shared Pablo del Val, Art Dubai's Artistic Director.

Held under the auspices of His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the

Architecture, Rotterdam, Anne Holtrop, Founder of Studio Anne Holtrop, Bahrain, Monira al Qadiri, Artist, Kuwait and Berlin, Gabriel Alonso, Artist and Researcher, Madrid, amongst others.

"In the 21st century, extreme weather — from floods, droughts, and storms to smog — is no longer limited to 'the developing world,' but is now happening everywhere. Meanwhile, the threat of extinction elicits urgent innovations — and imagination," the forum teased.

As the commissioner who gave life to the forum, Basar was methodical in his approach to making the event a success. It was evident that he placed a lot of thought into the programming,

of the forum.

"For me, art is a point of confluence between different disciplines, whether it's literature or history or technology. And so that has very much influenced me as a commissioner. We see art in a much broader context and never in an isolated way," he added.

Regarding putting the focus on climate change in this year's edition of the forum, he explained, "I think art and culture have a responsibility to deal with the world as it is. Realities of our present moment are the changes in our weather as they become more and more extreme and one of the problems about that is that the weather and the climate crisis are very abstract."

He added, "They're almost too overwhelming for us to conceive. And so what art and culture can do is humanise them into languages that we can relate to in a more direct way. And I think this is a very important responsibility that art and culture have."

Explaining how the forum was put into shape, he said, "The first part of the process

and backgrounds, and in supporting the next generation of cultural professionals," shared Art Dubai's Executive Director Benedetta Ghione.

She added, "Our year-round education, scholarship, and thought-leadership programmes, developed alongside our long-term partners, create significant opportunities for people from all over the world to build careers in the creative industries in Dubai."

Art Dubai 2024 offers comprehensive programming that encompasses various facets of the art world, highlighting both traditional and innovative forms of artistic expression. One significant aspect is the Public Art Strategy, a collaboration between Dubai Culture and Art Dubai, which introduces the 'Union of Artists' sculpture, inaugurating the Dubai Public Art Initiative. This initiative aims to transform Dubai into a vast artistic canvas.

Another highlight is the Dubai Collection, the city's first institutional art collection, presenting the 'Encounters' exhibition curated by Alia Zaal Lootah, featuring celebrated UAE artists.



UAE and Ruler of Dubai, it was evident that the expanded programme of collaborations with local and international partners helped underscore the fair's position as the meeting point for the Global South's creative communities and its mission to redefine the role an art fair can play in supporting local and regional ecosystems.

Despite the busy programming, the Global Art Forum 2024 proved to be one of the most timely and relevant portions of the fair. Titled Global Art Forum 17: Whether or Not, Art Dubai's flagship transdisciplinary summit looks at the relationship between extreme weather and extreme change. This edition, organised by Commissioner Shumon Basar and Curator Nadine El Khoury and taking place on 29 February and 1 March 2024, was well-attended primarily because it collected some of the best speakers one can ask for in a gathering, including Dr Stephanie Rosenthal, Director of Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, Samir Bantal, Director of AMO at the Office of Metropolitan

and getting El Khoury to curate was a strategy that made the event a topic among the media on its own.

"I discovered art as a teenager, and what was so exciting about it was the fact that it opened up portals and doorways to other parts of the world, whether that was in the past or towards the future and it provided alternative pathways to imagine how the world could be," Basar shared on the sideline

was appointing my curator Nadine El Khoury, here in Dubai, and she focuses on botany and ecology and plant life, and so together we brought together a group of artists, curators, philosophers, architects who all deal with the question of extreme weather and extreme change. And one of the things we like to do in the Global Art Forum is combine different people from different backgrounds."

The combined experience, according to Basar, allows "you [to] get a very holistic view of the contemporary condition [and] how different people are approaching some of the most important questions of the day."

COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMMING

"Art Dubai Group is committed to laying foundations for a thriving cultural and creative ecosystem, inspired by and responding to our home city of Dubai. The cultural scene here is maturing rapidly and we are proud of the role we play in engaging and inspiring audiences of all ages

Additionally, the A.R.M. Holding Children's Programme, led by Indian artist Sahil Naik, offers workshops at the fair and extends to schools, engaging 15,000 students across the UAE.

The Digital Summit brings together global and local industry leaders to discuss the evolving digital art ecosystem and Dubai's role within it, building upon the foundation laid by Art Dubai Digital.

The Bawwaba exhibition, curated by Emiliano Valdes, invites introspection and healing through ten powerful artist presentations. Art Dubai Modern, curated by Dr Christianna Bonin, explores new modernisms from the Global South, featuring works from Syria, Egypt, Uganda and Sri Lanka. Art Dubai Digital provides insight into the digital art world, showcasing pioneers and emerging trends.

Finally, the Contemporary Galleries expand perspectives on the Global South with presentations from cities like Sao Paulo, Tehran, Dubai and Mumbai, showcasing contemporary artists and galleries. Together, these elements create a diverse and immersive experience at Art Dubai 2024, reflecting the city's commitment to artistic innovation and cultural exchange.



UNSUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT threatens the health and diverse fish populations of the Mekong river, with one-fifth of fish species in Southeast Asia's main artery facing extinction, a report by conservation groups said on Monday.

The Mekong, stretching nearly 5,000 km (3,000 miles) from the Tibetan Plateau to the South China Sea, is a farming and fishing lifeline for tens of millions of people in China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.

Threats to its fish include habitat loss, conversion of wetlands for agriculture and aquaculture, unsustainable sand mining, introduction of invasive species, worsen-

provides essential nutrients to tens of thousands of farms in the Mekong River Delta, Reuters reported in 2022.

Some 19 per cent of the 1,148 or more fish species in the Mekong are heading towards extinction, said the conservationists' report, "The Mekong's Forgotten Fishes", adding that the number may be higher as too little is known about 38 per cent of the species to gauge their conservation status.

Among those facing extinction are 18 species listed as "critically endangered" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, including two of the world's largest catfish, the world's largest carp and



ing climate change and hydropower dams fragmenting the flow of the river and its tributaries, according to the report compiled by the World Wildlife Fund and 25 global marine and wildlife conservation groups.

"The biggest threat right now, and a threat that's still potentially gaining momentum, is hydropower development," said fish biologist Zeb Hogan, who heads the Wonders of the Mekong, one of the groups behind the report.

Dams alter the flow of the world's third-most biodiverse river, change water quality and block fish migration, he said.

Proliferating Chinese-built hydroelectric dams upriver have blocked much of the sediment that

the giant freshwater stingray.

"Some of the largest and rarest fish... anywhere on earth occur on the Mekong River," Hogan said.

Fish depletion in the Mekong - which accounts for over 15 per cent of the world inland catch, generating over \$11 billion annually - could harm food security for at least 40 million people in the Lower Mekong basin whose livelihood depends on the river, the report said.

Hogan said it was "not too late" for countries in the delta to coordinate efforts to reverse the adverse impacts on the fish population.

"If we take action, collectively take action, to develop the river sustainably, there's still hope," he said.

— Reuters

SUSTAINABLE AND ECO-CONSCIOUS PIECES WIN SHADES OF WHITE EXHIBITION



BY LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

Shades of White, a juried art exhibition, opened its doors to the public at Alliance Business Centres Network, at Double Tree by Hilton Hotel, Qurum. The exhibition will run until April 15th. Shades of White – Spiring Salon Exhibition, is the first Juried Exhibition from Matti Sirvio Art Galleria.

Matti Sirvio, the gallerist, artist, and Curator of this Exhibition, mentioned at the opening reception that it was not easy for the jury members to choose, as all the pieces of art were wonderful. "Art is very subjective, especially abstract art," Sirvio said. There were 49 entries and according to the Gallery, all could have been chosen as they were worthy of display.

"Our main judge, Muhammad Sihni, one of the leading contemporary artists from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, chose the final list after considering the choices of the other jurors. All of them worked without knowing the names of the artists. We hoped that this would emphasise the art, not the name, professional reputation, or nationality of the artists. We are happy to see that seven Omani artists were chosen in the group of the 20 finalists," the Gallery said in a statement.

Looking at the artworks, paintings, photographs, installations, one would realise there are many shades of white.

"This is the message," said Sirvio. According to the curator, white is one of the most challenging colours. It's humble, silent, happy to be in the background, providing the most powerful contrast to all the self-promoting other colours. Without effort, the white is there, dishdasha, kumma, decorative khanjars, shells and turtle eggs on the beach, houses and sands. Oman is the cradle of all the shades of white.

"With the outside jury, we hope to go to another level in our professionalism as a gallery. Participation in a juried exhibition will advance the artists also in their career. It's an opportunity to be recognised by well-known art influencers," stated the organisers. The exhibition was inaugurated by Shaikh Abdullah al Ajmi.

Mona Ahmadi, from Iran, chose to present a sculpture that depicted a face. Mona said, "As I am a sculptor specialising in faces, I chose to do a face but not a realistic face. I worked with textures. It is titled 'My Ivory' because sometimes the face might not be that good, but the person is. It is up to the person how to see the acupuncture—you can see the face or you can see the textures, which is like life, some ups and downs and shades of life."

Dr Shalini Kumar chose to work with a ball of newspapers covered with white paper which was inlaid with driftwood from the sea, pearls, eggshells, pulses, rice, pieces of mirror and all things that could be in shades of white, so she recycled waste by creating an installation representing one world, one family.

Hani Abdelmagid is an artist from Iran and his work is a combination of several photos of places that no longer exist, with added digital elements. "These are places that have memories for me, good and bad. Old places in the centre of a city in Iran where I have been for many years, especially when I was a teenager. The name of this city is Qom, a city near Tehran, the capital of Iran. As a human being, you have a personal way of dealing with memories, I whitened them, to accept them and instead of opposing and seeing their dark sides, with whiteness, give them another meaning. For me, whiteness means emptying the concepts of everything."

The event was supported by Alliance Business Centre, Blue Light, Strategic Catering abf Forever 18.

THE WINNER'S CIRCLE

Emerson Sumaoang's Soul Dance and Lisa Janssens Drift were co-winners for the Jury Award.

Sumaoang, who has been renowned for his sustainable and eco-conscious art, is a young, emerging Filipino artist who sources his materials from the sea and nature in general. Soul Dance is Sumaoang's brand of art coming to life, but this time it is elevated, so it speaks deeply in an almost sculptural yet abstract way. His choice of material combines puffer fish spines interplaying with a mesh, truly an ingenious way of integrating nature into art.

"I'm truly thrilled and honoured to share that I, along with three other incredible artists, have been awarded at the "Shades of White" Juried Exhibition curated by Matti Sirvio," Sumaoang shared on his Instagram @mhearts_214.

"Soul Dance is a hanging sculpture crafted from white-painted mesh wire with delicately attached fishbones. Like smoke, it drifts gracefully, revealing ever-changing figures from every angle. This art piece symbolises life's flow through illuminated faces depicting our journey's dance through various stages of an ever evolving existence," he shared on his social media.

For Belgian artist Janssens, Drift is an abstract formation of tangled driftwood that she scavenged along the different beaches in Oman. The wood was bleached and whitened, which serves as her commentary that even in death, plants still have their purpose.

"I found these materials on the shore. It was once strong but is now fragile and dry to the core. It's the naked heart of a tree. From the shore, it has become a treasure for me to keep," Janssens shared on her Instagram, @lisajanssensart.

The painting of Nigerian artist Patrick Unogbo took home the honourable mention.

For Rachel Eapen, taking home the Visitor's Choice for her photography entry called Metamorphosis was heartwarming.

"The very fact that my work spoke to the guests who came in different ways is my biggest reward. I couldn't be more grateful," she shared on her Instagram account, @tickled_by_inspirations.