

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President-elect Ferdinand Marcos Jr of the Republic of Philippines on being elected as his country's president. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments to President-elect Marcos Jr, wishing him success in realising aspirations of the people of the Philippines. His Majesty also wished the relations between the two countries further development and growth. – ONA



P10

DEBUTANTS
GUJARAT CLAIM
IPL CROWN



P13

BUSINESSES
VULNERABLE TO
INTERNET ATTACKS



P20

FOOD AS
CULTURAL
AMBASSADORS



MUSCAT

MAJOR PLASTICS
PARK IN SUHAR

OQ, the global integrated energy group of the Sultanate of Oman and the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to set up a plastics park in Sohar Industrial City with support from Oman Vision 2040 implementation Follow up Unit. The MoU comes in line with one of Oman Vision 2040's objectives: Achieving a competitive, diversified and integrated economy as the project is envisaged to open major investment opportunities, especially in plastics conversion, with OQ as the major provider of raw materials. Under this MoU, Madayn has allocated 1 million m2 land in the Sohar Industrial City for the park to manufacture semifinished and finished high value-added plastic products. **DETAILS ON P13**

MODERN FISH MARKET IN BARKA



The new fish market in the Wilayat of Barka in South Al Batinah Governorate was designed as per latest international standards and the best technical and health specifications. The new modern fish market represents an ideal integration between production and consumption areas. – ONA

Royal Academy aims to
mould executive leaders

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
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The strategy and work model of the Royal Academy of Management was presented on Monday. The academy works under the patronage of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

Dr Ali bin Qasim al Lawati, President of the Royal Academy of Management, said the main vision is to have a scientific institution focusing on developing executive leadership. The academy has been building the curriculum and is now onto training.

LEADERSHIP OFFERINGS

A suite of 14 leadership offerings, including programmes, initiatives and knowledge insights aimed at the nation's leaders, will be launched in the coming 12 months and delivered through four centres of excellence.

There are also non-structural specialised centres to keep pace with the changes in the world.

Dr Ali said: "The guiding principle for the academy's work is the ambitious vision of His Majesty in developing and empowering existing and future leaders in Oman". **TURN TO P3**

350 journalists from 100
nations to attend IFJ meet

IFJ CONGRESS TO WITNESS 'JOURNALISM IN THE FIRING LINE'

SAMUEL KUTTY
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The 31st World Congress of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), taking place in Muscat, will witness first-hand accounts of experience from journalists in war-torn countries like Afghanistan, Mexico, Yemen and Ukraine.

"Union leaders and journalists from these countries will come together to give first-hand accounts of their experiences on the ground in a special session looking at journalism in the firing line", the IFJ said in a release on Monday.

According to the release, the Congress will host a discussion on the impunity for crimes against journalists.

The opening ceremony will be held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said,

“
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IFJ

Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan.

Oman Journalists Association (OJA) will represent the Sultanate of Oman in hosting the four-day

event at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

"The debate will feature killed journalists' family members who will travel to Muscat to inform delegates about their cases and call for support for their fight for justice", the IFJ said.

Referring to the increase in violence against journalists worldwide, the IFJ stated that the last three years have been especially challenging for journalists all over the world.

"Violence against journalists has increased worldwide, with four countries at the epicentre: Afghanistan, Mexico, Yemen and Ukraine", the release said.

According to IFJ President Younes Mjahed, the triennial Congress allows IFJ affiliates to meet, discuss the IFJ working programme and elect a new Executive Committee and a new leadership. **TURN TO P2**

Lidocaine infusions could help migraine sufferers: Study

LONDON: According to a recent study, infusions of the local anaesthetic lidocaine may provide pain relief to people with chronic migraine who haven't responded to other treatments.

The findings of the research were published in the journal 'Regional Anesthesia and Pain Medicine'.

Intravenous infusions of a local anaesthetic such as lidocaine have been suggested as a possible treatment option for people who have a poor quality of life because of chronic migraine which is difficult to treat. The aim is to stop pain, but few studies have looked at the



effectiveness of this treatment beyond immediate pain relief. In this retrospective study, the authors analysed the hospital records of 609 patients who were admitted with refractory chronic migraine and

treated with infusions of lidocaine to assess the short- and medium-term benefits of this approach.

Patients included in the analysis had experienced at least 8 debilitating headache days per month for at least 6 months and failed to respond to or had contradictions to the seven classes of medicine for migraine.

Patients received lidocaine infusions over several days along with other aggressive drug treatments for migraine, such as ketorolac, magnesium, dihydroergotamine, methylprednisolone and neuroleptics. – **Agencies**

Bank Muscat launches special
customer offer to win
51 hospitality packages to
FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™,
courtesy of Visa

MUSCAT - In line with its customer-centric vision to serve its customers better every day, and commitment to providing top of the line features, services and rewards, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider has announced that it is giving away 51 match packages to visit FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™, courtesy of Visa, as part of the run up to one of the biggest sporting spectacles on the planet. All Bank Muscat Visa Credit and Prepaid Cardholders will be automatically entered into raffle draws to select the winners once they use their Bank Muscat Visa Credit or Prepaid Card to make a minimum cumulative spend of RO 50 or more during the promotional period which will extend till 31 August 2022. For every RO 50 spent, customers get one chance in the draw, the more they spend the higher their chances of winning. All transactions will be included except for ATM withdrawals and Government spends.

Each winner will receive a Hospitality Package for two to the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™, courtesy of Visa. The packages, which include airline tickets, hotel accommodation and tickets for a number of matches during the month-long football carnival have been reserved exclusively for different card segments. As many as 10 packages (1 Opening Match, 1 Final and 8 Quarter Final matches) have been reserved for Bank Muscat Private Banking Visa Infinite and Asalah Priority Banking Visa Signature credit cardholders. Nine packages featuring Quarter final matches have been reserved for Al Jawhar Visa Platinum credit cardholders, while Visa Prepaid cardholders can win one of the 8 Group Stage match packages reserved for them. Holders of Bank Muscat-Co-branded Visa Platinum credit cards, Visa Gold credit cards and Visa Classic credit cards are eligible to be entered into draws for one of the 24 Group Stage match packages reserved especially for them.

On this exciting occasion, Abdulnasir



Al Raisi, General Manager – Personal Banking, Bank Muscat, said: "In line with its commitment to offering the largest range of benefits, and also recognising the great passion with which football is followed in Oman, Bank Muscat is delighted to offer a large number of football enthusiasts a great opportunity to win Hospitality Packages to FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™, courtesy of Visa. Launching this offer comes within the bank's strategy of offering the best features and benefits to our customers, including Asalah and Al Jawhar customers. With a number of prizes reserved for different segments, we invite everyone to participate enthusiastically and benefit from this offer by using their Visa credit cards and prepaid cards.

On his part, Abdullah Tamman Al Mashaani, General Manager – Products, Bank Muscat, said: "We thank Visa for their

continuous cooperation and partnership with Bank Muscat, which helps the bank provide the best offers and services to our customers. As the leading financial services provider in Oman, the bank is always working to further develop and launch new products and offers. We hope that our customers will wholeheartedly participate in this promotion for a chance to win one of these exciting 51 hospitality packages to attend FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™, courtesy of Visa. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all our customers for their strong confidence in the bank and its cutting-edge products and services."

Bank Muscat has also launched an exclusive limited edition Visa Prepaid Card to celebrate FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™ courtesy of Visa. Customers can easily apply for this Visa Prepaid card, which has been designed as a collector's item via their Bank Muscat Mobile Banking app or Internet Banking only.

It is important to note that the Bank Muscat Visa Prepaid Card features contactless payment technology and can be managed easily through the Mobile Banking app or Internet Banking. Customers can apply for a personalised card with its unique design, load funds and top it up instantly, and also review transactions to manage their expenses. In addition, the cards can be used for secure online payments apart from PoS payments and ATM withdrawals.

Bank Muscat contactless cards feature best-in-class security for PoS and online transactions. In case of any loss or misplacement of the card, it can be blocked immediately by calling the Bank Muscat Contact Centre on 24795555. For more details on the bank's Visa Prepaid cards, please go to <https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/bm-cards/Pages/cards.aspx>.



Foreign minister receives Patriarch of Antioch

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, on Monday received Patriarch John X of Antioch in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The two sides reviewed the efforts exerted to enhance political and diplomatic dialogue in a bid to achieve regional and international stability,

security and peace.

The Patriarch lauded Oman's good will initiative in spreading peace, tolerance and coexistence.

The meeting was attended by several officials from the Foreign Ministry and the delegation accompanying the guest. — ONA

Media representatives start arriving for IFJ Congress

KABEER YOUSUF

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The Omani capital, Muscat, will host journalists and media representatives from different media organisations -- newspapers, TV channels and online media -- from more than 100 countries on Tuesday. Most of the media representatives have already arrived to be part of the International Conference of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) Congress in its 31st edition. The event venue is Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The four-day event will also host press unions and associations from different continents to brainstorm the present and future scenarios of media, current developments and the future of media.

The conference agenda includes an opening speech by Dr Mohammed bin Mubarak al Araiimi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Omani Journalists Association (OJA), and a speech by Younis Mujahid, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the IFJ, as well as the screening of a documentary film on journalism in the Sultanate of



Oman.

During the opening ceremony, the Sultanate of Oman award for the best press photo in the world will be announced, and 5 families of journalists who lost their lives while performing their journalistic work will be honoured.

During the meetings of the IFJ, the founding meeting will also be held, the presidency and general committees will be elected, and the plenary session will be held to discuss the Secretary's report General' solidarity messages, continental and parallel meetings of the General Conference committees on financial decisions, laws, the Secretary-General's report, the Honourary Treasurer's report, the election of administrative candidates, in addition to

discussing legal and regular suggestions.

"The 31st Congress of the IFJ aims to introduce media work in the Sultanate of Oman and cooperation between various media institutions, in addition to introducing the Omani journalists and media persons to all the details of this large organisation, which includes more than 600,500 journalists around the world," said Dr Mohammed bin Mubarak al Araiimi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Omani Journalists Association.

He added that the work of the conference will include dialogue sessions that include many journalists from different countries of the world, during which their experiences in media will be presented to the benefit of the participants, by journalists from both inside

and outside the Sultanate of Oman, in addition to a lecture on the foreign policy of the Sultanate of Oman and a lecture on the Oman Vision 2040.

The economic and promotional aspect and the presentation of a promotional film aimed at introducing the Sultanate of Oman's economic, cultural and social components will also be previewed.

Al Araiimi pointed out that the International Federation provides services to journalists in various countries of the world, where there are committees for women journalists, committees for freedoms and committees for subsidies, and the card issued by the union containing many features that help the journalist will also be introduced.

"The 31st International Federation of Journalists' Congress and its meetings are an opportunity to discuss issues of journalists and press freedom and what is happening at the global level, in addition to that Muscat will be an important station for electing the IFJ Board of Directors for the next session," said Younis Mujahid, President of the IFJ.

Oman participates in WHO meeting



GENEVA: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Health took part in the 151st meeting of the World Health Organization (WHO), held in Geneva on Monday.

The meeting's agenda covered a set of topics, namely approving the schedule of the 151st edition of the WHO meeting and reviewing the report of the Executive

Council's Department of Budget and Management, among others.

The event was attended by Dr Mohammed bin Saif al Hosni, the Ministry of Health's Under-Secretary for Health Affairs, and Dr Jumana bint Ahmed al Abduwani, the ministry's Director-General of International Relations and Organizations.

— ONA

350 journalists from 100 nations to attend IFJ meet

FROM PAGE 1

"This Congress comes at a particularly sensitive time for journalism, with wars in several countries, growing surveillance of media workers and newsrooms still suffering the consequences of the Covid pandemic. We believe this Congress will provide us with a clear roadmap to face these challenges and strengthen the IFJ's capacity to support its members across the world", Younes said.

The World Congress, hosted by the Omani Journalists Association (OJA),

will kick off today with a pre-conference involving a high-level debate on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on journalism and newsrooms and IFJ affiliates' actions to save jobs and lives over the past two years.

The panel will include trade union leaders from every continent. As many as 350 journalists, representing associations from over 100 countries will be taking part in the event, in addition to 50 journalists and media personalities who represent newspapers, radios, television channels and e-newspapers from all over the world.

The newly-elected IFJ Gender Council

and its Steering Committee, will lead a review of their actions over the last three years — including campaigns to eradicate violence against women journalists, close the gender pay gap and foster women's access to leading roles in the media — and adopt a new action plan.

In addition to other agendas at the Congress, it will also hold a special session to mark the International Safety Fund's 30th anniversary, looking back on historic moments over the past three decades when the fund has provided key support to journalists at risk.

Ministry to announce packages and plans for Word Cup fans

VINOD NAIR

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With the World Cup in Qatar less than five months away and Oman likely to host a large chunk of fans, there has been demand from all quarters that the Sultanate of Oman should take maximum advantage of the occasion.

Eng Mohammed bin Salim al Busaidy, Chairman, Omran Group, said that such mega-events will not be held in the region again soon.

"This is the real starting point for the recovery of the tourism sector movement in the Sultanate of Oman. Efforts must be combined to maximise the benefit of this opportunity, which might not be repeated in the region," he said.

Underlining the importance of Oman being a partner in such a major event, Salim bin

Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, said that details will be soon announced, which will include the establishment of an Olympic and recreational village or a venue that will host tourism programmes for the football fans staying in the Sultanate of Oman.

Responding to requests for promoting the tourism potential of some governorates, the minister said, "All segments of the tourism sector and small and medium-sized enterprises have good possibilities for recovery and make some gains by hosting a large number of football fans in various governorates."

The two national airlines, Oman Air and Qatar Airways have announced a partnership to provide air connectivity during Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022 between Muscat and Doha.



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ENG MOHAMMED AL BUSAIDY

Chairman, Omran Group

Under this agreement, 21 flights will be operated between Muscat and Doha,

to transport fans of the World Cup to Qatar 2022.

Overall, there will be 48 daily flights between the two countries (24 round trips) during the matches between November and December 18.

The shuttle flights will provide a seamless and convenient 24-hour experience for all football fans between Muscat and Doha throughout the tournament.

This service is designed with the purpose of connecting fans seamlessly to Qatar so they can attend their respective matches, before departing Doha on the same day.

Muscat is among the cities in the region that will host the audience and visitors of the World Cup in Qatar 2022 because of its multiple tourism components represented in ancient markets, and historical and archaeological monuments.

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Majlis Ash'shura discusses teachers' issues

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 30

The Majlis Ash'shura held its 14th regular meeting of the third annual session (2021-2022), under the chairmanship of Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman, on Monday.

At the outset of the meeting, Yousef bin Mohammed al Maamari, council member, presented an urgent statement on compensation for the citizens from the Wilayat of Liwa who were affected by the activities of Sohar Industrial City. In his urgent statement, Al Maamari delivered the citizens' demand to include all citizens to the compensation list even those whose houses are located west of the main road as they are similarly affected by the activities of Sohar Industrial City in the same way as those residing on the east of the main road.

The session saw the presentation of an urgent statement regarding the number of resignations among teachers recently. In his statement, Hassan bin Said Kashoub, explained that teachers' resignations are mainly due to delayed promotions and financial incentives for teachers and hoped that the issue will be solved. Their salaries remained the same since 2012 despite the increasing in cost of living and high prices.

This is in addition to the increased workload on teachers who bear the brunt of the



educational process from the time of entering school until the end of the school day.

In his statement, the member indicated that one of the reasons for the resignations was the delay in issuing the Labour Law which hampered the solving of administrative and organisational problems in the

educational sector.

The council approved a request for discussion regarding the monopoly of the drug market and medical devices.

The council approved a report submitted by the Health and Environment Committee on the expressed desire to evaluate the reality and quality of primary

healthcare institutions in the Sultanate of Oman. The report said that most primary healthcare institutions (health centres) suffer from pressure with 70 per cent of health centres providing medical services to higher-than-standard figures i.e. one health centre for every 10,000 people.

The members of Majlis

Ash'shura approved a report prepared by the Health and Environment Committee on the expressed desire to set up the Food and Drug Authority in the Sultanate of Oman. The committee's report, read out by Mansour bin Zaher al Hajri, Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur of the committee pointed out

to lack of control over the food and drug sectors as a result of the multiplicity of competent authorities and overlapping legislation regulating them and lack of coordination between them as well as the recent spread of pandemics and food crises.

The council approved the report of the Youth and Human Resources Committee on the expressed desire to amend the rules and criteria for applying to job vacancies offered by the public and private sectors. The expressed desire called for adopting criteria that take into account the differences in job classification between the public and the private sector and the adopting of the employment programmes approved for each sector as a main criterion as a replacement of the seniority criterion.

The council approved the Water Security Committee's report about the expressed desire on date industry in the Sultanate of Oman. The report indicated that the number of date palm trees in the Sultanate of Oman is estimated at 9 million while the Sultanate of Oman's production of dates reached 371,000 tonnes as of last year.

The meeting approved a report submitted by the Youth and Human Resources Committee for determining the Omanisation rate in the economic diversification sectors in accordance to the directives of the Tenth Five-year Plan and Oman Vision 2040.

Royal Academy of Management to mould executive leaders

FROM P1

"His Majesty sees the academy as an important pillar for the realisation of the Vision 2040."

Inspired by the ancient Sultanate Tughra, the academy's emblem represents human capital, a greater legacy, Royal guidance and a prosperous future.

The training will be one — for the leadership community at all levels, both in the government and private sectors; second, for the executive leadership, those who are specialised such as project managers, human resources managers etc. These people are extremely important because part of their job is to bring into realisation from

visualisation. The third group is for future leaders both in the government and private sectors.

Dr Ali, during his presentation, said it is important to be in touch with the new reality — speed of change, and there is a force that is affecting the change, which for example, could be the economy or diseases.

He also pointed out that internationally the success rate of nations in implementing and achieving their vision is less than 30 per cent. And the studies show the reason is leaders.

"That is why we need leaders who can lead today and tomorrow. Successful leaders focus on beneficiary services; their move from strategy to execution is



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swift. Meanwhile, some people get comfortable at the strategy level. The other qualities of successful leaders (whether young or old) is that they have a solution mindset, as well as have flexible mindset.

"Some people say we need young leaders, and I say, we need old leaders with young minds", noted Dr Ali.

He explained that the academy is not a training institute but is a mechanism — a tool to realise the Vision 2040.

"That means we will participate in the development and modernisation of the government. We hope it will contribute in bringing together government and private sectors' leaders to work together

effectively. Part of our vision is to develop future leaders in the government and private sectors. We would like to develop a community of leadership", he said, speaking to the 'Observer'.

While the strategy was developed internally by the academy, it has international and national delivery partners. The academy has brought in international content into local context.

"So our international partners will bring in the latest thinking and experiences into our programme while we will develop the local context. We have international partners as well as local partners from within Oman", he said.





Digital transformation

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The second edition of the Digital Indicators Report issued by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology stated that the Sultanate of Oman has made strides in laying the foundations of digital society and preparing the telecommunications and information technology sector to be modern and feasible for various economic and social aspects as well as responsive to the requirements of sustainable development.

This is obvious by establishing many projects, which contributed to building a digital infrastructure that enabled all individuals and sectors to access various services.

The issuance of the report came to reflect the digital reality of the Sultanate of Oman locally and globally in various fields and activities of the technology sector and out of the importance of studying indicators and sharing data.

The report included the most important indicators related to the information and communication technology sector, including postal security indicators, education indicators, cyber indicators and the Sultanate of Oman's ranking in several international reports.

According to the data, the Sultanate of Oman ranked 48th out of a total of 134 countries in the Networked Readiness Index report, 49th out of 172 countries in the Government's Artificial Intelligence Readiness report, 5th out of 22 countries in

the Digital Economy Index report, 16th out of 175 countries in the International Cybersecurity Readiness Index report and 5 out of 13 countries in the GEMS Maturity Index of e-Government and Mobile Services.

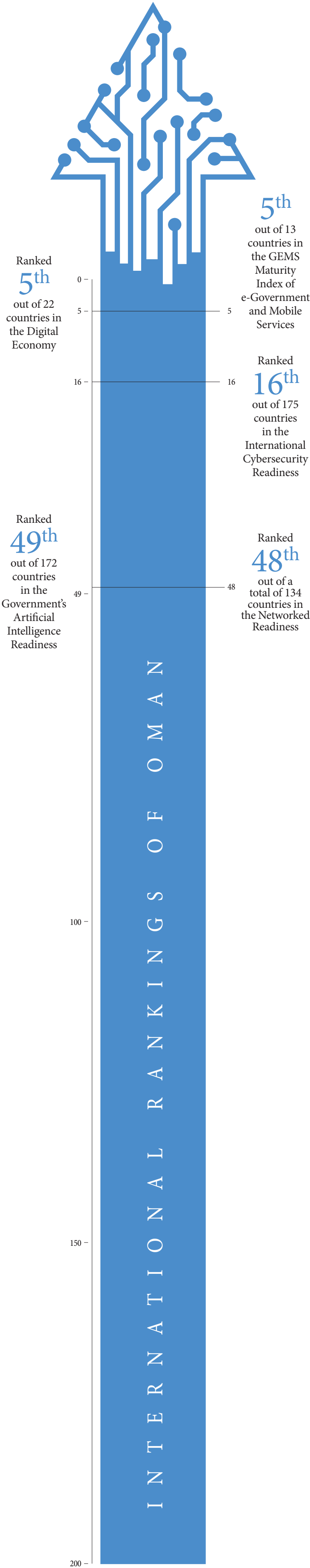
At the level of families, the percentage of families with the Internet was stabilised at 94 per cent in 2020 and 2021. Also, the percentage of families with smartphones was 95 in the same two years, while the number of families that had computers — desktop computers, laptops, tablets — accounted for 66 per cent.

At the level of individuals, the percentage of individuals who owned a smart mobile phone reached 94 per cent in 2021, while individuals who used the Internet reached 95 per cent, according to surveys of access and use of information and communication technology in the households and individuals sector 2020 and 2021.

Regarding the Internet use activities of individuals, the surveys showed the participation of individuals in social media platforms out of the total Internet users stood at 77 per cent, uploading content to a website or blog was 72 per cent, and the purchase or order of goods

through websites was 38 per cent, selling goods or services through websites was 20 per cent and using meeting applications for work, study or communication purposes was 42 per cent in 2021.

The report clarified the most important reasons for not buying goods or completing services online for individuals 18 years and over. It said that 72 per cent of the total individuals prefer shopping in stores, 44 per cent have concerns related to customer service



such as warranties and receiving or returning products, 43 per cent have information security concerns in terms of using debit or credit cards, 43 per cent also have technology concerns in terms of fake websites or payment failures, 43 per cent lack skills and knowledge to purchase goods online, 43 per cent have concerns related to privacy such as disclosure of personal data) and 50 per cent do not show interest at all.

In the telecommunications sector, the fixed-line subscriptions per 100 families until the end of December 2021 amounted to 81.4 per cent, the fixed broadband subscriptions per 100 families amounted to 74.7 per cent, the mobile telephone subscriptions per 100 individuals of the population amounted to 135 per cent and the mobile broadband subscriptions per 100 individuals Of the population reached 114 per cent, according to the data of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority.

The authority said that the population coverage of 5G mobile phone networks amounted to 44.9 per cent, coverage of 4G phone networks reached 97.8 per cent, while coverage for 3G networks reached 99.4 per cent.

According to the report, the revenues of the telecommunications sector in the local economy in 2020 amounted to RO 795 million , while investments stood at RO 272 million investments and the value of royalty was RO 74 million. At the same time, Omanisation in the sector reached 92 per cent.

It mentioned that the number of attempts of cyberattacks targeting government networks and the Omani cyberspace that were discovered and dealt with in 2021 amounted to 39,319,293 million attempts, while the number of actual cybersecurity incidents that government institutions reported, vital sector institutions and in-

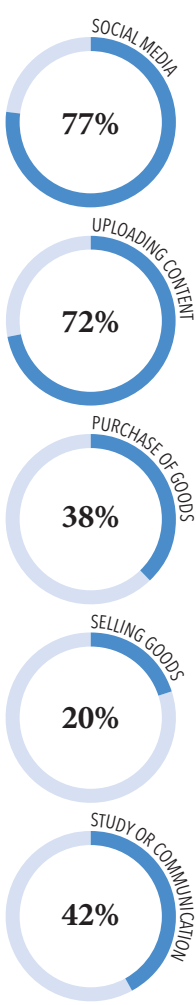
dividuals were 1,300 which were dealt with successfully in 2021. The number of notifications of security threats in the field of TNAS cybersecurity that was prepared and sent to the targeted groups decreased to 55 in 2021 compared to 107 in 2020, according to data from the National Centre for Information Safety.

The report included statistics from the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, in which it said that the percentage of students studying ICT majors who were enrolled in higher education institutions (inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman) out of the total enrolled students amounted to 12.5% for the academic year 2019/2020, while the percentage of graduates in ICT majors from institutions inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman, out of the total graduates in the academic year 2020/2021 was 17.8 per cent.

Moreover, the report said that the institutional readiness index for digital transformation rose from 55 per cent in 2020 to 59 per cent in 2021, as the amount of data exchanged between institutions through the National Integration Platform was 200,339,365 in 2021, and the number of digital transactions through civil ID card reached 1,657,313 and digital transactions via the certified mobile SIM amounted to 5,749,448.

According to the Executive Programme for Digital Transformation, 75 per cent of government institutions have a government digital transformation committees and teams, 75 per cent of the basic government calcified services fall under the category of common services whose procedures intersect with other institutions, 40 per cent of digital government services were obtained through websites and 81 per cent of the government institutions' websites are available in both Arabic and English.

Internet use activities of individuals





South Al Sharqiyah municipal council discusses projects

SUR: The Municipal Council of the Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah on Monday discussed a set of tourism, housing and municipal projects in various wilayats of the governorate.

The 4th meeting, held under the chairmanship of Dr Yahya bin Badr al Maawali, Governor of South Al Sharqiyah, reviewed an initiative submitted by the housing and urban planning on urban development areas



Municipal Council of South Al Sharqiyah Discusses Tourism, Housing Projects

(city centre). It also discussed surrounding area of Bilad Sur interest to the governorate. means of developing the Castle, among other topics of

— ONA



RNO commander receives CTF-152 commander

MUSCAT: Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), received in his office on Monday Colonel Saif Abdulhadi al Hamlan, Commander of the Combined Task Force (CTF-152).

The two sides exchanged views on several naval matters and reviewed ways of enhancing them.

The meeting was attended by Commodore Tarik bin Issa al Raisi, Senior RNO Staff Officer and several senior RNO officers.

VISIT TO MSC

Colonel Al Hamlan visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC). The guest was received upon his arrival at the centre by the Deputy Head of the MSC.

The guest was briefed on the tactical roles and tasks carried out by the centre in search and rescue missions, as well as in the safety of the maritime environment. He also toured the centre's facilities and viewed its latest equipment and technologies. — ONA

Winners of mega drama fest announced

KABEER YOUSUF

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'Naam', meaning 'us' has been adjudicated the best drama followed by 'Mannadayalam' (Soil Imprint), which bagged the second best drama at the mega drama festival that featured 10 selected entries on stage on May 27 and 28 at the Al Falaj hotel.

Sreejith, who lived up to the subordinate man in Naam, won the best actor, while Shyna Dinesh of the same drama and Dhanya Manoj, who staged a solo called 'Aval' meaning 'Her' shared the best actress award.

Sreevidhya Raveendran from the 'Mannadayalam' and Salomi Chacko in the same drama shared the second best actress. Vinod G Ammaveedu, the septuagenarian in the 'Mannadayalam' play, is the best second actor.

Preveen Kumar P, who directed 'Naam' has been chosen the Best Director



while Ansar Ibrahim, who directed 'Mannadayalam' is the second best director.

"Hosting a drama fest of its kind in the post-pandemic era is a milestone in the art scenario not only in the country but the GCC as a whole. It was really a challenge to adjudicate the best and the second-best as we received many quality works from the artists around Oman," said Shahjahan Ottathayyil, one of the three judges. Manoj Narayanan and

Kabani Haridas, two acclaimed stage and film workers, comprise the trio.

Organised by Talent Space International and Theater

Oman, the drama fest hosted actors and actresses from across the country donning different garbs of characters of renowned playwrights from Kerala.

"This is the first time in the Sultanate of Oman that an expatriate community is conducting a drama festival of this nature which features ten popular dramas on one stage incorporating talented artists, both onstage and offstage, spread over two days," said Jayan and Bondhu, organisers of the event.

Other awards and accolades:

Best script (Jayapal Damodar, Nishadapavram),

best child artists (Adhrit Gautham, and Adhi Krishna, Pratheeksha).

Special jury award for actor (Dr Rajagopal Radhakrishnan, Pratheeksha), Pradeep Kallara*(Stambam Akkam).

Special jury award for actress (Mini Sunil, Nishadapavram), Silli Varughese (Stambam Akkam).

Mohammed K of 'Nishadapavram' was selected Promising Actor, while Ashritha Chandrasekhar from the play 'Chairs' was the Promising Actress.

Special jury award for the presentation was bagged by the play 'Pratheeksha'.

All Covid-19 travel curbs lifted

MUSCAT: Oman Air has said all remaining Covid-19 precautionary safety measures and procedures in place at airports across the Sultanate of Oman have been lifted as of May 22.

Arriving international travellers no longer need to register through the eMushrif portal or undertake a PCR test before or upon arrival, as previously required. Furthermore, authorities have removed all quarantine requirements as well as the requirement to download the Tarassud+ Track & Trace application prior to departing for Oman, the national airline said in a statement.

Guests departing Oman should ensure that they are aware of all pre-departure requirements and requirements during their flights.

Earlier, the Civil Aviation Authority made a similar announcement following the Supreme Committee statement on May 22.

سلطنة عُمان
وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات
Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

إعلان مناقصة Tender Notice

The Internal Tender Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology In AL Khuwair invites for the Following Project:

TENDER NO	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
32/2022/ MTCIT/HQ-9	CERT HPE SERVER MAINTENANCE	30-05-2022	06-06-2022	20-06-2022	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE TENDER BOARD IN SERVICE (EXCELLENT, FIRST AND SECOND CLASS)	(25/-) TWENTY FIVE OMANI RIAL NON-REFUNDABLE
31/2022/ MTCIT/HQ-8	CERT BACKUP SYSTEM SUPPORT RENEWAL	30-05-2022	06-06-2022	20-06-2022	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE TENDER BOARD (EXCELLENT, FIRST AND SECOND CLASS)	(25/-) TWENTY FIVE OMANI RIAL NON-REFUNDABLE
28/2022/ MTCIT/HQ-6	SUPPORT RENEWAL OF HP HARDWARE FOR G CLOUD	30-05-2022	06-06-2022	20-06-2022	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (ALL GRADES)	(25/-) TWENTY FIVE OMANI RIAL NON-REFUNDABLE

Interested Companies registered with The Secretariat General of Tender Board may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. Tenders should be submitted online on given website. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee issued by local bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of (1%) of the Tender value validity for (90) days, and addressed to (Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee). And hard copy of the same should be submitted manually to the Tenders Section, Tenders and Contracts Department (1st Floor), Ministry of Transport Building at Al Khuwair before 11:00 am on submission date.

CORRESPONDANCE:

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

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE

@mtcitoman

www.mtcit.gov.om

MOORE STEPHENS LLC

NOTICE ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF LIQUIDATION OF CIVIL CONTRACTING COMPANY LLC (AS APPEARED IN OFFICIAL GAZETTE NO 1443)

Moore Stephens LLC, announces the liquidation process of Civil Contracting Company LLC, bearing commercial registration number 1022407, in accordance with the decision taken by the Company's Members on 10 May 2022. The liquidators alone have the right to represent the Company under liquidation before third parties, and all parties are to confirm with the liquidator for all matters concerning the company's business at the following address:

**Office No.41,4th Floor, Building No.1022, Way No.1013;
Al Walaj Street, Al Qurum
P O Box 933, Ruwi, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24061000, Fax: 24061099**

By this announcement, the liquidator calls the company's creditors to submit their claims against the company, together with the supporting documents, to the above address within six months from the date of publishing this announcement for the first time, and any debtors should settle the company's rights with the liquidator on the address above.

Moore Stephens LLC
Official Liquidators of Civil Contracting Company LLC
(Under voluntary liquidation)

Announcement of the tender TND GSI BV /04/2022 for the supply of portacabin

GS INIMA (Barka) LLC have been awarded with the Engineering, Procurement and Construction of Barka V Desalination Project in Oman, for the Oman Power and Water Procurement Company SAOC.

Omani companies are invited to quote their most competitive price for **supply of one Portacabin size 3m x 2.4 m or nearest available ready size.**

Quotation will be sent to mohamed.farid@inima.com within **Thursday 2nd June 2022 1:00 PM.**

General Terms and Condition are applied.



Pacific nations reject China security pact

SUVA: Ten Pacific island nations rejected China's push for a wide-ranging regional security pact on Monday. Talks in Fiji between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and leaders from the small island nations failed to reach an agreement.

China is offering to radically ramp up its activities in the South Pacific, directly challenging the influence of the United States and its allies in the strategically vital region.

The proposed pact would see Beijing train Pacific island police, become involved in cybersecurity, expand political ties, conduct sensitive marine mapping and gain greater access to natural resources on land and in the water.

As an enticement, Beijing is offering millions of dollars in financial assistance, the prospect of a potentially lucrative China-Pacific islands free trade agreement and access to China's vast market of 1.4 billion people.

Behind the scenes, Pacific leaders have voiced deep



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Fijian Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama arrive for a joint press conference in Fiji's capital city Suva. — AFP

misgivings about the offer. In a recent letter to fellow leaders, David Panuelo, the President of the Federated States of Micronesia, warned the offer was "disingenuous" and would

"ensure influence in government" and "economic control" of key industries. A more soft-spoken public rebuke came after the talks, when leaders said they could not agree to Beijing's proposed

"Common Development Vision" due to a lack of regional consensus. "As always, we put consensus first", co-host and Fijian Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama said after the meeting, indicating that

broad accord would be needed before inking any "new regional agreements".

Papua New Guinea, Samoa and the Federated States of Micronesia were said to be among those concerned about the proposals, along with Taiwan-recognising Palau, which was not invited.

"We would rather deal with our own security issues with China", Papua New Guinea Foreign Minister Soroi Eoe said, indicating concern about any region-wide pact.

Chinese officials — working frantically to secure support during Wang's 10-day diplomatic blitz of the region — admitted their entreaties had fallen short.

"There has been general support from the 10 countries", Chinese ambassador to Fiji Qian Bo told reporters in Suva.

"But of course, there are some concerns on some specific issues and we have agreed that these two documents will be discussed afterwards until we have reached an agreement." Speaking from

Suva, Wang made the face-saving announcement that the 10 countries had agreed to memorandums of understanding on China's "Belt and Road" infrastructure initiative.

The two sides will "continue to have ongoing and in-depth discussions and consultations to shape more consensus on cooperation", he said, urging those worried by Beijing's intentions not to be "too anxious and don't be too nervous".

Many in the Pacific are uneasy at being thrust to the centre of a geopolitical tussle between China and US allies. During a joint appearance with Wang, Bainimarama hit out at those engaged in "geopolitical point-scoring".

It "means less than little to anyone whose community is slipping beneath the rising seas, whose job has been lost to a pandemic or whose family is impacted by the rapid rise in the price of commodities", he said. — AFP

Saudi Arabia names senior diplomat as first climate envoy

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia announced on Sunday it had named a senior diplomat as its first climate envoy.

The appointment of Adel al Jubeir (**pictured**), the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, to the envoy role was announced as part of a series of royal orders decreed by King Salman.

The announcement did not include details about the envoy's mandate. Jubeir, who previously



served as foreign minister and ambassador to Washington, will continue in his role at the foreign ministry. — AFP

Statuette of architect among ancient Egyptian artefacts

SAQQARA: Egypt on Monday unveiled a cache of sarcophagi and bronze statuettes — including one of pioneering architect Imhotep — at the Saqqara archaeological site south of Cairo. They were the latest in a series of discoveries made in the area.

Saqqara is a vast necropolis of the ancient Egyptian capital Memphis, a Unesco World Heritage site home to more than a dozen pyramids, animal burial sites and ancient Coptic



Christian monasteries. Among the 150 bronze statuettes unearthed in the latest findings is one of Imhotep, who "revolutionised architecture" in the ancient world, Mostafa Waziri, head of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, told reporters. — AFP

All bodies found after Nepal plane crash

KATHMANDU: Nepalese search and rescue teams have found the bodies of 21 passengers and crew at the crash site of a plane in the foothills of Nepal's Himalayas, one day after the aircraft went missing with 22 people on board, according to officials.

Deo Chandra Lal Karn, spokesperson of Nepal's Civil Aviation Authority, said on Monday that one person aboard the flight was still missing.

The wreckage of the plane was found at an altitude of almost 4,500 metres in Sanosware in Mustang district, a Himalayan district north-west of Kathmandu, more than 20 hours after it was first reported missing, according to the Ministry of Culture Tourism and Civil Aviation.

It took the rescue team several hours to reach the site due to bad weather, according to the police.

The Tara Airlines plane was making the quick flight to Jomsom from Pokhara, a popular tourist hub around 200 kilometres west of Kathmandu, with three crew members and 19 passengers on board when it lost contact with air traffic control at around 9:55 am on Sunday, according to a Nepal Police spokesperson.

There were four Indians, two Germans and 16 Nepali nationals on board, police said. Local media reported that a Nepali family had seven members on the flight who were going on pilgrimage to



Family members and relatives of passengers on board the Twin Otter aircraft operated by Tara Air, weep outside the airport in Pokhara. — AFP

Muktinath Temple, a temple in the Himalayas.

The missing aircraft, a Tara Air Twin Otter 9N-AET, was 43 years old, according to Flightradar24, a website which tracks flights in real time.

The flight from Pokhara to Jomsom usually only takes around 20 minutes and is considered one of the most accident-prone routes, even by Nepal's poor track record on air safety. At least 74 people have died on the route

in five plane crashes since 1997, according to the 'Nepali Times'.

Nepal has also seen several larger plane crashes. In 2018, a US-Bangla Airlines plane from Dhaka crash landed at the country's only international airport in Kathmandu, killing 49 people. Jomsom airport, a small airport in the middle of rugged mountains, is the gateway for tourists trekking to Upper Mustang and Manang.

Nepali authorities on Monday

The aircraft is scattered at several places all over the slope

said that they had formed a commission to investigate the crash.

Four Indians were on board, as well as two Germans, with the remainder Nepalis including a computer engineer, his wife and their two daughters who had just returned from the United States.

The four Indians were a divorced couple and their daughter and son, aged 15 and 22, going on a family holiday, Indian police official Uttam Sonawane said.

"There was a court order for (the father) to spend time with the family for 10 days every year, so they were taking a trip", Sonawane said. According to the Aviation Safety Network website, the aircraft was made by Canada's de Havilland and made its first flight more than 40 years ago.

Tara Air is a subsidiary of Yeti Airlines, a privately owned domestic carrier that services many remote destinations across Nepal.

It suffered its last fatal accident in 2016 on the same route when a plane with 23 on board crashed into a mountainside in Myagdi district.

— AFP/dpa

SYDNEY

Australia's centre-left secures majority

Australia's recently elected Labor Party will have a majority in parliament, the country's Electoral Commission projected on Monday, reducing Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's reliance on independents to pass his agenda. Official projections showed the centre-left government had won at least 76 seats in the 151-strong House of Representatives following the May 21 vote. The party is well ahead of the former conservative coalition, which had for decades blocked



substantive action on climate change, favouring Australia's vast fossil fuel industry instead. It had appeared that Albanese would need the support of 10 independents. — AFP

NEW DELHI

Indian rapper killed in gang-related violence

An Indian rapper with a major following both at home and among the diaspora in Canada and Britain was gunned down near his hometown in a gang-related killing. Indian police have said. Shubhdeep Singh Sidhu — known as Sidhu Moose Wala to his 11 million followers on YouTube and millions of fans — was driving his SUV in Punjab when he was attacked by suspects in two or three cars who fired about 30 bullets. The state police chief, said the



killing "looks like an inter-gang rivalry" and added that a Canada-based gangster known as Goldy Brar "has claimed the responsibility on behalf of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang". — AFP

JAKARTA

31 rescued after Indonesia ferry sinks

Thirty-one people have been rescued and 11 are still missing after a ferry ran out of fuel and sank in bad weather off the coast of Indonesia, an official said. Local tugboats and fishermen brought many of the survivors ashore after the 'KM Ladang Pertiwi' sank while sailing through the Makassar strait in South Sulawesi province on Thursday. "Until now 31 people have been rescued alive and we are still looking for 11 more people who are still missing", head of local



search and rescue team Djunaedi, who like some Indonesians goes by only one name, said. "They have returned home now and they are generally in good health", he added. — AFP



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TUESDAY | MAY 31 | 2022

7

In brief

ROME



RESCUE SHIP WITH MIGRANTS ABOARD DOCKS IN SICILY

After several days of waiting, the ‘Ocean Viking’ rescue vessel has been allowed to dock in Sicily with 294 migrants on board. The ship entered the port of Pozzallo on the southern tip of the Italian island on Monday. Some of the migrants, who were rescued in several operations, had already been on the ship for more than a week, as the vessel was waiting to be assigned a safe port. The private organisation SOS Mediterranee, which runs the ship, announced that the ‘Ocean Viking’ was allowed to enter Pozzallo. Thousands of migrants attempt the dangerous journey from the North African coast to the EU each year in search of a better life. — **dpa**

LONDON



COVID-HIT ARCHBISHOP TO MISS QUEEN’S SERVICE

The Archbishop of Canterbury said he would miss a national service of thanksgiving for Queen Elizabeth II’s Platinum Jubilee after testing positive for Covid. Justin Welby, who leads the worldwide Anglican communion, said he was “deeply saddened” at missing Friday’s service in St Paul’s Cathedral, central London. He was diagnosed with mild pneumonia on Thursday and developed coronavirus symptoms over the weekend and has cancelled all engagements this week. “However, I will be praying for the queen and giving thanks for her extraordinary 70 years of service to us all”, the archbishop said. — **AFP**

N'DJAMENA



AROUND 100 DEAD IN CLASHES BETWEEN CHAD GOLD MINERS

Around 100 people have died in clashes between gold miners in northern Chad, Defence Minister General Daoud Yaya Brahim said. Violence broke out on May 23 at Kouri Bougoudi near the Libyan border, sparked by a “mundane dispute between two people which degenerated”, he said, adding that the toll was “around 100 dead and at least 40 wounded.” The clashes occurred in the Tibesti Mountains, a rugged and lawless region in the central Sahara some 1,000 kilometres from the capital N’Djamena. — **AFP**

France to boost arms supplies to Ukraine: FM

BUCHA: France’s new Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna said on a visit to Kyiv on Monday that Paris is ready to boost military aid to Ukraine to help it counter Russia’s war. “France is not at war with Russia”, but it will “continue to reinforce arms deliveries”, Colonna said at a news conference with her Ukrainian counterpart Dmytro Kuleba.

She said the arms will arrive “in the coming weeks.” Colonna defended French President Emmanuel Macron, who has come under fire in Ukraine and some Western countries for holding frequent phone calls with Kremlin chief Vladimir Putin.

“The conversations between the President of the Republic and Vladimir Putin are direct and frank”, she said.

She added that “it does not seem to be the hour for negotiations but, as President Zelensky said, the day for dialogue will have to come.

“We are at Ukraine’s side to facilitate this if it wishes”, she said.

The pair also discussed Ukraine’s closer integration with the European Union and Colonna said France was “in favour of a rapprochement with Ukraine and even an accelerated one. It is a legitimate request”, she said.

Kyiv has expressed frustration at some EU countries for not wanting to fast-forward its member status in the face of Moscow’s war. “I asked my French colleague not only to support



Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba and French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna attend a ceremony at the memorial wall to commemorate Ukrainian servicemen killed during the Russian occupation in Kyiv. — **AFP**

the decision to grant Ukraine EU candidate status, but also to convince those who still doubt the expediency of this step”, Ukraine’s Kuleba said.

Colonna, who took office this month, also visited the town of Bucha, where Russian forces allegedly killed hundreds of civilians. “This should never have happened. It must never happen again”, Colonna told reporters after visiting an Orthodox church in Bucha. She said France stood with victims of alleged Russian

atrocities and that her country would “do everything in its power to restore peace”. Colonna said France had been “the first one to respond” by dispatching gendarmes to Bucha to probe killings alongside Ukrainian investigators.

She said she hoped that work would be completed as quickly as possible, “so that families can see their loved ones laid to rest in proper graves”.

Colonna is the highest-ranking French official to visit Ukraine

since the beginning of the Russian war on February 24. She was also to hold talks with President Volodymyr Zelensky to discuss Moscow’s blockade of Ukraine’s ports and the impact on global food security.

Meanwhile, EU leaders were hoping on Monday to persuade Prime Minister Viktor Orban to back a watered-down oil embargo against Russia after a month of haggling over a blocked sanctions package.

— **AFP**

Eurovision winners auction trophy for army

KYIV: Ukraine’s Kalush Orchestra, which won the Eurovision this year, has auctioned its trophy for a \$900,000 donation to a foundation that helps the Ukrainian army.

The trophy — a large crystal microphone with the song contest’s logo — was put up for auction on Facebook.

The bidding ended on Saturday night and was won by WhiteBIT, a Ukrainian bitcoin company.

“You guys are amazing!” Kalush Orchestra wrote on Facebook late on Sunday announcing the winner. “Special thanks to the WhiteBIT team who bought the trophy for \$900,000 and are now the rightful owners.”

The band said that funds raised in auction, which could be entered using cryptocurrencies, will be donated to the Prytula Foundation, which helps the Ukrainian army.

The group Kalush Orchestra won the European contest on May 14 with its song “Stefania” mixing hip-hop and traditional music.

— **AFP**

Holidaymakers face delays as airports struggle with demand

LONDON: Airline passengers faced cancelled flights and long queues at Britain’s airports on Monday as millions of people embarked on half-term getaways or trips to coincide with the Platinum Jubilee weekend. Airports are struggling to cope with the demand for travel amid staff shortages.

Meanwhile, easyJet and Tui have cancelled a number of flights this week in an attempt to boost reliability.

Manchester Airport has been one of the worst affected, with passengers reporting four-hour queues on Monday.

Chris Price, a battlefield guide, was travelling with his family to the Dominican Republic.

He told the PA news agency: “Tui’s lack of communication with passengers is shocking. Nobody (was) there to assist or help if needed, and now (the) flight (is) delayed.

“It spoils an exciting time, especially for children... my son is pulling his hair out. “(The) sad part is it’s entirely avoidable if Tui communicated.” Tui told passengers on social media it is “doing everything to minimise disruption to our flying schedule”, adding that “the majority of our flights are operating with minimal disruption.”

Manchester Airport said in a statement that airlines and their ground handlers are experiencing “challenges” which is “leading to delays at check-in and baggage reclaim for some passengers.”

It added: “This is not the experience we want passengers to



Airlines and their ground handlers are experiencing ‘challenges’ which is ‘leading to delays at check-in and baggage reclaim for some passengers’

have at Manchester Airport and we are sorry to hear customers have faced disruption.”

Passengers departing on flights from Bristol Airport were forced to wait outside in a long line which reached a car park.

Road transport firm MET Executive Travel, which posted a video of the queue on social

media, wrote: “Here are the queues of passengers trying to get into the airport this morning stretching out as far as the drop off zone, worst we’ve ever seen.”

In a statement, Bristol Airport said: “We appreciate the frustration experienced by customers early this morning and apologise for the queues at security, which reached 90 minutes for a short period.

“Over 80 per cent of our customers experience less than a 20-minute security queue; only during peak times we extend beyond this.”

Passengers also reported long queues at Heathrow and Birmingham airports.

The situation could worsen in the coming days with people jetting off once the four-day bank holiday period begins on Thursday. — **dpa**

Irish court finds ex-soldier guilty

DUBLIN: Three judges at the Special Criminal Court in Dublin on Monday found former soldier Lisa Smith guilty of joining the so-called IS group in Syria. Smith, 40, wept in the dock as judge Tony Hunt read the panel’s decision, which was delivered after a nine-week trial.

She pleaded not guilty to membership of an unlawful fighter group between October 28, 2015 and December 1, 2019.

Judge Hunt said the prosecution had established beyond reasonable doubt that she travelled to Syria “with her eyes open” and pledged allegiance to the group, led by Abu Bakr al Baghdadi.

She was acquitted of a separate charge of financing terrorism by sending \$900 to aid medical treatment for a Syrian man in Turkey.

Hunt said there was reasonable doubt that she intended the money to be used for humanitarian purposes rather than to fund terrorism.

He granted her bail until a sentencing hearing on July 11.

During the trial, which began in January, prosecutors detailed how Smith, who was a member of the Irish Defence Forces from 2001 to 2011, travelled to IS controlled territory in 2015.

The court was told that she bought a one-way ticket from Dublin to Turkey, crossing the border into Syria and living in Raqqa, the capital of the IS’s self-styled caliphate.

At the time, the headline fighters ruled over vast swathes of Syria and Iraq, attracting

thousands of foreign fighters to their cause before the group’s territorial defeat in the region.

After failing to convince her husband to join her, Smith divorced him in 2016 and married a UK national involved in the group’s armed patrols. As IS lost ground to a US-led coalition on the battlefield and towns and cities under its sway fell, Smith was forced to flee Raqqa and then Baghouz, their last remaining stronghold, before returning to Ireland.

She was arrested on arrival at Dublin airport on December 1, 2019 with her young daughter. Defence lawyers argued that Smith’s presence in IS territory did not make her a de facto member of the extremist group. They have said it could only be argued “at a stretch” that she provided some sort of assistance to the group because she had kept a home for her husband. — **AFP**



Lisa Smith

Giving a new meaning to autism



Dr Nisma Haris

The writer is content creator and wellness adviser

Autism is a term that we hear now quite often, with a greater number of kids being diagnosed these days with this condition.

Also known as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), it is a neuro developmental disability in which one has issues with communication and social behaviour. The rising numbers of autism cannot be just attributed to increasing cases but the awareness that has been created around leading to more diagnoses and better outcomes for those who are being affected with ASD.

Hence, rather than focusing on the limitations that autism can cause why not embark on the walkaways set by the autistic people

who are making an enormous difference and inspiring the autistic kids as well as their guardians.

They have not only contributed significantly to redefining autism but also had never let autism become any hurdle to their goals.

Mentioning a few, Daniel M Jones from Great Britain, is quite a popular figure on Instagram (@theaspieworld) who being an author and content creator has immense and interesting content about uplifting and encouraging autistic kids and people around.

A pastry chef Jeremiah Josey (@jercookingadventure), at 23 is also an author, model, and motivational speaker. His book 'Here's What

AUTISTIC CHILDREN
AND PEOPLE ARE RIDICULED
OR SOMETIMES BULLIED
FOR DOING
THINGS DIFFERENTLY

I Want You To Know' gives an insight into his own experiences as an autistic.

What's more? Chris Bonnello, is an award-winning writer and author of the Underdog novel series and a special education tutor for autistic children while himself being on the spectrum. Eileen

lamb, too; herself being autistic and mother to an autistic child couldn't stop her from becoming a published author and a profound autism advocate.

She shares her views on what goes on in the everyday life of an autistic parent and a child and how that can be balanced artfully on her Instagram profile and other platforms.

Such are the people who had pulled out all the stops on their way and had given a new meaning to autism; sharing their journey and experiences.

While inspiring and educating many on the way they made it distinct and clear that ASD

never became an obstacle to their accomplishments.

By and large what happens is, that those autistic children and people are ridiculed or sometimes bullied for doing things differently. However, it is all about perception. It's just that people with ASD have an entirely different approach towards learning, responding, or interacting.

They might find it difficult to learn things that are easy for others. On the contrary, they can be exceptionally good at other skills.

It's all about intervening early and in the right ways and no one can stop autistic people from attaining their full potential.

Grassroots approach in anti-poaching drive

ADRIEN MAROTTE

A whistle blows. The car stops, and the driver is politely asked to turn off the engine and get out. A team from Gabon's anti-poaching brigade then searches the vehicle from top to bottom, looking in every cranny for guns or game. Nothing is found, and the driver is allowed to move on. The unit's task is to help guard Gabon's rich biodiversity.

Forests cover 88 per cent of the surface of this small central African nation, providing a haven — and a tourism magnet — for species ranging from tropical hardwoods and plants to panthers, elephants and chimps.

The team was on patrol close to a small village called Lastourville, 500 kilometres southeast of the capital Libreville.

The area has been badly hit by poaching, and tracks dug into the forest floor by logging vehicles are also used by illegal hunters to enter and shoot game.

"There's no standard profile of a poacher. Everyone poaches — from the villager who is looking for something to eat to some big guy in the city who has an international network," the brigade's commander, Jerry Ibala Mayombo, said.

The unarmed unit sees its role as "educating, awareness-building and, as a last resort, punishing," he said. The heaviest sentences are for ivory smuggling, which can carry a 10-year jail term.

The two-year-old service was created by a partnership between Gabon's ministry for water and forests, a Belgian NGO called Conservation Justice and a Swiss-Gabonese sustainable forestry firm, Precious Woods CEB.

"At the start, the overall feeling towards us was mistrust. But that's not the case today, because we have got the message across to people about what we do," said Ibala Mayombo.

"We sometimes face violent poachers who threaten us, sometimes with their guns," he said. The team can be given a police escort when necessary. Last year, the unit seized 26 weapons, several dozen items of game and arrested eight individuals for ivory smuggling.

"The trend is downward," said Ibala Mayombo.

Gabon, an oil-rich former French colony, is putting itself forward as a major advocate for conservation in central Africa, where wildlife has been battered by wars, habitat destruction and the bushmeat trade. In 2002, Gabon set up a network of 13 national parks covering 11 per cent of its territory.

In 2017, it created 20 marine sanctuaries covering 53,000 square kilometres — the biggest ocean haven in Africa, and equivalent to more than a quarter of its territorial waters. These initiatives have helped to place Gabon firmly on the map for lucrative eco-tourism. —AFP

Lavish projects and meager lives: The two faces of a ruined Sri Lanka

MUJIB MASHAL & SKANDHA GUNASEKARA

The international airport, built a decade ago in the name of Sri Lanka's ruling Rajapaksa family, is devoid of passenger flights, its staff lingering idly in the cafe.

The cricket stadium, also constructed on the family's orders, has had only a few international matches and is so remote that arriving teams face the risk of wildlife attacks.

And then there is the port, the biggest of all the monuments to the Rajapaksas, a white elephant visited almost as much by actual elephants as by cargo ships before it was handed over to China in the face of impossible debt.

As Sri Lanka grapples with its worst-ever economic crisis, with people waiting hours for fuel and cutting back on food, nowhere is the reckless spending that helped wreck the country more visible than in Hambantota, the Rajapaksa family's home district in the south.

This enormous waste — more than \$1 billion spent on the port, \$250 million on the airport, nearly \$200 million on underused roads and bridges, and millions more (figures vary) on the cricket stadium — made Hambantota a throne to the vanity of a political dynasty that increasingly ran the country as a family business.

The frenzy of building on borrowed

money, with little hope of immediate return on the investment, was in essence the payoff for the family's triumphant declaration of victory in 2009 after a three-decade-long civil war against the Tamil Tigers, an insurgency that had taken up the cause of discrimination against the ethnic Tamil minority.

With Mahinda Rajapaksa, the president, then at the peak of his powers, he did what many nationalist strongmen do: erect tributes to himself. Cash wasn't a problem at the time, as Sri Lanka was finding international goodwill after ending the war and China was emerging as a willing lender around the globe.

That's now all gone. Sri Lanka is an international basket case whose foreign reserves — which once stood at more than \$6 billion under the Rajapaksas — have dwindled to almost nothing.

The collapse is partly a result of the loss of tourism during the pandemic, a problem made worse as war has kept away many of the Russians and Ukrainians who used to visit in large numbers. But the family's economic mismanagement and denial of festering problems have also contributed mightily.

With food prices rising, electricity often cut and lifesaving medicines scarce, protesters have pushed Rajapaksa, 76, out of his latest position — prime minister — and are demanding that his brother Gotabaya,

72, give up the presidency.

This month, after Mahinda Rajapaksa's supporters attacked peaceful protesters in the capital, Colombo, angry residents in Hambantota went after the symbols of grandiosity and privilege that dot the district. Local citizens who might once have supported the Rajapaksas for their ardent Buddhist Sinhalese nationalism now swarmed the family's mansions, pelting them with stones and smashing windows. They destroyed monuments built in the Rajapaksas' honour and set ablaze the homes of supportive lawmakers accused of amassing wealth and hoarding fuel as the nation suffered.

Just outside the private residence of Rajapaksa, the Carlton House, they tied ropes to a gold-coloured statue of his father, D A Rajapaksa. When they couldn't drag it down, they dug under its feet until it collapsed. And around the corner from the family's sprawling ancestral estate, they torched the museum memorialising the resting place of the patriarch and his wife.

"I am very sad about it," said Kapila Gamage, a 42-year-old mechanic and supporter of the Rajapaksas. "Whatever the politics, they shouldn't have done this to their parents' resting place."

As he spoke down the road from the Rajapaksa estate, Gamage was waiting for the electricity to come back on so he could complete a welding job. Such struggles are the one thing that unites supporters and opponents of the Rajapaksas amid the economic crisis.

Padma Wijeyawickrama, 53, has been making and selling curd for more than 20 years in Hambantota. While her husband is out grazing their 15 cows, the mother of two stacks the clay pots of curd at her feet on her scooter and drives to the town market to sell them.

Before the economy crashed, she would sell 30 to 40 pots a day. That number has since dropped to about 20, as people have saved for other necessities. Most days in recent weeks, she has come back with half of her stack of 15 unsold.

"This is the hardest time we have faced," she said.

— New York Times



A line for gas at a station near the residence of Mahinda Rajapaksa, the former prime minister of Sri Lanka, in the town of Tangalle.

Say no to smoking



Lakshmi Kothaneth @lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

The forthcoming days have many dedicated days to various causes in the world.

For instance May 31 is the ‘World No Tobacco Day’ that was declared in 1987 by the World Health Organization because of the tobacco epidemic and the preventable death and the diseases it can cause.

World No Tobacco Day is an opportunity,

WHO says to raise awareness on the harmful and deadly effects of tobacco use and second-hand smoke exposure as well as to discourage the use of tobacco in any form.

The Observer has a special podcast to mark this day with Dr Rothman P T, pulmonologist, who says there is so much to talk about it because there are various aspects that need to be highlighted.

What was fascinating was to learn about third-hand smoke exposure.

Third-hand smoke exposure is when a person who has been sitting with you smokes and your clothes carry the smell.

It doesn’t end there what if you are in a hotel room that was previously used by a smoker? It does not matter how long, Dr Rothman explained the content remains and begin to react with products that are then and now you are there to inhale it.

Have always been aware of the second hand smoke exposure. We make sure children are not there in the same space, but the child can come there after a while so there is still a danger of third-hand exposure.

Probably we are far better today compared to the 70s, 80s and 90s. At least there have been so many developments and regulations.

There are regulations that prohibits people from smoking indoors. So if the heat has not deterred people from smoking (even under harsh conditions), what would?

Spoke to a smoker and he said let us have at least this luxury. Rich or poor a person can have a smoke.

So what is it that keeps them wanting more.

The culprit is Dopamine.

Dr Rothman explained the connection of it all with the brain. He said Dopamine is the one that urges the smoker to take more because the nicotine in the cigarettes.

It makes the brain happy. In other words the brain gets addicted to the dopamine released during the smoke.

Soon it becomes a habit.

Imagine there was a time when there were smokers in cinema theatres and in flights.

I remember as a child telling a co-passenger, excuse me, my mother is allergic to smoke.

There are many ways to overcome this and release the dopamine.

Just read about it that if there is a low deficiency of dopamine ensuring good enough sleep, listening to music, getting sunshine and meditating could help.

But if you need to overcome nicotine dependency then a consultation with a doctor is the best solution and they do have solutions.

Why shouldn’t we smoke?

There are at least 16 diseases linked to it and that include using smokeless tobacco.

Most importantly there is someone else who needs protection- our planet.

The theme this year’s World No Tobacco Day is ‘Protect our Environment.’

Don’t forget to tune in to Oman Observer Podcast to find out more.

WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY IS AN OPPORTUNITY, WHO SAYS TO RAISE AWARENESS ON THE HARMFUL AND DEADLY EFFECTS OF TOBACCO USE AND SECOND-HAND SMOKE EXPOSURE AS WELL AS TO DISCOURAGE THE USE OF TOBACCO IN ANY FORM



Queen Elizabeth II’s Platinum Jubilee

Students attend a performance by members of Nottinghamshire Band of the Royal Engineers at a boarding school in Jakarta on Monday, to celebrate Britain’s Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee which marks her 70th year on the throne. – AFP

Why South America’s breadbasket isn’t the answer to global wheat crisis

MAURICIO RABUFFETTI

As the world faces a growing food crisis provoked by Russia’s war on Ukraine, many have looked to South America’s “breadbasket” — major wheat producers Brazil and Argentina, along with Uruguay and Paraguay — as a possible solution. But experts and analysts say a variety of factors — climate, cost, domestic needs — make such a solution highly unlikely.

Russia and Ukraine alone produce 30 per cent of the world’s wheat supply.

Moscow’s military offensive in Ukraine and subsequent sanctions on Russia have disrupted supplies of fertiliser, wheat and other commodities from both countries, pushing up prices for food and fuel, especially in developing nations. A suspension of India’s exports have further exacerbated the problem.

Agricultural giant Brazil is due to increase its wheat crop coverage by between three and 11 per cent this year, according to Embrapa Wheat, a state-run research unit affiliated with the Brazilian agriculture ministry.

Record prices, surging demand and the “expectation of favourable weather, strengthen the projection of an increase in the planted area” from 2.7 million hectares in 2021 (6.7 million acres) to a little over three million in 2022, said Embrapa Wheat.

But the country of 213 million people is already unable to meet domestic demand — estimated at 12.7 million tonnes a year, and rising.

Internal logistical and transport costs have pushed many farmers, particularly

AGRICULTURAL GIANT BRAZIL IS DUE TO INCREASE ITS WHEAT CROP COVERAGE BY BETWEEN THREE AND 11 PER CENT THIS YEAR, ACCORDING TO EMBRAPA WHEAT, A STATE-RUN RESEARCH UNIT AFFILIATED WITH THE BRAZILIAN AGRICULTURE MINISTRY

in the south, to favour exporting, thus ramping up the need to import.

Brazil is actually the world’s eighth largest importer of wheat, most of which (87 per cent) comes from Argentina.

Argentina, home to 45 million people, is also traditionally a major wheat producer — but current climatic conditions are unfavourable, meaning it is unlikely to help fill the global void.

“We expect about an eight per cent drop in the land area planted with wheat,” Tomas Rodriguez Zurro, an analyst at the Rosario grains exchange, said.

That amounts to a drop from 6.8 million to 6.3 million hectares, due mostly to a drought affecting the country, Rodriguez Zurro explained.

“In general, we plant wheat to then

plant soybean, but the water reserves are very low, so the producers don’t want to risk planting wheat in case it reduces the humidity reserves even more” for subsequent plantings, said Rodriguez Zurro.

On top of that, farmers say they will use less fertiliser due to soaring prices — another factor limiting production, the analyst said. Russia is the world’s largest exporter of fertilisers with more than 12 per cent of the global market, but its sales have been virtually paralysed by sanctions.

Both Paraguay, a country of 7.5 million, and Uruguay (population: 3.5 million) enjoy good wheat yields — but they have a much smaller global impact and neither expects to increase production.

“Wheat production is expensive, very expensive,” said a source at Uruguay’s agriculture ministry.

Farmers there expect a yield “similar to last year, or slightly higher,” the source said — a total that should satisfy domestic demand and allow exports to remain at roughly one million tons a year.

In Paraguay, production should also remain stable, according to Hector Cristaldo, president of Paraguay’s farmers’ union, but he added: “Our volumes are not significant on the world stage.”

Paraguay consumes 700,000 tons and exports as much again, almost exclusively to Brazil.

In mid-May, when India banned exports, wheat reached a record price of 438.25 euros (\$456.68) per ton in European trading.

—AFP



South America’s breadbasket is a major wheat-producing region, but it may not be the solution to the global crisis. – AFP



Debutants Gujarat claim IPL crown

PANDYA STARS WITH BAT AND BALL IN FINAL

AHMEDABAD: Skipper Hardik Pandya on Sunday said coming generations will talk about Gujarat Titans' IPL triumph in their debut season after they hammered Rajasthan Royals in front of almost 105,000 home fans.

Pandya returned figures of 3-17 to restrict Rajasthan to 130 for nine in the lop-sided final at the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad.

The captain then made 34 with the bat before Shubman Gill (45) and David Miller (32) steered the team home in 18.1 overs to win by seven wickets and bring the house down at the 132,000 capacity stadium.

It was a fairytale finish for a team that entered the world's richest domestic cricket tournament alongside Lucknow Super Giants in the expanded 10-team IPL this year.

"This title is going to be a special one because we talked about creating a legacy", said Pandya, who has won five IPL titles including four with Mumbai Indians. "The coming generations will talk about it."

Gujarat defied critics, who slammed their squad after the February auction, to become the first team to enter the play-offs and then storm into the final.

Pandya set up victory with his key wickets including Jos Buttler's prized scalp for 39 after Rajasthan, led by Sanju Samson, elected to bat first.

Buttler, who hit an unbeaten 106 in Rajasthan's win in the



SCOREBOARD	
Rajasthan Royals	
Y Jaiswal c Kishore b Dayal	22
J Buttler c Saha b Pandya	39
S Samson c Kishore b Pandya	14
D Padikkal c Shami b Rashid	2
S Hetmyer c and b Pandya	11
R Ashwin c Miller b Kishore	6
R Parag b Shami	15
T Boult c Tewatia b Kishore	11
O McCoy run out	8
P Krishna not out	0
Extras: (lb2)	2
Total (9 wickets, 20 overs)	130
Fall of wickets: 1-31, 2-60, 3-79, 4-79, 5-94, 6-98, 7-112, 8-130, 9-130	
Bowling: Shami 4-0-33-1, Dayal 3-0-18-1, Ferguson 3-0-22-0, Rashid 4-0-18-1, Pandya 4-0-17-3, Sai Kishore 2-0-20-2	
Gujarat Titans (target 131)	
W Saha b Krishna	5
S Gill not out	45
M Wade c Parag b Boult	8
H Pandya c Jaiswal b Chahal	34
D Miller not out	32
Extras: (lb1, w8)	9
Total (3 wickets, 18.1 overs)	133
Fall of wickets: 1-9, 2-23, 3-86	
Bowling: Boult 4-1-14-1, Krishna 4-0-40-1, Chahal 4-0-20-1, McCoy 3-1-0-26-0, Ashwin 3-0-32-0	

second qualifier, finished this season as the leading batsman with 863 runs and his wicket raised the roof at a stadium bigger than the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Buttler, who equalled Virat Kohli's record of four centuries in one IPL season, was named player of the tournament.

"Exceeded all my expectations apart from today — the trophy we really wanted", said Buttler who got the orange cap.

"Disappointed with that. Big congratulations to Hardik and team. Deserving champions."

Afghanistan's Rashid Khan returned impressive figures of

1-18 from his four overs of leg-spin to keep down the opposition scoring.

SAVED THE BEST FOR THE BEST

Pandya, who sent back his opposite number Samson for 14, kept up the pressure and got the big-hitting Shimron Hetmyer out for 11 with a caught and bowled.

"Wanted to show at the right time what I've worked hard for", Pandya said after being named man of the match. "Today was the day from the bowling point of view I saved the best for the best."

Fast bowlers Mohammed

Shami and Yash Dayal, who got opener Yashasvi Jaiswal for 22, worked up good pace to keep Rajasthan on the backfoot from the start.

In reply, Gujarat lost Wriddhiman Saha for five and Matthew Wade for eight before Gill and Pandya put the chase back on track.

The pair put on 63 runs for the third wicket to put the pressure back on the bowling side as Pandya smashed Ravichandran Ashwin for a four and six in the 12th over.

Yuzvendra Chahal got Pandya out with his leg spin to overtake Wanindu Hasaranga of Royal Challengers Bangalore as the leading wicket-taker of the tournament and finished with 27 scalps.

But Gill, who was dropped on nought by Chahal, stood firm to put on an unbeaten 47-run stand with left-handed South African batsman Miller, who made 32 off 19.

Gill's 45 came from 43 balls and ended with a six that secured the victory. The two batsmen hugged and, as the fireworks erupted, the Gujarat players came running on to the pitch to celebrate.

Rajasthan go back dejected after their first final appearance since they won the inaugural edition in 2008 under late Australian hero Shane Warne. The tournament threw up many surprises including five-time winners Mumbai, led by India captain Rohit Sharma, ending bottom of the table and last year's winners Chennai finishing ninth. — AFP



Record crowd of almost 105,000 watches final

AHMEDABAD: The Indian Premier League final between Gujarat Titans and Rajasthan Royals in Ahmedabad set a new record attendance for a cricket match, attracting a crowd of 104,859, organisers said on Sunday.

The 132,000-seater Narendra Modi Stadium — the biggest cricket ground in the world — was nearly full for the season finale of the popular Twenty20 tournament.

The largest crowd in one-day matches was previously listed as 100,000 in Kolkata in the 1990s and early 2000 but the highest official figure for a limited-overs match was the 87,812 people at the 1992 50-over World Cup final between Pakistan and England in Melbourne.

The Ahmedabad stadium has been working empty or at half capacity during the coronavirus pandemic after it opened in 2020 to a packed mega rally of former US president Donald Trump.

But the fans poured in for the title clash to back home team Gujarat, led by star India all-rounder Hardik Pandya.

India's cricket board allowed 100 per cent seating for the four play-offs this season after stadiums worked at half capacity in the IPL league phase due to Covid restrictions. — AFP

Real Madrid celebrate 14th European Cup

MADRID: Real Madrid captain Marcelo bid a tearful farewell as the players celebrated winning a 14th European Cup at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Real Madrid defeated Liverpool 1-0 at the Stade de France on Saturday night, with Vinicius Junior scoring the winning goal to secure the club their fifth Champions League title in the last nine seasons.

To celebrate the success, the players took the trophy on an open-top bus tour around Madrid on Sunday, which included stops at the Almudena Cathedral, regional government headquarters, City Hall, Plaza Cibeles and finally the Santiago Bernabeu.

Marcelo led the celebrations and broke into tears as he was presented to the crowd inside the stadium. The Brazilian has been at Real Madrid since 2007 and leaves this summer after collecting his fifth Champions League trophy.

"It is a wonderful moment in my life, I close a cycle here, at the best club in the world," Marcelo said in a speech to the fans. "Today is not a day of sadness, it is a day of joy because we have won again, the best competition in the world."

Real Madrid president Florentino Perez had earlier told the team to turn their attention to winning a 15th European Cup next season.



Real Madrid players pose with their trophy during the club's celebration of their 14th European Cup at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid. — AFP

"Real Madrid has made history again and here is our 14th European Cup and 35th La Liga trophy," Perez said at the regional government headquarters.

"This European Cup, won against a legendary club like Liverpool, will be remembered as one of the greatest in the history of the Champions League.

"This club's legend grows bigger and bigger. We have beaten

four of the best teams in Europe by fighting and always believing until the end.

"It has been a wonderful season and it has been achieved in one of the most beautiful and difficult times in our history. Five Champions Leagues in eight years is something very difficult for football fans to forget from all over the world. Madrid is eternal. And now, let's go for the 15th."

'HAVEN'T SLEPT MUCH'

Perez also praised Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti, who this season has become the first coach to win four European Cups and the first to win all five major European leagues. "He symbolises what Real Madrid is," said Perez.

Dressed in black suits, white shirts and black ties, the Real Madrid players paraded the Champions League and La

Liga trophies at each location, while also signing shirts, giving autographs and posing for photos with their adoring fans.

On top of the bus, the players put on Real Madrid shirts that had the number 14 and 'champions' written on the back. "I haven't slept much, I had too much adrenaline to be able to sleep," said Thibaut Courtois, Real Madrid's goalkeeper who was named man of the match in the final. "I still couldn't believe it, it's an incredible feeling. For me it's an honour to play for Real Madrid and I hope I can help the team win more."

Thousands of fans gathered at Plaza Cibeles, the central square at the end of Gran Via, where the club traditionally celebrates its biggest successes around the statue of the goddess Cybele.

Marcelo tied a Real Madrid scarf around the statue's crown, draped a flag around its neck and kissed its cheek, before hoisting the Champions League trophy to huge cheers. Marcelo was wearing five large gold rings on his fingers, one for each of his Champions League victories. The players took it turns to sing songs to the crowd while Eden Hazard made a pledge for next season. "It's been three years of injuries and other things but next season I will do everything for you," Hazard told the supporters. — AFP

Champions League 2021 - 2022 Top goal scorers*	goals
Karim Benzema (Real Madrid)	15
Robert Lewandowski (Bayern Munich)	13
Sebastien Haller (Ajax)	11
Mohamed Salah (Liverpool)	8
Riyad Mahrez (Manchester City)	7
Christopher Nkunku (RB Leipzig)	7
Arnaut Danjuma (Villarreal)	6
Cristiano Ronaldo (Manchester United)	6
Kylian Mbappe (Paris SG)	6
Darwin Nunez (Benfica)	6
Leroy Sane (Bayern Munich)	6
Sadio Mane (Liverpool)	5
Lionel Messi (Paris SG)	5
Roberto Firmino (Liverpool)	5
Rodrygo (Real Madrid)	5
Luis Diaz (Liverpool)	4
Gabriel Jesus (Manchester City)	4
Pedro Goncalves (Sporting Portugal)	4
Antoine Griezmann (Atletico Madrid)	4
Thomas Muller (Bayern Munich)	4
Vinicius Junior (Real Madrid)	4
Timo Werner (Chelsea)	4

Source: UEFA *final standings AFP



BCC beat Ashes to win BCL title

MUSCAT: An utterly dominant BCC beat Ashes by five wickets to win the BCL second edition (morning league) title on Saturday.

BCC won the toss and sent Ashes to bat in the final played under floodlights at Oman International Cricket Turf ground in Al Amerat.

BCC's Sarath Kumar (2-19) bowling with his fiery pace ran through Ashes top order before another pacer Mohammed Shoaib (2-18) castled out middle and lower order. Only Alif Juval (52 from 42 balls) from Ashes could resist the high quality bowling attack to some extent to take his side to 101 which ended up not being enough for BCC's power packed batting line-up.

Needing 102, BCC lost their opener Thameem very early in chase but Ajay fired another shot (38 of 34 balls) and Mohammed Kabeer (14 not out of 15 balls) came together for a second wicket partnership to take their side to glory. The target was chased comfortably with 2 overs to spare. Ajay was adjudged as the man of the final.

Ajay from BCC was also declared man of the tournament for his brilliant batting performance. Shahil Mohammed of Sabco was named best bowler whereas Rehmat Ali from UGB Barka was awarded with best fielder of the tournament.

Mohammad Riaz, the owner of Mohammed Riaz & Partners LLC, was chief guest for the grand finale of BCL-2, where the winners and runners-up trophies were handed by him to the respective captains.

Guests Ahmed Shariff (Manager Sarooj Water), Azra Aleem, Mohammad Aleem Anis, Murad Ali, Muzaffer Shiralkar and Nasir congratulated all the players. The BCL committee thanked their sponsors, organisers, all of their participating teams, support staff and volunteers for making the event successful with their efforts.

BRIEF SCORES: Ashes 101-7 in 16 overs (Alif Juval 52, Ragesh Kumar 19; Sarath Kumar 2-19, Mohammed Shoaib 2-18) lost to BCC 103-5 in 14 overs (Ajay 37, Mohammed Kabeer 14; Rahul Prakash 2-35 and Manoj Kumar 2-20 by five wickets.

France blames 'massive' ticket fraud for CL fiasco

PARIS: France on Monday blamed massive ticket fraud for the chaotic scenes that marred the Champions League final between Liverpool and Real Madrid that raised questions over the capacity of Paris to host the 2024 Olympics.

The French government has faced a barrage of criticism from press and politicians in Britain over police handling of the match on Saturday, which saw thousands of Liverpool fans with tickets struggling to enter.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's spokesman told reporters in London many Liverpool fans were in the French capital "in good time. We're hugely disappointed by how they were treated," the spokesman added. "Fans deserve to know what happened."

But after a crisis meeting at the sports ministry, French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin defiantly insisted that ticket scams and the behaviour of Liverpool



French Sports, Olympic and Paralympic Games Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera speaks after a meeting in Paris.

fans was to blame.

"What has been confirmed is a massive, industrial-scale and organised fraud in fake tickets... this was the root cause of the delay to the match," Darmanin said, also charging that Liverpool fans had been less well-organised than their Spanish counterparts.

Sports Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera said French authorities were "extremely sorry" for the approximately 2,700 fans with

tickets that were unable to enter the Stade de France because of the crowd control problems and suggested they receive compensation.

The scenes tarnished the image of the French capital, raising questions about its ability to host major sporting events as it gears up for the 2024 Olympics, as well as the 2023 Rugby World Cup.

Leading French daily *Le Monde* echoed the British complaints on Monday, saying the French authorities were "in denial" about their shortcomings that had turned the event into a "fiasco". **'ABSOLUTELY SHAMBOLIC'**

Monday's meeting at the sports ministry involved European football's governing body Uefa, French football chiefs and the French police. Darmanin and Paris police chief Didier Lallement were both in attendance, along with the Sports Minister Oudea-Castera. Lallement has called for

a formal investigation into the production of fake tickets, which he said had helped cause the problems. Darmanin defended the policing of the final, saying officers had "prevented deaths" that might have been caused by crowd crushes outside the stadium to the north of Paris.

He acknowledged that some officers had been seen making "inappropriate" use of teargas, after images posted on social media showed even children being targeted at close range.

Labour MP for Liverpool area Ian Byrne, who was present at the match, told Sky News that the fans had been treated "like animals".

The mayor of Liverpool, Joanne Anderson, who was also at the scene, told the BBC that it was "absolutely shambolic but also the police behaviour was also really brutal."

Liverpool FC have requested a formal investigation. — AFP

GCC Games to conclude today

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 30

The third GCC Games competitions will conclude in Kuwait on Tuesday. The Games was held from May 16 to 31 with more than 1,700 male and female participants.

Events were held in 23 games, 16 for men and 7 for women. Competitions were held in athletics, handball, volleyball, basketball, futsal, shooting, swimming, karate, judo, fencing and tennis, cycling, ice hockey, table tennis, padel and electronic sport.

The concluding day will witness the distribution of medals in four games, namely karate, fencing, tennis and handball.

Kuwait lead the medals tally



with 84 medals and Bahrain own 57 medals, while the UAE have 44 medals, Qatar are fourth with 48 medals, Oman are ranked fifth with 29 medals and Saudi Arabia are in sixth and last place with 56 medals.

Oman national karate team will conclude campaign on the last day.

Oman's Ali al Raisi had participated in the 'kata - men's singles' and came fourth. Kuwait's

Sayed Mohammed al Moussawi won the gold, UAE's Marwan al Mazmi won the silver and Saudi's Mesfer al Asmari took the bronze.

Taha bin Suleiman al Kishri, Secretary-General of the Oman Olympic Committee, thanked Shaikh Fahad Nasser Sabah al Ahmad Al Sabah, Chairman of the Kuwait Olympic Committee, for the great efforts made by the organising committee of the third

GCC Games and for the good organisation and preparation. Also during the meeting, they discussed the technical levels achieved by the Gulf teams in the tournament and ways to develop the next tournaments, and the cooperation between the Oman Olympic Committee and the Public Authority for Youth and Sports.

200 SAMPLES OF DOPE

Hana al Bati, Director-General of the Kuwait Anti-Doping Agency, confirmed that 200 samples have been collected so far from various sports of both sexes and from all countries participating in the third GCC Games, stressing that the work of anti-doping teams will continue until the end of the course in all competitions.



Norway's Casper Ruud reacts as he plays against Poland's Hubert Hurkacz on day nine of the Roland-Garros Open in Paris. — AFP

Ruud edges Hurkacz to reach quarters

PARIS: Eighth seed Casper Ruud became the first Norwegian man to reach the French Open quarterfinals on Monday with a four-set win against Poland's Hubert Hurkacz.

The 23-year-old held off a brief Hurkacz fightback to win 6-2, 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 and will face either fellow Scandinavian youngster Holger Rune of Denmark or fourth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas on Wednesday.

Ruud is into his first ever Grand Slam quarterfinal as he continues an impressive season which has seen him win two clay-court titles.

"It's been a goal of mine to reach the quarterfinals of a Grand Slam," said Ruud, who missed the Australian Open with injury.

He dominated the first two sets before Hurkacz, who reached the Wimbledon semifinals last year, battled back to force a fourth.

The Pole led by a break as he looked to take the match to a decider, but he could not maintain his momentum as Ruud moved 5-2 in front. Hurkacz saved a match point on his own serve, but Ruud closed it out in the next game.

"Luckily, it was looking a bit dark for me in the fourth set as well but I managed to break him a couple of times," he said.

RUSSIAN DUO IN LAST 8

Daria Kasatkina said she is looking forward to sharing another "good memory" with Veronika Kudermetova when the Russian duo clash in the quarterfinals. Kasatkina, seeded 20th, took advantage of an error-strewn performance from Italian Camila Giorgi to win their last-16 tie 6-2, 6-2.

Kasatkina and Kudermetova, who are both 25, played against each other from a young age and were part of the Russian squad who won last year's Billie Jean King Cup.

"(We played) many times in juniors. We were on one team winning Billie Jean King Cup last year, so we have many good memories to share together."

Earlier, Kudermetova came back from a set down to defeat Madison Keys of the United States 1-6, 6-3, 6-1. — AFP

Perez claims 'dream' Monaco win

MONACO: Sergio Perez won a rain-disrupted Monaco Grand Prix on Sunday as pole-sitter Charles Leclerc suffered another dose of ill luck on his home circuit.

Perez, the first Mexican to win at the iconic circuit, claimed his third career win ahead of Carlos Sainz for Ferrari.

Perez's Red Bull teammate Max Verstappen took third to extend his lead in the world championship over Leclerc, fourth after a bungled pit stop strategy.

A deluge caused chaos and an hour delay to the start but Perez kept his cool for a "dream" victory after his crash in qualifying 24 hours earlier.

"Checo you have won Monaco, what a brilliant drive," Red Bull team boss Christian Horner told him over the team radio.

"It's a dream come true. As a driver you dream of winning here. After your home race there is no other more special weekend to win," said the man of the hour.

"It's a massive day for myself and my country," added Perez for whom this was a remarkable turn around in fortune after being left frustrated a week ago at relinquishing the race lead in Spain to Verstappen under team orders.

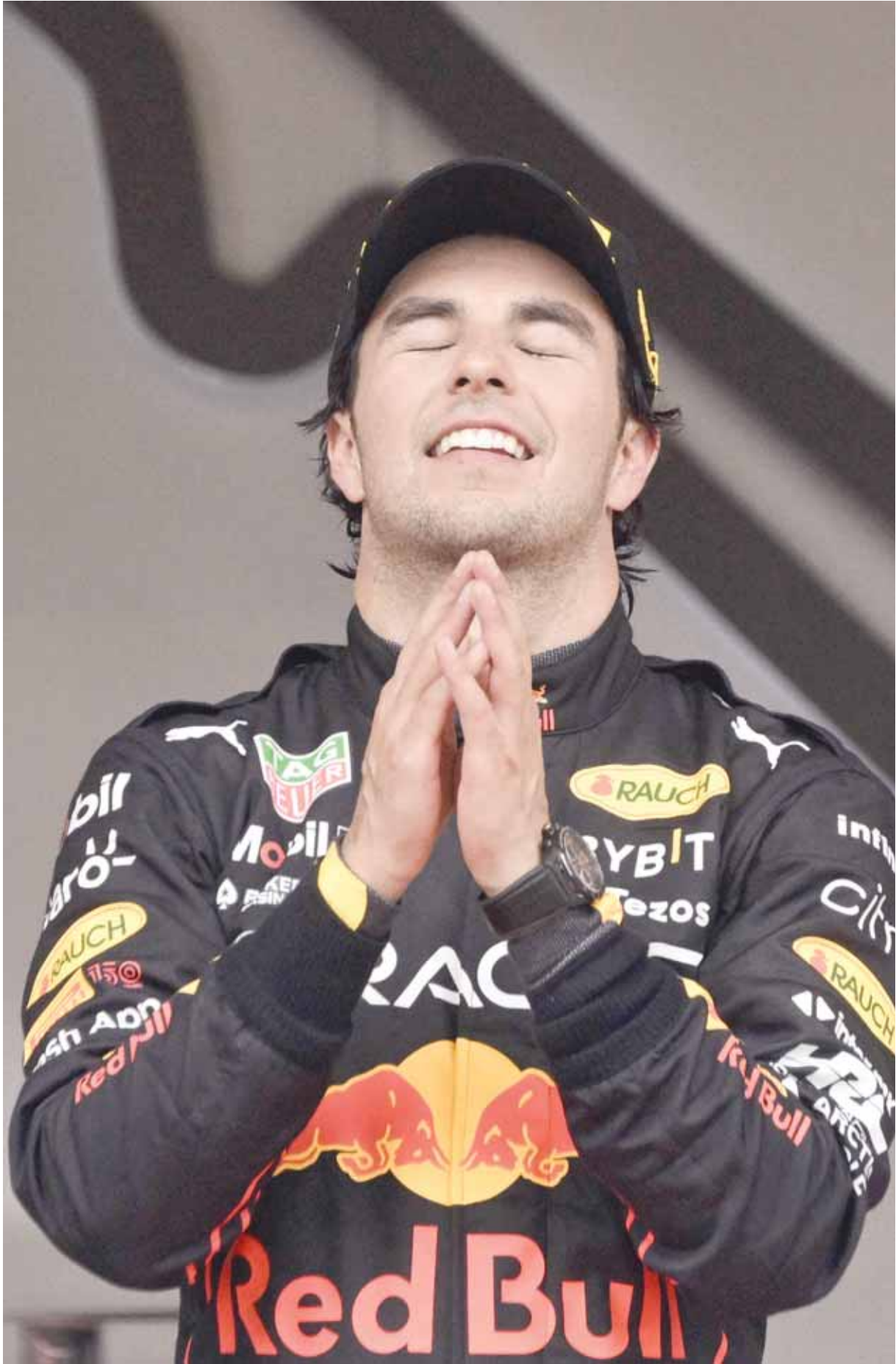
World champion Verstappen extended his lead over Leclerc to nine points in the drivers' title battle. Perez moved up to only six points behind Leclerc in third.

Leclerc was furious at seeing a winning hand collapse after losing time on one of the many pit stops. "No words. We can not do that," he told his team.

George Russell took fifth for Mercedes ahead of Lando Norris for McLaren, Alpine's Fernando Alonso and Lewis Hamilton in the other Mercedes.

The seventh round of the championship was hit by a deluge before its scheduled 1300GMT start, the downpour creating scenes of chaos in the crowded confines of the narrow harbourside pit lane.

Rain had been forecast in advance, but few teams appeared to expect the notoriously capricious Monaco microclimate to obey instructions as warm



Red Bull Racing's Mexican driver Sergio Perez celebrates on the podium after the Monaco Formula 1 Grand Prix at the Monaco street circuit in Monaco. — AFP

sunshine continued until the final minutes before lights out.

After three days of perfect Riviera weather, the anticipated rain clouds arrived and burst immediately after the national anthem, sending Race Control into safety overdrive and creating

chaos on the grid.

But no sooner had the cars gone out for a formation lap over an hour behind schedule than more heavy rain fell, leaving a lot of water on the narrow stretches of asphalt on the barrier-lined street circuit. This resulted in

the race being red flagged and all the cars and drivers returned to a saturated pit lane before the rain relented allowing racing to go ahead under a rolling start.

Formula One returns for the eighth round of the championship in Azerbaijan on June 12. — AFP

Celtics edge Heat to set up Warriors clash in NBA Finals

MIAMI: The Boston Celtics, sparked by 26 points from Jayson Tatum, advanced to the NBA Finals by defeating Miami 100-96 on Sunday, setting up a title showdown against the Golden State Warriors.

Boston captured the winner-takes-all match-up to claim the best-of-seven Eastern Conference finals 4-3 and secure a place in the championship series, which begins on Thursday in San Francisco.

"We aren't satisfied. We've still got a long way to go," Tatum said. "We know we have a tough task ahead. I'm looking forward to it."

The Celtics, who eliminated 2021 NBA champion Milwaukee in seven games, led from start to finish but had to hold off a Heat fightback in the dying minutes to reach their first NBA Finals since 2010.

"We fought through a lot of adversity," Celtics coach Ime Udoka said. "We're a resilient group. We can't ever really slam the door but we held them off. "Now our focus is to win four more."

Boston advanced after losing the conference finals three times in the past five seasons.

"To get over the hump with this group, it means everything," Tatum said. "Not a lot of people believed in us, but it worked out."

Tatum, who also had 10 rebounds and six assists, was named the Eastern Conference Most Valuable Player.

"It was the biggest game of my career," Tatum said. "Going through those tough times helped us grow, helped us learn. They kept coming at us. We kept responding. We left it all on the floor. We got it done."

Marcus Smart and Jaylen Brown each added 24 points for Boston while Jimmy Butler led Miami with 35 points in a losing cause.

"Not good enough. I didn't do enough," Butler said. "Stats don't mean anything. I learned I have to be better and I will be better. We're going to come back better than ever."

Miami, the East's top seed, missed a chance at a second NBA



Jayson Tatum

Finals trip in three years and a first title since 2013. "It's one of the worst feelings in the world to address your locker room after a game like this," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. "It's heartbreaking when it ends like this."

Golden State split two games with the Celtics in the regular season, winning 111-107 in December at Boston and losing 110-88 in March at home when star guard Stephen Curry was injured.

Boston hadn't been to the finals since losing 12 years ago to the Los Angeles Lakers. The Celtics haven't won the NBA crown since 2008.

The Warriors, in the NBA Finals for the sixth time in eight years, seek their fourth title in that span and the first since 2018.

"This is a great opportunity. This is what you put all the work in for your whole life," Brown said. "We've got to embrace it but also embrace the challenge."

"We're playing a team that has been there, done that before. We've

got to come with our A-game."

'BIGGEST TEST'

Smart had six points in a 10-1 spurt by Boston for a 65-52 Celtics lead early in the third quarter, but a 7-0 Heat run soon after pulled Miami within 72-65 and the Celtics carried an 82-75 lead into the final quarter.

An 8-0 Celtics run early in the fourth quarter lifted Boston ahead 90-79, the Heat missing nine shots in a row.

"We had plenty of opportunities. We just couldn't get control of the game," Spoelstra said. "Most of the game we were grinding."

Max Strus' three-pointer closed an 11-0 run to lift Miami within 98-96 in the dying seconds, but Butler missed a late three-pointer, Smart hit two free throws and the Celtics held on. "We've been responding all year to adversity," Brown said. "Today was the biggest test of the year, of our careers, and we got past it." — AFP

business

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Major plastics park to come up in Suhar

Value creation: OQ Group and Madayn ink agreement for establishment of dedicated downstream plastics cluster in Sohar Industrial City

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 30

OQ, the global integrated energy group of the Sultanate of Oman, and the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to set up a plastics park in Sohar Industrial City with support from Oman Vision 2040 implementation Follow up Unit.

The MoU comes in line with one of Oman Vision 2040's objectives: achieving a competitive, diversified and integrated economy as the project is envisaged to open major investment opportunities, especially in plastics conversion, with OQ as the major provider of raw materials.

Under this MoU, Madayn has allocated 1 million m2 land in the Sohar Industrial City for the park to manufacture semfinished and finished high value-added plastic products.

The project will play a key role in creating job opportunities in an increasingly competitive and innovation-based economy, broaden the scope of private sector's contribution to diversified economic growth, encourage the shift to higher value-added sustainable products.

OQ will remain the major



provider of high-quality raw material for plastic-based products required for basic uses as sustainable packaging to specialty uses in healthcare, fibers and textile, agriculture, construction to furniture and more.

The plastics park, equipped with the requisite facilities and offering streamlined processes for ease of doing business, will attract more domestic and international investors in the plastic value chain like raw material suppliers, additive manufacturers, plastic convertors, recyclers and testing facilities.

Madayn has offered the land at incentivised rates and the Plug and Play concept that offers common facilities like workshop, administrative building, an excellence centre, lab, and recycling at attractive rates besides power, gas and

telecommunications lines. The plastics industrial park is located 16 km from Suhar Airport, 18 km from Sohar port and 20 km from the OQ raw material plant. The park will also open investment in new, breakthrough, innovative, high quality and sustainable products for polymer conversion to gain competitive advantages.

Easily available raw material

from OQ at competitive prices will result in minimising raw material stocks, shortening delivery time and saving transportation cost.

As investments grow, the plastics park will help develop an industry-specific local equipped with technical skills through training and integration of well-educated unemployed young Omanis and also by introducing polymer curriculum in Oman's universities.

Hilal bin Ali al Kharusi, CEO – Commercial & Downstream, OQ, said, "This MoU will fill the gap in plastic convertors in this industry and fuel Oman's underdeveloped polymer downstream industry. It is part of OQ plans to create opportunities from the conversion of its raw material and diversify economic growth.

We see major potential in the plastics industry as demand

will continue to remain high from various important sectors like healthcare, food packaging, construction and agriculture."

Hilal bin Hamad al Hasani, CEO – Madayn, added: "Our mission is to help industries find their true potential by meeting their basic requirements and supporting them in their growth. The plastics industry is one area that holds great potential of growth. We are happy to sign this MoU with OQ which has foreseen the returns investments in this area will bring for the people of Oman."

Also present at the signing were Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Chairman of the Oman 2040 Vision Implementation Follow-Up Unit, Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Under-Secretary for Commerce and Industry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and senior officials of OQ Group.

Small businesses vulnerable to Internet attacks



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 30

When a small business owner is faced with the responsibilities of production economics, financial reports and marketing all at the same time, cybersecurity can often appear complicated and, at times, unnecessary. However, this disregard for IT security is being exploited by cybercriminals.

Kaspersky researchers assessed the dynamics of attacks on small and medium-sized businesses between January and April 2022 and the same period in 2021 to identify which threats pose an increasing danger to entrepreneurs.

In 2022, popular attack tool used on small businesses is Internet attacks, specifically, web pages with redirects to exploits, sites containing exploits and other malicious programmes, botnet C&C centres, and so on.

The number of these attacks also increased in the first trimester of 2022 by 134 per cent. In comparison to 33,124 infections in 2021, Kaspersky researchers detected almost 77,562 in the first four months of 2022.

Pact signed for setting up Cloud Data Centre at SOHAR Freezone

Strengthening infrastructure: Slated for launch by end-2022, the new facility first information technology investment at the free zone

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 30

SOHAR Port and Freezone has signed an agreement with China's United Projects Achievement (FZC) LLC for the lease of 25,000 sqm of land at the Freezone on which a new Cloud Data Centre is to be constructed.

The data centre will include a multi-functional server room combined with artificial intelligence, big data, and cloud computing.

Anticipated to be in operation towards the end of 2022, Cloud



Data Centre will be the first investment project of information technology at SOHAR Freezone.

"This agreement represents a major milestone for us in

line with our plans to make SOHAR Freezone a frontrunner in innovation and a smart, technologically advanced ecosystem. It is the second Chinese

land-lease investment project at the Freezone, as we continue to promote its enormous potential as a hub for Chinese investment.

A diverse number of industries,

projects and countries have chosen to bring their business to SOHAR Freezone, and we are confident that China's United Projects Achievement facility will help attract future investments, particularly in IT, diversifying our income sources with wide-ranging economic benefits for Oman," said Omar al Mahrizi, Chief Executive Officer of SOHAR Freezone.

Yu Xiao, CEO of China's United Projects Achievement added, "As the world's fastest growing Port and Freezone complex and offering a strategic location at the heart of global trade routes, there are significant advantages for us to invest.

The new data centre will enable us to replicate our achievements in our home market, serve the increasing demand for affordable and secure cloud computing, and add further impetus to the

country's economic diversification plans. This partnership is reaffirming our success as we remain as China's the top 10 when it comes to cloud computing platforms."

Presenting a wealth of benefits to investors, SOHAR Freezone offers an abundance of land available for new construction as well as allowing investors to lease warehouses and commercial offices.

With competitive rates starting from one to three years, companies can register for a SOHAR Freezone GTL electronically from anywhere in the world and secure all required permits through the on-site one-stop shop. Investors also enjoy zero per cent personal income tax, zero per cent import and re-export duties and a corporate tax holiday of up to 25 years.

Bank Muscat launches special customer offer to win 51 hospitality packages to FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022

MUSCAT: In line with its customer-centric vision to serve its customers better everyday and commitment to providing top of the line features, services and rewards, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider has announced that it is giving away 51 match packages to visit FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, courtesy of Visa, as part of the run up to one of the biggest sporting spectacles on the planet.

All Bank Muscat Visa Credit and Prepaid Cardholders will be automatically entered into raffle draws to select the winners once they use their Bank Muscat Visa Credit or Prepaid Card to make a minimum cumulative spend of RO 50 or more during the promotional period which will extend till August 31, 2022.

For every RO 50 spent, customers get one chance in the draw, the more they spend the higher their chances of winning. All transactions will be included except for ATM withdrawals and Government spends.

Each winner will receive a Hospitality Package for two to the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022,

courtesy of Visa.

The packages, which include airline tickets, hotel accommodation and tickets for a number of matches during the month-long football carnival have been reserved exclusively for different card segments.

As many as 10 packages (1 Opening Match, 1 Final and 8 Quarter Final matches) have been reserved for Bank Muscat Private Banking Visa Infinite and Asalah Priority Banking Visa Signature credit cardholders.

Nine packages featuring Quarter final matches have been reserved for Al Jawhar Visa Platinum credit cardholders, while Visa Prepaid cardholders can win one of the 8 Group Stage match packages reserved for them.

Holders of Bank Muscat-Co-branded Visa Platinum credit cards, Visa Gold credit cards and Visa Classic credit cards are eligible to be entered into draws for one of the 24 Group Stage match packages reserved especially for them.

On this exciting occasion, Abdulnasir al Raisi, General Manager – Personal Banking,



Abdulnasir al Raisi
General Manager – Personal Banking



Abdullah bin Tamman al Maashani
General Manager – Products



Bank Muscat, said: “In line with its commitment to offering the largest range of benefits, and also recognising the great passion with which football is followed in Oman, Bank Muscat is delighted to offer a large number of football enthusiasts a great opportunity to win Hospitality Packages to FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, courtesy of Visa.

Launching this offer comes within the bank’s strategy of offering the best features and benefits to our customers, including Asalah and Al Jawhar customers. With a number of prizes reserved for different segments, we invite everyone to participate enthusiastically and

benefit from this offer by using their Visa credit cards and prepaid cards.

On his part, Abdullah bin Tamman al Maashani, General Manager – Products, Bank Muscat, said: “We thank Visa for their continuous cooperation and partnership with Bank Muscat, which helps the bank provide the best offers and services to our customers.

As the leading financial services provider in Oman, the bank is always working to further develop and launch new products and offers.

We hope that our customers will wholeheartedly participate in this promotion for a chance to win one of these exciting 51 hospitality packages to attend FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, courtesy of Visa. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all our customers for their strong confidence in the bank and its cutting-edge products and services.”

Bank Muscat has also launched an exclusive limited edition Visa Prepaid Card to celebrate FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 courtesy of

Visa. Customers can easily apply for this Visa Prepaid card, which has been designed as a collector’s item via their Bank Muscat Mobile Banking app or Internet Banking only.

It is important to note that the Bank Muscat Visa Prepaid Card features contactless payment technology and can be managed easily through the Mobile Banking app or Internet Banking. Customers can apply for a personalised card with its unique design, load funds and top it up instantly, and also review transactions to manage their expenses. In addition, the cards can be used for secure online payments apart from PoS payments and ATM withdrawals. Bank Muscat contactless cards feature best-in-class security for PoS and online transactions. In case of any loss or misplacement of the card, it can be blocked immediately by calling the Bank Muscat Contact Centre on 24795555. For more details on the bank’s Visa Prepaid cards, please go to <https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/bm-cards/Pages/cards.aspx>.

BankDhofar concludes successful participation in Comex 2022



MUSCAT: BankDhofar has concluded its participation at Comex 2022 successfully which was held during May 23-25, 2022. The largest Technology, Communications, Innovation and Digital Transformation show in the Sultanate of Oman, brought together leading technology companies that display their digital solution.

BankDhofar’s booth at the exhibition saw large turnout, and the advanced digital banking solutions were well received by the visitors. BankDhofar introduced the features of the Mobile Banking App to the visitors.

Non BankDhofar customers may benefit from the App through opening Mobile Wallet account, from which they may transfer amounts internationally through Western Union.

Not only that, BankDhofar booth visitors were able to open BankDhofar accounts and get their debit card instantly.

The Bank issued PayStickers instantly as well. The PayStickers enables customers to enjoy convenient highly secured payment transactions.

Additionally, the Bank showcased its Multi-Function

Kiosk, which will enable customers to conduct various banking transactions including, for example, printing account statement and printing cheque books.

On the last day of the exhibition, the Bank conducted a prize draw for BankDhofar booth visitors, where 6 lucky winners got the chance to win valuable prizes. BankDhofar puts technology and innovation at the core of its strategy to improve the experience of its customers.

The Bank is constantly keeping pace with the technological developments while designing new products and services to ensure convenient banking experience for customers. Customers may conduct their transactions at ease and around the clock through the highly-secured and user-friendly digital banking channels.

To learn more, check out BankDhofar pages on social media: Facebook (www.facebook.com/BankDhofar), Twitter (@BankDhofar), Instagram (www.instagram.com/BankDhofar), or visit the official website www.BankDhofar.com or contact the Customer Engagement Hub 24/7 on (+968) 24791111 for inquiries.

Sohar International: Digital transformation partner in New Age Banking Summit Oman

MUSCAT: Committed to leading the dialogue on innovation in the banking space, Sohar International will be participating in the New Age Banking Summit and extending its support to the event as the Digital Transformation Partner.

The event will also witness Ewan John MacLeod, Chief Transformation Officer at Sohar International sharing his insights in the event’s panel discussion.

Sohar International has been leading the way in deploying unique digital banking solutions to meet the changing preferences of customers. It has demonstrated exceptional development and application of technologies that have positively impacted the entire banking sector, further



reinstating its calibre, agility, and digital prowess.

The New Age Banking Summit is a highly anticipated banking event slated to take place on May 31, 2022 at Al Bustan Palace and will welcome as its Chief Guest and keynote speaker, Tahir al Amri, Executive President of the Central Bank of Oman. With strong support from Oman Banks Association, the summit will also witness the participation of over 150 delegates from more than 100 Banking, financial services, insurance and technology companies, including leaders of



the top 10 banks in Oman.

Commenting on Sohar International being the Digital Transformation Partner for the event, Ahmed al Musalmi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International said, “Sohar International has been successful in establishing its position as a leader in digital transformation because of the bank’s pervasive culture of experimentation, agility in operations, and keenness in embracing technological innovation. With strong values that align with the digital transformation goals of the

nation, we will remain steadfast in our endeavours to contribute towards reshaping the future of banking.”

A key part of the summit will be the insightful presentations from senior executives in the sector and a rounded, end-to-end panel discussion where Ewan MacLeod, Chief Transformation Officer at Sohar International, will present his views.

Through the bank’s participation and support at thought-leadership forums like the New Age Banking Summit, Sohar International seeks to continuously build on its acquired momentum and offer its unfaltering services to cater to the varying digital banking needs of its customers.

CBFS student tops ESCWA research competition

MUSCAT: Aya al Balushi, a student of the College of Banking and Financial Studies (CBFS) won the first place in the prestigious Student Research Competition of the Arab Competition Forum organised by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. The title of her research project is “Tech giants monopoly of the e-commerce”.

The ESCWA announced the winners on a ceremony held at Oman Convention and Exhibitions Centre on May 24, 2022 and attended by Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion as well as the Secretary-General of the Arab league.

Following CBFS were Sultan Qaboos University (in second place) and Buraimi University College (in third place).

In the words of Dr Zahran al Salti, Dean—CBFS, “I congratulate Aya on behalf of the entire CBFS family. This is a proud moment for CBFS. This meritorious achievement was



made possible by the efforts and hard work of Aya with the support and encouragement of her teachers and classmates.

The College is posed to continue to blaze on the trail of excellence in its multifarious

offerings across the fields of academic programmes, professional certifications and training courses in the coming days with a focus on student centricity and all-round development”.



Open Hydrogen Initiative can strengthen Oman's access to globally traded hydrogen market: S&P Global

Effective tools: It is imperative for Oman, with its growing portfolio of giga-scale green energy projects, to demonstrate the low carbon intensity of its investments to prospective markets, says expert



CONRAD PRABHU

@conradprabhu

With the Sultanate of Oman poised to emerge as a global-scale producer of green energy, chiefly green hydrogen and green ammonia, it would be prudent – indeed imperative – for investors to sign up to industry-leading tools to assess the carbon intensity of their production assets, according to a key market expert.

Alan Hayes (pictured), Head of Energy Transition Pricing at S&P Global Commodity Insights, has urged market players with a stake in the Sultanate of Oman's burgeoning green energy future, to be part of the Open Hydrogen Initiative (OHI), an international collaboration to further transparency into the environmental impact of hydrogen production and help unlock its full potential as an important driver of energy transitions. The Open Hydrogen Initiative was first unveiled last December jointly by S&P Global, a leading independent provider of

“We see carbon intensity as being a foundational part of the hydrogen industry as it emerges, which includes regulators. So, if we look across the world right now, you have regulators in different parts of the world who are looking at imposing a carbon intensity threshold.”

ALAN HAYES

Head of Energy Transition Pricing
S&P Global Commodity Insights

information and benchmark prices for the commodities and energy markets, and GTI Energy, a leading US-based research and training organisation.

Representing an international cohort of energy sector



professionals, the initiative aims to create objective, credible, peer-reviewed, transparent and open-sourced tools that allow participants from across the hydrogen value chain to assess the carbon intensity of hydrogen at the asset level, says Hayes.

“This initiative has the ambition of producing tools and a methodology to measure the carbon intensity of hydrogen production across all production pathways. As there are various methods to produce hydrogen, you will have very different carbon intensity profiles and different carbon intensity measurements. So it's important to understand carbon intensity across different production pathways so that

decisions can be made about what options deliver the most cost effective route of decarbonisation for hydrogen production,” he explained.

Consequently, the tools offered via the Open Hydrogen Initiative are important not only to help understand the decarbonisation potential of hydrogen, but also in facilitating the development of the trading and export of the commodity to major consuming market, Hayes noted. The Sultanate of Oman, with its ever expanding portfolio of mega-scale green energy investments, has everything to benefit from membership of the Open Hydrogen Initiative, according to the expert.

“It's our ambition to invite as many market participants as possible to take part in the initiative, because we want people, like those behind the projects in Oman, for example, to be part of the process,” said Hayes.

“Ultimately, this is a methodology and a tool that we want the industry to use. So the value for being part of the process is that the participants are part of building the tool that best suits their needs. It allows them to very clearly showcase the production and its carbon intensity.”

Citing the Sultanate of Oman's huge potential for green hydrogen production, Hayes stressed it was imperative for the country to be able to demonstrate the potential

low carbon intensity of a particular project to prospective markets.

OQ Group, the global integrated energy group of the Sultanate of Oman, is leading a portfolio of over 35 gigawatts — and counting — of renewable energy capacity that will underpin large-scale green hydrogen projects planned for implementation over the coming decade.

In this context, Hayes underlined the need for the regulators of the future green hydrogen industry in the Sultanate of Oman to be fully part of the Open Hydrogen Initiative.

“We see carbon intensity as being a foundational part of the hydrogen industry as it emerges, which includes regulators. So, if we look across the world right now, you have regulators in different parts of the world who are looking at imposing a carbon intensity threshold,” the expert noted.

“But, for the industry to achieve and meet that regulation, they need a method and a tool to allow them to measure their carbon intensity. From a regulatory perspective, we think it's important that we speak to (regulators), who will be looking to the industry to meet the regulations that they're putting in place.

And the (Open Hydrogen Initiative) is potentially one of the ways that they can show regulators that they are meeting their requirements.”

Tariq named ‘Youth ICT Influencer of the Year’

MUSCAT: At the conclusion of COMEX 2022, held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, Omani ICT expert Tariq bin Hilal al Barwani was presented with the prestigious “Youth ICT Influencer of the year” award by Dr Ali al Shidhani, Under-Secretary for Communications and Information Technology at Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.



“Tariq has been instrumental to be a role model for the youth

to adapt and prospect future technologies for two decades since he was a young boy. The positive impact of Tariq's work has created many Omanis to pursue ICT as a career, an entrepreneurial path as well as do business in the field of ICT. Tariq is an outstanding leader who continuous to serve the community and the people in the country,” said Sadiq Khan, Group COO of OITE and Arab Research Bureau.

During the three-day technology event, Tariq ran an innovative technology clinic where he advised students to pursue the right ICT education for job opportunities, counselled young entrepreneurs on their business ideas, plans and operations, and offered guidance to employees on courses to take in order keep up with the advancements and requirements of future technologies.

Omantel's mobile app wins two Gold Stevie Awards 2022



MUSCAT: The winning streak continues for Omantel at global platforms as its service delivery approach integrated with innovation convenience makes daily lives and business operations better.

Oman's first and leading integrated telecom service provider in the Sultanate has proudly bagged gold in two categories at the Middle East and North Africa Stevie Awards 2022 held recently. Omantel was named Gold Stevie Winner in the Innovation in Business Utility App and Innovative Use of Technology in Customer Service categories.

The awards, sponsored by the RAK Chamber of Commerce & Industry, received over 700 nominations from organizations across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) this year in close to 12 categories. Winners will be facilitated at a gala in Ras Al Khaimah, UAE.

The double victory for Omantel came for its innovative and groundbreaking mobile app,

which combines international best practices in online customer service, its fully online onboarding process, exceptional customer experience, Noor, the app's Artificial Intelligence digital assistant, and round-the-clock customer service helpline.

The idea of relaunching Omantel App with a simplified online onboarding process emerged shortly before the launch of eSIM in the Sultanate of Oman. Omantel was the first telecommunications provider in Oman to offer its customers the option to order and activate an eSIM online.

Ammar al Lawati, Senior Manager of Digital Channels at Omantel, said, “The comprehensive digital experience has become an integral part of the customer's satisfaction and retention. Thanks to the new features of Omantel App, customers can efficiently meet most of their needs online from their smartphone or tablets throughout the customer journey.”

bp Oman extends land rig contract with Abraj Energy Services

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, MAY 30

bp Oman, the local subsidiary of energy major bp, has signed the extension of the land rig services contract with Abraj Energy Services for a period of two years.

The contract renewal agreement, signed on Saturday, reinforces bp Oman's commitment to the In-Country value (ICV) and the long-term relationship with Abraj Energy Services, stemming from its original contract signed in 2014.

bp Oman president Yousuf al Ojaili commented: “We're proud with our long-standing relationship with Abraj. The contract renewal is a result of the outstanding performance of Abraj on delivering the well services in Block 61 over the past eight years.



Through our various projects and operations in Block 61, we ensure our alignment with the Oman Vision 2040 to encourage economic diversification and empower local talent.”

Eng Salah Abdullah al Harthy, Acting Managing Director at Abraj Energy Services said: “We are thrilled by the confidence bp have placed on us and giving us the opportunity to further cement

our relationship. bp continues to demonstrate its commitment in supporting the local businesses and integrating them in its complex and highly sophisticated operations.

Abraj will continue its journey in becoming the market leader in Drilling and oilfield services while focusing on safe workplace and operational excellence.”

bp's partnership with Abraj

Energy Services has helped build their technical and commercial capabilities to global standards.

bp will continue its collaboration with Abraj Energy Services to boost the company's safety performance to a global satisfactory level, taking into consideration focus areas such as red-zone management, contractor self-verification and flat time performance.

Together with bp, Abraj Energy Services completed the first well stimulation on Block 61 in December 2021, a huge milestone and one of the largest stimulations completed by the company. This achievement positioned Abraj Energy Services as the only local company in the country to reach this milestone and the first local company in the MENA region to perform this complex service.

Britain to tax oil and gas profits as cost-of-living crisis swells

The British government said it would use a windfall profits tax on oil and gas companies to help raise funds for direct payments to households, totalling about 15 billion pounds (about \$19 billion), to ease the country’s cost-of-living crisis.

Rishi Sunak, the chancellor of the Exchequer, announced the measures on Thursday as the government has come under increasingly intense pressure to help households with rapidly rising inflation and energy bills. Sunak said that energy companies had benefited from the surge in global commodity prices, in part driven by the war in Ukraine, and that some of their soaring profits could be used to protect low-income households.

Oil and gas companies will be charged a 25 per cent tax on their “extraordinary” profits. The tax will be phased out as energy prices return to normal, Sunak said, but will not last beyond 2025. It will generate 5 billion pounds over the next year, amounting to about one-third of the cost of the direct payments for households, the Treasury estimated. The measure will include an investment allowance that will help companies cut their tax if they reinvest their profits in Britain.

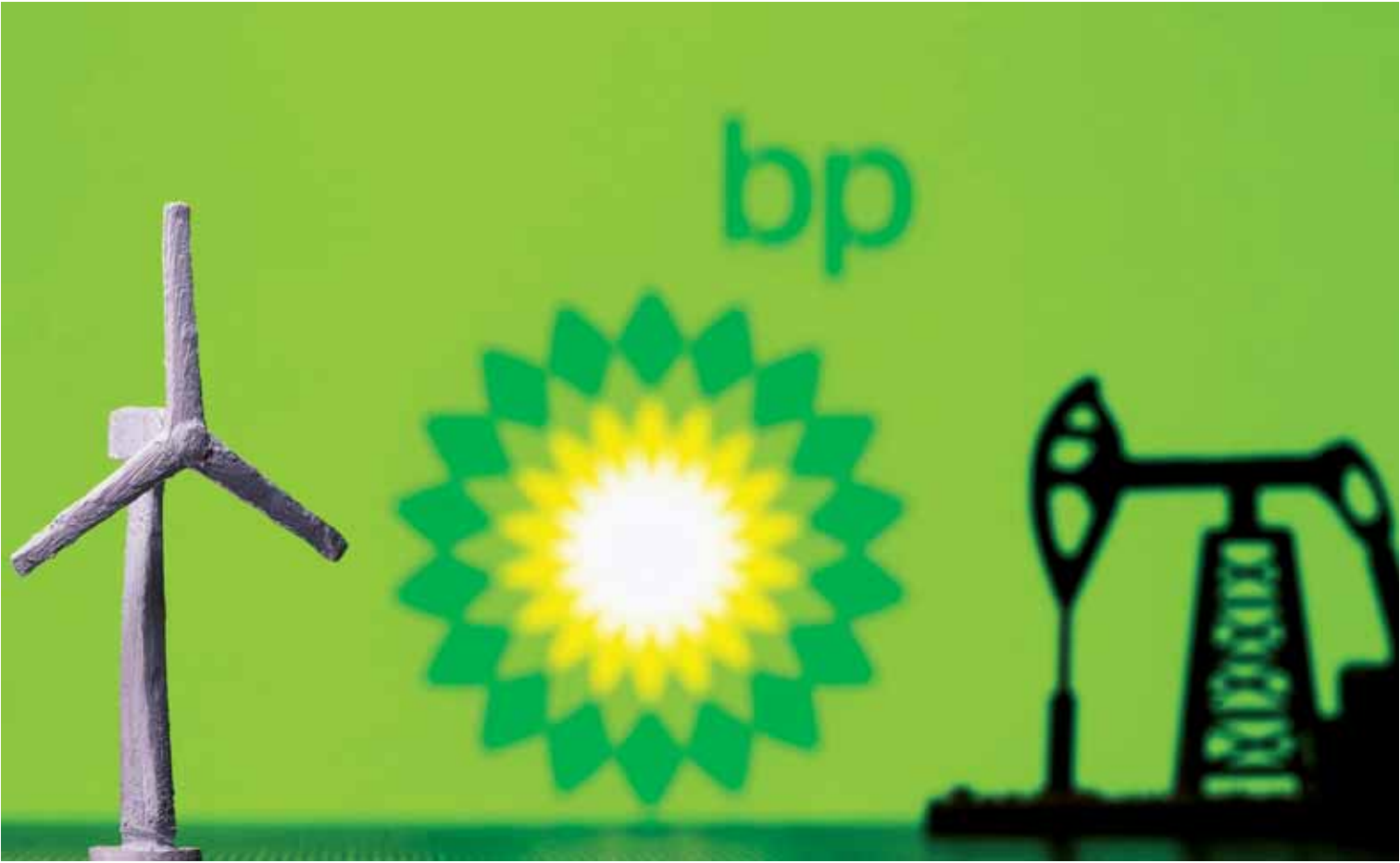
“The oil and gas sector is making extraordinary profits,” Sunak told lawmakers in Parliament. “Not as the result of recent changes to risk-taking or innovation or efficiency, but as the result of surging global commodity prices.” “For that reason, I am sympathetic to the argument to tax those profits fairly,” he added.

This month, Shell, the London-based energy giant, reported its biggest-ever quarterly profit for the three months that ended in March, making \$9.1 billion, and BP reported its largest quarterly profit in a decade. Both companies provided cautious responses to the new tax.

BP said it saw many opportunities to invest in Britain, but it pointed out that Thursday’s announcement was not for a one-off tax but was instead a multiyear proposal. Amid growing calls for a windfall tax, BP said this month that it would invest 18 billion pounds in British energy by 2030.

“Naturally, we will now need to look at the impact of both the new levy and the tax relief on our North Sea investment plans,” BP said in a statement.

In March, Shell said it would invest up to 25 billion pounds in the British energy system over the next 10 years. After Sunak’s announcement, the company said that “a stable environment” was fundamental to its investment plans and that the investment allowance in the new levy was a “critical principle.” In the United States, a group of Democrats in Congress are pushing for a windfall tax on



A 3D printed windmill and oil pump jack are seen in front of displayed BP (British Petroleum) logo in this illustration picture. – AFP

oil companies, calling out the firms’ plans to spend billions buying back their stocks to raise their value.

Other countries have approved measures to force energy companies to take on some of the burden of high prices that would otherwise fall to households. Spain has extended its tax cuts on household energy bills and prolonged the levy on companies.

France this year capped electricity price increases at 4 per cent, which the state-owned power company EDF said would lead to a loss in earnings of about 10 billion euros. In Britain, the government has been accused of being slow to support low-income households amid rising food and energy prices, leaving people forced to make difficult spending choices. Now the government appears to be trying to steer focus away from the lawbreaking lockdown parties held at Downing Street after a long-awaited report into the gatherings was published on Wednesday and has dropped its resistance to an additional tax on oil and gas companies.

Britons are expected to face one of the worst squeezes on their disposable incomes in decades. Last month, Britain’s annual inflation rate jumped to 9 per cent, the highest in 40 years, and is expected to peak above 10 per cent later this year. Consumer confidence has plummeted. The central bank forecast that high inflation will restrict consumer spending and warned that Britain is at risk of a recession.

“The high inflation we are experiencing

now is causing acute distress for the people of this country,” Sunak said. “I know they are worried. I know people are struggling.” On Thursday, he laid out his plan to tackle this, though the payments will not be sent until later in the year.

Every household will receive 400 pounds (about \$500) in October. In addition, more than 8 million low-income households would receive 650 pounds, split across two payments in July and the fall.

Another 8 million retired people already receiving help with their energy bills would get 300 pounds toward the end of the year, and 6 million people on disability payments would get another 150 pounds in September. Local councils would also be giving 500 million pounds in October to support households.

Torsten Bell, CEO of the Resolution Foundation, which studies British living standards, said the measures were “a big and very welcome package of support” that targeted lower-income households. Twice as much of the 15 billion pounds will go to the lower-income half of households as the top half, the organisation estimated.

In April, the cap on household energy bills rose 54 per cent, raising the amount that 22 million households pay to about 2,000 pounds a year. The government gave most households 150 pounds off their household bills in April and said it would cut another 200 pounds in October, but that sum would need to be repaid over five years.

Energy bills are expected to jump higher in autumn. This week, the head of

Ofgem, the agency that sets the price cap, said the cap could increase by another 800 pounds in October. On Thursday, Sunak said he would scrap the repayment plan for the October relief and double it to 400 pounds.

The government has been under pressure to deliver more fiscal support to households since its last budget proposal two months ago, when Sunak’s announcements underwhelmed economists and campaigners. Then he announced a modest cut to taxes on gasoline and diesel for a year and increased the income threshold that workers must meet before paying National Insurance, a broad tax.

There are signs that high prices are starting to bite in Britain. Nearly 90 per cent of Britons said their cost of living had increased because of higher food, fuel and energy prices, and people reported efforts to cut down on their energy use at home and take fewer car journeys, according to the Office for National Statistics. Other polls have shown people cutting back on dining out, takeouts and nonessential food.

Despite Thursday’s announcement, which should help the poorest third of households offset the shock from energy bills, “prospects for the economy in the coming quarters remain gloomy,” Amarjot Sidhu, an economist at BNP Paribas, wrote in a note to clients. Incomes, once adjusted for inflation, will still be strained, while businesses have received no new support, he added.

Russia slashes rate to 11% as rouble hits multiyear high

ESHE NELSON

Russia’s central bank slashed its benchmark interest rate to 11 per cent, from 14 per cent, in a hastily arranged meeting on Thursday as policymakers sought to support businesses and households struggling under sanctions.

The bank is cutting interest rates faster than expected as the country’s currency has rapidly appreciated, reaching its strongest level in four years against the US dollar this week.

Capital controls imposed by the central bank after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, particularly those forcing exporters to exchange their earnings into roubles, have increased demand for the Russian currency. The country’s large current account surplus, a measure of trade and investment flows, has been bolstered by high earnings from oil and gas exports and a drop in imports, and is also keeping the rouble elevated.

While the strength of the rouble has the benefit

of easing inflation, it is also putting pressure on the country’s public finances because the budget relies on revenues from oil exports denominated in dollars.

The annual inflation rate in Russia climbed to 17.8 per cent last month, the central bank said, but it was estimated to have declined slightly since then, faster than policymakers expected.

“The capital controls are probably the primary driver of why the rouble has recovered and strengthened so much,” said Brendan McKenna, an emerging-markets economist and currency strategist at Wells Fargo Securities. “It’s really, really difficult right now to just buy US dollars and convert roubles into dollars or any other currency in Russia.”

In the days after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on February 24, the currency dropped to its weakest-ever level against the US dollar. The bank quickly raised its benchmark interest rate to 20 per cent and imposed capital controls to restrict the flow of money out of the country in an effort to support the currency. Since then, the rouble has strengthened and become the

While the strength of the rouble has the benefit of easing inflation, it is also putting pressure on the country’s public finances because the budget relies on revenues from oil exports denominated in dollars

best-performing currency in the world. It’s up 25 per cent against the dollar this year.

Amid the currency’s rapid ascent, Russia eased some of its capital controls. On Monday, the Finance Ministry said exporting companies needed to exchange only half their foreign currency earnings into roubles within 60 days. Previously, they had to exchange 80 per cent.

The central bank has room to cut interest rates as it focuses on stimulating an economic recovery. The bank previously forecast that the economy would shrink as much as 10 per cent this year as companies had to develop new supply chains with even fewer imported goods.

“External conditions for the Russian economy are still challenging, considerably constraining economic activity,” Russia’s central bank said. “Financial stability risks decreased somewhat, enabling a relaxation of some capital control measures.” The bank signalled that further cuts to the interest rate might come at upcoming meetings.

The next policy decision is scheduled for June 10. “When the currency is so strong, there’s really not a need for such tight monetary policy,” McKenna said.

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Food as cultural ambassadors

In celebration of the Turkish Cuisine Week, a wide spread of the most distinguished delicacies of the traditional Ottoman Turkish cuisine prepared by the award-winning Chef Sinem Özler and her team met with traditional Omani dishes were put on offer to the yearning guests throughout the week at the Grand Millennium Hotel... **P20**

Zsa Zsa Gabor museum opens in Budapest

A MUSEUM DEDICATED to the glamorous Hungarian-born actress Zsa Zsa Gabor, who died in 2016, was opened in Budapest on Thursday by her widower Frederic Prinz Von Anhalt.

The permanent exhibition, located in the Origo film studio on the outskirts of the capital, celebrates Gabor's flamboyant Hollywood lifestyle and personality.

"Zsa Zsa was the world's first real celebrity, wherever she went around the world the doors were opened for her," Von Anhalt, 78, told AFP after the open-

ing. "It's wonderful there is a museum for her now," he said.

Exhibits donated by Von Anhalt include lavish dresses and furniture, as well as memorabilia such as a copy of the "Life" magazine featuring Gabor on the cover.

One of the dresses on show was worn by the actress when she was famously arrested for slapping a Los Angeles traffic policeman in 1989.

Von Anhalt married Gabor in 1986,



making it by far the longest of her nine marriages.

Gabor's ashes were buried in Budapest last July nearly five years after her death aged 99 from a heart attack at home in Los Angeles in December 2016.

Zsa Zsa is alive again

"Now Zsa Zsa is alive again, she is right

over there," said Von Anhalt, pointing to the exhibition.

"People ask me why am I giving away things that she left to me but I know they are now kept in a good place, she should be celebrated," said Von Anhalt.

"So I am giving her stuff back to her; I lived with her for 35 years, everything is

in my heart, every picture, every dress, I will never forget them as long as I live".

Born into a wealthy family in Hungary in 1917 as Sari Gabor, Zsa Zsa was one of a trio of sisters known for their shapely curves and passion for well-heeled men.

In her heyday she embodied the film industry's platinum blonde ideal as a voluptuous former beauty queen who won "Miss Hungary" in the 1930s.

Her resume after emigrating to the United States before World War II includes a long list of film roles in such hit movies as "Moulin Rouge," "Lili" and "Arrivederci, Baby!"

But the actress was at least as famous for her romantic conquests as her triumphs on the silver screen.

Her thick Hungarian accent was much parodied -- especially her signature penchant for calling everyone she met "darling" -- or "dahlink" as she pronounced it.

"I call everyone 'dahlink' because I can't remember their names," the socialite once said.

Von Anhalt said a statue is also in the works to honour Gabor, and there could even be a TV series and movie about her life. -- AFP

READ

TWO TREATISES OF GOVERNMENT

BY JOHN LOCKE

The Second Treatise of Government places sovereignty into the hands of the people. Locke's fundamental argument is that people are equal and invested with natural rights in a state of nature in which they live free from outside rule.



AUCTION AT CANNES

Auctioneer Simon de Pury conducts an auction on May 26, 2022 during the annual amfAR Cinema Against AIDS Cannes Gala at the Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc in Cap d'Antibes, southern France, on the sidelines of the 75th Cannes Film Festival. — AFP



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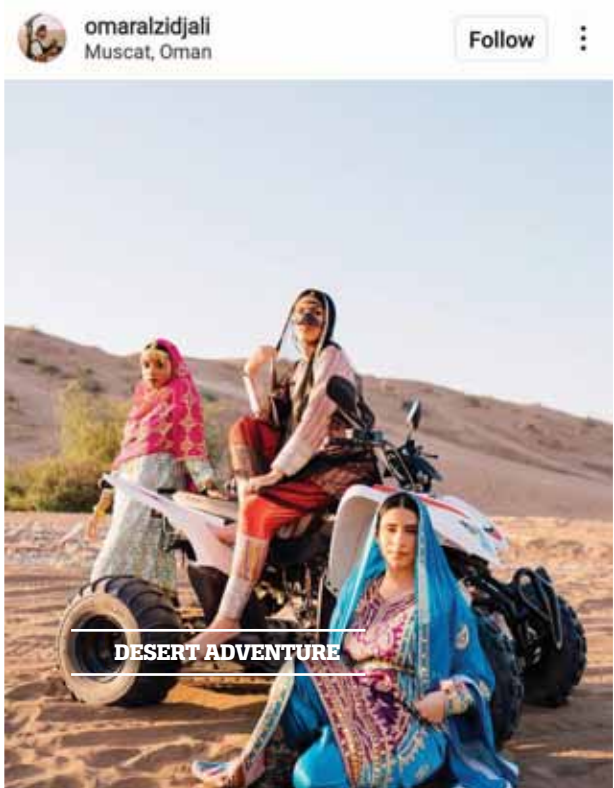
A student turned model of the Army Institute of Fashion and Design (AIFD) presents a creation designed by students during Design Dapple 2022 fashion show organised as part of annual AIFD graduation day ceremony in Bangalore. — AFP





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AROUND THE WORLD

ENTERTAINMENT

The dinosaurs are back in 'Jurassic World' finale



CASTS OLD and new return for more dinosaur misadventures in "Jurassic World Dominion", in a final outing concluding the second trilogy of films in the popular franchise.

The movie is set four years after the destruction of the remote island of Isla Nublar, and dinosaurs roam the entire world, living and hunting among humans.

"Jurassic Park" actors Laura Dern and Sam Neill reprise their roles as palaeobotanist Dr Ellie Sattler, now a soil and climate change scientist, and palaeontologist Dr Alan Grant, reuniting with their castmate from the 1993 movie Jeff Goldblum, who plays mathematician Dr Ian Malcolm.

The movie sees them join forces with Chris Pratt's animal behaviourist Owen Grady and Bryce Dallas Howard's activist Claire Dearing, who have helmed the more recent "Jurassic World" trilogy of films.

"Both of them (Dern and Neill are) terrific friends... and changed my life for having known them for all these 30 years... We were in a movie that got people's attention and entertained people", Goldblum, who featured in 2018's "Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom", told Reuters at a London press event for the movie on Friday.

"And now, for the first time, being reunited on screen and getting a chance to work together under these interesting circumstances with this new cast... what a parade and a cobb salad of lucky teammates for me."

The film, which begins its global cinema roll-out on June 1, features plenty of stunning visual effects showing the dinosaurs living alongside humans. Soon enough, threats emerge.

"What I'm so grateful for and why I felt privileged to come back as Dr Ellie Sattler is it has a deeply rooted environmental message as the entire franchise does, because ultimately it's about corporate greed and previous extinction", Dern said.

Howard, whose character was former operations manager at the now closed dinosaur park in the first "Jurassic World" movie, said wrapping up the trilogy which began in 2015 was emotional.

"I cried so much", she said.

"There was some of the actors on my flight home, and they messaged everyone going like, 'Bryce cried the entire 10 hours home.' I'm like, 'I know.'" — Reuters

CULTURE

'Like a family': Exercise clubs build unity in Burundi



IT'S A TUESDAY in Burundi's biggest city, and like every week just before sundown, crowds of young and old huff and puff in lockstep as a coach shouts encouragement and blasts his whistle.

"Tired?" he yells at the dozens of men and women jumping on the spot in a large circle, lifting his voice above the pop and Afrobeats blasting from nearby speakers at the weekly exercise club.

"And one, and two, and three!"

Two other groups have converged on the concrete basketball court on the shores of Lake Tanganyika for their regular fitness meet.

Some arrive in fluorescent tracksuits, others in whatever outfit they happen to be wearing, their cell phones and other possessions piled together for safekeeping as they sweat and heave in unison.

One of the regular attendees at Beach Club Solidarity is Sacree Metela, a 32-year-old, who says she comes for the sense of community atmosphere.

"Being together gives you a certain amount of courage, it encourages you even if you're tired", she says, pausing for a breath.

POPULAR AND PLURAL
These exercise clubs are a familiar sight across Bujumbura, and have played their own small part in helping heal divisions following the country's violent upheav-

al in recent times.

In 2015, a political crisis set off a bloodbath across this small, landlocked country and the violence rippled through its largest city wedged between Lake Tanganyika and rolling hills.

Hussein Sinangwa, who co-founded Beach Club Solidarity in 2004, said attendance fell away at the outbreak of turmoil, but picked up quickly once security improved.

"People came out in droves", said the 69-year-old fitness enthusiast.

"After the crisis, it was very important to get together."

Since independence in 1962, Burundi has witnessed terrible cycles of bloodshed between its Hutu and Tutsi communities, estimated at 85 per cent and 14 per cent of the population respectively.

The country of 12 million is a melting pot of ethnic and religious groups, but sports clubs offer a common cause.

"Group sport is important, because we converge all types: Political parties, ethnic groups, religions", Sinangwa said.

A once-prominent member fell foul of the club for "poisoning" other attendees with talk of ethnic troubles.

"We kicked him out", Sinangwa said.

LIKE A FAMILY
Anyone can attend his casual weekly get-together, and come and go as they wish.

Entry is 200 Burundian

francs (10 US cents), a small fee even in the world's poorest country by GDP per capita.

"It's very cheap! Gyms are very expensive, not everyone can afford them", admitted 19-year-old Sheila Mpawenimana.

Attendees at Beach Club Solidarity can also make small donations to the coach, who moves around the circle subtly taking any contributions.

This initiative aims to assist those club members in need of extra cash to cover emergencies or deaths in the family, said Sinangwa.

The country is mired in an economic crisis that has made the cost of living unbearable for many, and left some essential goods in very short supply.

Until earlier this year, Burundi was under economic sanctions imposed by the EU over the recent political troubles. US sanctions were lifted last year.

On the surface, life has seemingly returned to normal, even if the government's poor record on oppression and rights abuses has not improved.

But the fragile healthcare system remains very weak, and in the absence of formal safety nets, these exercise clubs are more important than ever.

"It's like a family. When you have a problem, everyone is here to help", said Mpawenimana, before rejoining the circle. — AFP

A WINDOW INTO CONTEMPORARY OMANI LITERATURE



Dr Khalid Mohammed al Balushi
khalidalbalushi@hotmail.com

Snake Poison Kills Us Not

The following is my English translation of an excerpt from "A Soldier from Oman: Memory's Nectar" by (ret.) Inspector-General Said bin Rashid al Kalbani

SNAKE POISON KILLS US NOT

Leading a life open to different possibilities, we would face all manner of unexpected events in our journeys through mountains and valleys, and even in our daily farming activities. Always exposed to snakes, scorpions and other poisonous creatures, we had a kind of immunity unknown to the current generation.

Injuries would be dealt with as unavoidable but manageable destiny. The treatment would usually start with tying the part bitten rather tightly and then making a cut in the wound with a knife, later leaving a scar that wouldn't go away. Then someone would bite the skin where the snake had attacked and suck the poison or the blood in order to prevent it from spreading. The poisoned person would subsequently be given oil, honey and some herbs. (It was believed that both oil and honey protected the belly from poison). The person who had been bitten wouldn't be allowed to sleep for two or three days.

A person by the name of Sohail was something of a specialist in treating snakes' bites. He would boil parts of the leaves (known locally as "veins") he brought from palm trees. The victim would drink it and get cured. The secret of this rather mysterious, but effective, medicine Sohail wouldn't reveal to anyone save his son. Aware that the exposure of the secret would undo its effect, he apparently appreciated what we call today the "secret" of the profession.

There was a fenced cave called Aljawar Almojdar in our village. The person suffering from smallpox would stay in that cave and wash from the water next to it until he was cured, as I had been told. People would bring him food and drinking water all the way through.

TRIBAL CONDITIONS*
Most Miskan people are from our tribe, the Bani

Kalbani, with the Bani Said living with us mainly in the plains. When it rained, people would leave Miskan for Maqaniyat, 30 kilometres away. The Bani Kalbani would naturally live in groups and cooperate with each other in the face of any attack from other tribes, something not quite unexpected in that period of Omani history.

An interesting, though slightly funny, story would perhaps reveal this aspect of our village. I remember once a child went to a farm and climbed up a rather tall palm tree (locally known as Awanal). When the farm owner came and found the child at the top of the tree, he rebuked him saying, "Whose child are you?" The child didn't reveal his father's real name, and gave him that of another person. The old man, in an attempt to play a trick upon him, pretended he was leaving. The child began to climb down, but as he realised that he was being tricked by the old man he went up swiftly again.

The latter, fearing that the child would fall and get hurt, ran to the man whom the boy claimed to be his father. The "father" came and called up to his son and rebuked him in front of the old man; he then took him to a tent, saying to him: "Don't worry, I won't beat you. I'll beat al Samma" (the mattress made of palm leaves). Both the boy and (the alleged) father executed the trick well. As the old man heard the shrieks of the boy, he called upon his "father" to let go of him, "Please listen to me. I beg you to stop beating him. I didn't ask you to kill him. I only asked you to advise him". (Of course, he wouldn't allow himself to get into the tent). The "father" answered, "Let me discipline him, for he goes about vandalising people's properties".

*For a detailed account of tribal politics in Oman see J. E. Peterson's Oman in the Twentieth Century, Political Foundations of an Emerging State. (London: Croom Helm, 1978). Of particular relevance are Wilkinson (1977) referred to in an earlier note, and his equally important The Imamate Tradition of Oman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) (the translator).

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Local Scene

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TUESDAY | MAY 31 | 2022



Food as cultural ambassadors

By Kabeer Yousuf

Can foods be the ambassadors of the traditions and cultures of a country? Are the gastronomic delights of a nation its face to the world?

It seems, yes from farm to fork, foods are the cultural ambassadors of a country and it's no wonder the idea behind every food festival is closely associated with a cultural fiesta too.

One such latest food fest was the Turkish Cuisine Week at the Muscat Grand Millennium Hotel recently which was aimed at showcasing the various delights of Turkish dishes with all their original qualities celebrated with culture and art events of Türkiye abroad.

For a week from May 26th, the hotel united the two countries' well-known dishes under the theme 'Grand Ottoman and Oman Night' at its Taybat Restaurant.

Tourism aimed at promoting the richness of Turkish cuisine to a global audience comprise presented 218 recipes for healthy, traditional and zero-waste dishes.

No food went to the gut without traditional Turkish music in the backdrop. In addition to the intriguing Turkish Cuisine, there were live san-toor and traditional Turkish musical instruments performed by Sedat Anar and art exhibi-

tions by renowned local artists such as Turkish ceramics (Çinil), miniature art, Ebru (water marbling) art, Turkish calligraphy, and illumination art commenting the food fest to the fullest.

"In every opportunity, we always strive to find ways to create a concept that is new, unique, and fun to deliver an exceptional guest experience. Our focus is to make Grand Millennium hotel a place where food, culture, arts, and music collide. With the help of the Turkish Embassy and Turkish Airlines, this event allows us to keep bringing special moments to our guests at Millennium," Luca Medda, Cluster General Manager at Grand Millennium Muscat told the Observer.

Adding value to the whole event, the message with the food was loud and clear. We are living in a world, which becomes more and more insufficient for meeting humanity's needs. Instead of merely enjoying our food, we should consider a waste-free, ecological and sustainable way of nutrition. Turkish cuisine has all these characteristics.

