

HM greetings to King of Jordan

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to King Abdullah II of the Kingdom of Jordan on his birthday. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments to King Abdullah II, wishing him good health and long life. His Majesty also prayed to Allah the Almighty for the return of this and similar occasions while the people of Jordan realise aspirations of further progress and prosperity. – ONA



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NATIONAL TEAM ATHLETES DOMINATE OMAN LEAGUE



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OMAN'S OIL PRODUCTION JUMPS 9.6 PER CENT IN 2022



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OMANI COMPANY INVENTS ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY COAL FROM COFFEE GROUND



MUSCAT

3D LAPAROSCOPIC SURGERY PERFORMED

A team from the Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre successfully performed the first-of-its-kind bladder cancer resection using 3D laparoscopic surgery, a highly safe technique that requires advanced laparoscopic skills. The 3D laparoscopic technology allows surgeons to perform surgeries by making small incisions in the abdominal wall and inserting high-resolution medical cameras that transmit three-dimensional images.

NO SURVEYS OR POLLS WITHOUT APPROVAL

The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) has issued a decision No 9/2023 defining the provisions of the Statistics and Information Law. The regulation prohibits individuals and non-governmental entities from conducting any survey or poll without obtaining a statistical license. The regulation excludes a number of categories from obtaining a license. SEE P3

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BIDIYA DESERT FESTIVAL KICKS OFF

The Desert Adventures Festival in Al Sharqiya Sands in the Wilayat of Bidiya kicked off on Sunday. Organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in cooperation with the office of the governor of North Al Sharqiyah and some government departments. The event will run until February 3. It is the first such festival in the Sultanate of Oman and aims to stir winter tourism particularly in the Wilayat of Bidiya which is famous for its soft golden sands.

Public Prosecution to discuss legal stand and crime

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The Public Prosecution Department will hold its annual conference on Tuesday at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC). This year's conference is themed "In the name of society".

The event covers a spectrum of topics, namely reviewing indicators and statistics of cases in 2022, top goals that have been achieved and future plans.

The Public Prosecution Department accords great importance to its annual conference, stemming from

The event covers a spectrum of topics, namely reviewing indicators and statistics of cases in 2022, top goals that have been achieved in the past and future plans

its belief in the principles of transparency, society's right to obtain information from official sources.

In a statement issued in 2022, the Central Bank of Oman has

identified that financial crimes using online platforms multiplied several times in 2021 due to increased digital transactions and excessive use of online platforms for various purposes.

In its financial report issued last year, it is shown that a whopping 40.6 per cent growth has been reported in online transactions in 2021 alone against a 19.2 per cent growth rate in 2020, thanks to the ever-increasing usage of smartphones and newer applications aiding better, hassle-free living. In 2020, bounced cheques constituted a major crime, with 7,143 cases registered with the Public Prosecution.

90 members to represent wilayats

POLL PROCESS FOR 10TH TERM OF MAJLIS ASH'SHURA BEGINS



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The Ministry of Interior has issued a decision determining the number of representatives of wilayats for the 10th term of the Majlis Ash'shura. The total number of representatives will be 90.

The decision pointed out that the following wilayats will have two representatives in the Majlis: Muttrah, Al Amerat, Bausher, Al Seeb, Qurayat, Salalah, Al Buraimi, Nizwa, Bahla, Izki, Samayil, Bidbid, Suhar, Shinas, Liwa, Saham, Al Khabourah, Al Suwaiq, Al Rustaq, Barka, Al Musannah, Sur, Jaalan Bani Bu Hasan, Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, Ibra, Al Mudhaibi and Ibr.

Meanwhile, as per the decision, the following wilayats will have one representative in the Majlis: Muscat, Taqa, Mirbat, Rakhoyut, Thamrait, Dhalkout, Al Mazyouna, Maqshin, Shalim and Al Hallaniyat Islands, Sadah, Khasab, Dibba, Bukha, Madha, Mahdah, Al Sunainah, Manah, Al Hamra, Adam, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, Al Awabi, Nakhl, Wadi Al Maawil, Al Kamil Wa'l Wafi,

Masirah, Bidiyah, Al Qabil, Wadi Bani Khalid, Dima Wa' ttayeen, Sinaw, Yanqul, Dhank, Haima, Mahout, Al Duqm and Al Jazir.

Meanwhile, eligible citizens started submitting applications for candidacy for the elections issued by Ministerial Resolution No 15/2023, and the process will continue until February 16.

The Ministry of Interior has called upon citizens wishing to run for membership of the Majlis, and who meet the criteria, to submit their applications through the website for elections (www.elections.om), after filling the form and attaching the required documents.

Zahrán bin Salim al Shaqsi, Deputy Director for Electoral Affairs Department at the Ministry of Interior, said the tenth term of the Majlis Ash'shura is important due to increased number of members from the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, and from the Wilayat of Sinaw in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, after raising the administrative level of these two wilayats in 2022.

TURN TO P2

Asteroid's sudden flyby shows blind spot in threat detection

WASHINGTON: The discovery of an asteroid the size of a small shipping truck mere days before it passed Earth last Thursday, albeit one that posed no threat to humans, highlights a blind spot in our ability to predict those that could actually cause damage, astronomers say.

Nasa for years has prioritised detecting asteroids much bigger and more existentially threatening than 2023 BU, the small space rock that streaked by 2,200 miles from

the Earth's surface, closer than some satellites. If bound for Earth, it would have been pulverised in the atmosphere, with only small fragments possibly reaching land.

But 2023 BU sits on the smaller end of a size group, asteroids 5-to-50 metres in diameter, that also includes those as big as an Olympic swimming pool. Objects that size are difficult to detect until they wander much closer to Earth, complicating any efforts to brace for one that could impact a



populated area.

The probability of an Earth impact by a space rock, called a meteor when it enters the atmosphere, of that size range is

fairly low, scaling according to the asteroid's size: a 5-metre rock is estimated to target Earth once a year, and a 50-metre rock once every thousand years, according to Nasa. But with current capabilities, astronomers can't see when such a rock targets Earth until days prior.

"We don't know where most of the asteroids are that can cause local to regional devastation," said Terik Daly, a planetary scientist at the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory.

The roughly 20-metre meteor that exploded in 2013 over Chelyabinsk, Russia is a once-every-100-year event, according to Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. It created a shockwave that shattered tens of thousands of windows and caused \$33 million in damage, and no one saw it coming before it entered Earth's atmosphere. Some astronomers consider relying only on statistical probabilities and estimates of asteroid populations an unnecessary risk. — AFP



Badr holds talks with Moroccan minister

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received here on Sunday Nasser Bourita, Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on developments in the Arab and international arenas.

They agreed to hold the next

session of the joint Omani-Moroccan Committee in a bid to continue boosting cooperation programmes, explore partnerships in economic and other fields and achieve mutual interests.

On the political spectrum, the two sides underscored the two countries' joint vision, which promotes dialogue and constructive cooperation

in tackling various issues and maintaining peace and stability among nations and peoples.

The meeting was attended by Khalid bin Hashel al Muselhi, Head of the Minister's Office Department, Tarek Lahssisne, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to the Sultanate of Oman and several officials from the Foreign Ministry. — ONA

OMAN, US HOLD BILATERAL TALKS



MUSCAT: Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary, Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, met with Brian Nelson, US Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, at the general Diwan

of the ministry here on Sunday.

The meeting discussed areas of cooperation between the two countries and underlined the two sides' keenness to continue promoting them in various fields.

It was attended by Shaikh

Humaid bin Ali al Maani, Head of the Global Affairs Department at the Foreign Ministry, Leslie M Tsou, US Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman and a number of officials from both sides.

— ONA

90 members to represent wilayats

FROM PAGE 1 NEW MEMBERS

It is worth noting that in this term, there were four new members. Two new members were added from the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and Sinaw, with a member representing each wilayat.

This was done after 2022 after the administrative level of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and Sinaw were raised. This is in addition to raise in the number of members from the Wilayat of Bidbid and Ibra from one to two members from each.

This came from the Royal interest of His Majesty Sultan

Haitham bin Tarik in strengthening the role of the governorates and following the method of modern administration in a way that ensures the achievement of decentralisation in decision-making for the development of the governorates.

The conditions for candidacy for membership of Majlis Ash'shura include: The candidate must be Omani by origin, age at the time of filing the candidacy should not be less than 30 years, educational qualification should not be less than a General Education Diploma, and should not have been previously convicted of a crime against

honour, or the trust. Also, to be registered in the electoral register in the wilayat for which a person is a candidate, and that person is not affiliated to a security or military entity, not indicted by a judicial ruling, and not afflicted with mental illness. Those whose membership has expired have the right to run for second time.

The Majlis contributes in national decision-making based on community participation and the complementarity of state institutions. It is also elected by the people with legal, financial and administrative independence.

MUSCAT: The 8th round of the political consultation committee between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Sudan was held at the general diwan of the Foreign Ministry here on Sunday.

The Omani side was chaired by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, whereas the Sudanese side was chaired by Dafa Allah al Haj Ali, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The meeting discussed aspects of cooperation between the two countries in various areas and means of promoting them. The



two sides also touched on a set of issues of mutual interest.

The meeting was attended by Ali bin Sulaiman al Darmaki, Ambassador of the Sultanate of

Oman to Sudan, Salah Al Din Al Kando, Ambassador of Sudan to the Sultanate of Oman and a number of officials from both sides. — ONA

Over 320 youths take part in second Asian debating championship

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JAN 29

The second edition of the Asian debating championship began in Muscat at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) on Sunday.

This follows the successful launch of the first edition in Malaysia. The five-day meet concludes on February 2.

Organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, under the auspices of Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas, Under-Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth, the tournament will witness the participation of the best teams in Asia, which took part in the Sixth International University Debating Championship.

Over 320 participants from 18 countries, including 165 debaters, 75 arbitrators, and 50 young Omani volunteers are taking part in the championship.

Hilal bin Saif al Siyabi, Director-General, Ministry of Culture, vice-chairman of the tournament committee said "the tournament attracts youngsters who are aware of the importance of dialogue and seeking knowledge, relying on the Arabic language and based on its heritage. The participants seek to showcase his personality in debates among his young peers and highlight his skills and knowledge of topics raised in the session."



"The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth believes in the importance of dialogue as a starting point that transcends differences, and it is part of our approach to establishing a youth dialogue and communication circle that sees debates as a means and tool to enhance the language of dialogue, organised ideas, and a space for knowledge, thinking, and analysis," Al Siyabi said.

Abdulrahman al Subaie, Director, Programmes and Projects at Qatar Debate Centre, said "The Asian universities and their debating youth are looking forward

to join the event as an opportunity and for the advancement of logic and language. Oman hosting of this version of the championship is regarded a qualitative addition to its organisation, professionalism and prestige."

The participating countries are Australia, Azerbaijan, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, Yemen, and Oman as the host.

From Oman the participating teams include Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), Al Sharqiya

University, Oman College of Health Sciences, Al Buraimi University College and 20 Omani referees.

Two categories will participate in the tournament, Arabic speakers and non-Arabic speakers.

Four teams will be selected from the non-Arabic speaking category in the semi-final round. Two teams will qualify for the final.

From the Arabic speaking category, eight teams will compete for the proceeds of the final, four teams for the semi-finals, and two teams for the final.

Decision endorses system for measuring adequacy of job performance

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour issued a decision to endorse a system for measuring the adequacy of job performance, which is based on a unified methodology for evaluating the performance of employees in units of the State's Administrative Apparatus of the civil state and other public legal persons.

Mohammed bin Mubarak al Kalbani, Assistant Director General for Legal Studies and Assistant Project Manager for the Ejada System, said that the system for measuring the adequacy of job performance will be effective from the day following its date of publishing in the Official Gazette.

He told ONA that the provisions of this system apply to all employees of the units of the State's Administrative Apparatus and other public legal persons who are in service for a period of more than 6 months.

He pointed out that the aim of applying the system is to govern the process of evaluating employees' performance according to a unified legislative framework for all employees of government units and other public legal persons. Al Kalbani added that the assessment of the adequacy of job performance will be measured by evaluating the employee's performance based



on his/her career plan, which the employees prepare at the beginning of each performance cycle, in coordination with their immediate supervisor. Regarding the difference between the job performance adequacy measurement system and the individual performance measurement system "Ejada", he explained that "Ejada" is a system for human capital governance in a bid to build a culture of proficiency in job performance, improve performance evaluation systems, and linking productivity with incentives. As for the performance adequacy measurement system, it is the legislative framework for the proper implementation of the system and ensuring the sustainability of its implementation to guarantee fair and equitable evaluation for all employees. — ONA



New guidelines for private surveys, polls in Oman

MUSCAT: The National Center for Statistics and Information on Sunday issued Resolution No (9/2023) issuing the executive regulations of the Statistics and Information Law.

The decision was based on the system of the National Center for Statistics and Information issued by Royal Decree No (40/2014), the Statistics and Information Law issued by Royal Decree No (55/2019), and the executive regulations of the Statistical Law issued by Royal Decree No (29/2001) issued by Ministerial Resolution No (7 / 2004), and to the approval of the Ministry of Finance, and as required by the public interest.

Dr Khalifa bin Abdullah al Barwani, CEO of the National Center for Statistics and Information, explained that the preparation of the centre, in cooperation with the relevant authorities, for the executive regulations of the Statistics and Information Law issued by Royal Decree No (55/2019), came as a translation and implementation of the articles included in the law, to organise statistical work in Sultanate of Oman.

He also indicated that the regulation specified the controls for conducting statistical activities and their scope, and the availability of data and information, and dealt with administrative records at government agencies and controls for violations and penalties.

He also added that the regulation codified the methods of practicing statistical activity for all spectrums. Both governmental and private institutions, academics, scholars, and researchers, and clarified the necessary practices for that, indicating that the regulation made it easier for researchers and academics to carry out statistical



activity without obtaining a permit, and it was satisfied with the centre's approval to implement it.

In order to organise the data collection process and provide it in a scientifically correct manner; the regulation authorised the centre to provide special statistical services for certain financial fees, including: providing unpublished data and information, and providing statistical advisory services, including designing an action plan to carry out a statistical activity, and reviewing or preparing part of the statistical activity such as: developing a methodology, designing a sample,

and drawing a sample designing or reviewing a questionnaire, processing or analysing data, in addition to carrying out a statistical activity or part thereof, preparing a study or report, conducting a survey or executing a survey, as well as providing statistical training programmes or any other statistical services within the scope of the centre's work.

The decision of the executive regulations of the Statistics and Information Law consists of 30 articles, 7 chapters, and 4 appendices: an appendix for fees for statistical services provided by the NCSI for non-governmental agencies, an appendix for classification of official statistics, an appendix for fees for statistical licenses and identification cards for non-governmental agencies and individuals, and an appendix for fees for statistical publications.

— ONA

Oman takes part in ICARDA meetings in Doha



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman took part in the annual regional meetings of the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), which is held in Doha from January 22 to 28.

Oman is represented at the meetings by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources. The meetings are organised by the Ministry of Municipality in Qatar.

The meetings focused on two main projects, titled “Developing Palm Production Systems in GCC States” and “Improving Agricultural Production Systems in the Arabian Peninsula in the Backdrop of Climate Change”.

The discussions evolved around applied research, the transfer of modern technologies and capacity building in the field of production systems of palm trees, controlled environment agriculture (CEA) and irrigated fodder. — ONA

Take note of sodium content while eating out, urges MoH

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The Ministry of Health (MoH) has urged restaurant customers to take note of the salt or sodium content in their food while eating out.

The ministry urged customers to request that salt is not added to their meals and avoid eating ready-to-cook meals such as burgers, pizza, or even shawarma. They should also avoid adding sauces, ketchup, mustard, and mayonnaise to the meal.

Starting this year, MoH started a campaign for a society free of chronic non-communicable diseases.

It urged all citizens who have completed the age of 35 to visit the nearest primary health care institutions to conduct early detection examinations for chronic diseases within the programme. Health experts have warned that high sodium intake is dangerous as it is linked to high blood pressure, increasing the chances of heart disease and stroke. Studies have pointed out that a person's daily sodium intake should not exceed 2,300 mg, and it may be noted that the majority of salt intake is due to eating out and consuming processed food.

‘QUEEN MARY 2’ ANCHORS AT SALALAH PORT



SALALAH: Cruise ship Queen Mary 2 anchored at the Port of Salalah, on Saturday. The ship was on a voyage from Port Safage in Egypt en route to Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as part of a tourist programme that sees her visiting a number of ports around the world. It has 3,415 passengers on board including 2,145 tourists. The tourists visited the heritage and historic landmarks of Dhofar Governorate as well as the beaches and traditional markets in Salalah city. — ONA

New batch of citizens joins ROP

MUSCAT: A new batch of national cadres joined the Royal Oman Police (ROP) on Sunday following the competition of the evaluation and admission procedures in coordination with the Ministry of Labour.

The new batch comprises holders of the general education diploma (GED) and post-GED certificates in mechanical and electronic engineering.

The new police recruits will join the Institute of Police Recruits at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences to undergo an integrated training and qualification programme that includes academic and scientific studies alongside military and sports training. — ONA



New dam coming up in Yanqul

YANQUL: The construction of Wadi Al Safri Dam in the Wilayat of Yanqul in Al Dhahirah Governorate is in full swing.

The dam is being built by civil and community efforts in the Wadi Al Safri area under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

Abdullah bin Said al Alawi, one of the project's supervisors said the dam's subbase is 130 metres long and its crest is 160 metres long. The height of the dam along with the shoulders is 7 metres. The total cost of the dam is approximately RO 103,000.

He added that by building the dam we aim to retain a large quantity of the water pouring



down from the valley to feed the aquifer by allowing water to flow down into the dam's basin.

He noted that the dam would contribute to the stability of agriculture by increasing the level of ground water on both sides of the valley in Wadi Al Safri area at times of drought season. — ONA

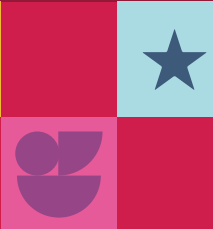
ROHM to feature renowned Mali star Diawara on Feb 9, 10

MUSCAT: The Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) announced an exciting concert featuring a global phenomenon Fatoumata Diawara, The Star of Africa, who will perform at the Royal Opera House of Musical Arts on February 9, 10, 2023.

Hailed as a visionary musician and voice for unity and hope, Fatoumata Diawara sings in her native Bambara. She dresses with magnificent originality, taking on the traditional elements of her heritage and bringing them to life for her stage performances.

A Grammy-nominated singer, songwriter, guitarist, actress and activist, she embraces modernity as well as tradition. Hugely charismatic, Diawara has played major festivals including Glastonbury (UK), worked with the likes of Gorillaz, Herbie Hancock and Cuban jazz pianist Roberto Fonseca and formed a super group of Malian artists.

— ONA



FUN & FROLIC CONTINUES

There is a chance for people who are yet to visit Muscat Nights to catch up during the last week and enjoy the festivities as they conclude on February 4.

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

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MUSCAT NIGHTS is full of enthusiasm, participation, games, debates, fun, and all that can meet the entertainment needs of the visitors, as the extravaganza, which started on January 19, is reaching its climax.

The festivities associated with the Muscat Nights concludes on February 4.

There is a chance for people who are yet to visit Muscat Nights to catch up in the last week and enjoy the festivities.

In Qurum the UV Act is held at 6.40 pm, 8 pm and 9.40 pm. The Football Juggler is in action at 4.40 pm, 6.25 pm and 7.50 pm. The Bubble Ballerina is from 5 pm and 8.50 pm and the show Chupa Chupa at 6 pm and 9.15 pm.

One of the major attractions of Qurum Natural Park is the collection of Lake Shows - Lake Boats, Helium Balloon and Acrobatic shows, which are held at 7.45 pm, 8.45 pm and 10.25 pm.

The water screen projector shows are at 7.45 pm and 8.45 pm. The 3D Water Fountain show is at 7.30 pm, 8.30 pm and 10 pm. The Drone show is only presented on Thursday and Friday at 9 pm.

Qurum Natural Park is screening the feature film Pathan at 6.15 pm and 8.50 pm until February 4.

Meanwhile, at Naseem Park, the Madagascar Show is held at 8 pm and 10 pm Sunday through Wednesday, and on the weekend, at 5 pm, 8 pm and 10 pm.

The stage activities at Naseem Park have been popular, ranging from magic shows (6.30 pm and 9 pm), swing shows (5 pm, 6.15 pm and 7.45 pm) LED Drums (6 pm, 8.10 pm, 9.40 pm), Fire Show (6.45 pm, 8.45 pm and 10.15 pm), Hologram Dance (7.45 pm, 8.40 pm and 10 pm) and the Drone Show is on Monday at 9 pm.

Naseem Park is also hosting the Heritage Village, which consists of Muscat Nights Coffee, Habboh Museum Center, Ummy House, Dar Al Atta and Charity Teams Corner, Craftsmen Corner, Mandoos Omani Food, Muscat Nights Fashion Museum, Habboh Heritage House, Dukaniyah Nights Muscat, Arabic Calligraphy and Graffiti corner and traditional Omani teams performances of folklore music and dance.

Oman Automobile Association begins its sessions at 4 pm and continues all the way until 11 pm. Their daily activities are Artists Alley, SMEs exhibitions, E-Sports Tournament, Padel Arena and Japanese Village.

Gates open at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre at 4 pm, and one can enjoy the activities till 11 pm.

The stage shows Akkadian and Alice in Wonderland continue to be presented at 5.40 pm, 7.40 pm and 9.40 pm. The Winter in Woods Arctic Cirque parade is presented at 6 pm, 7.30 pm, 9 pm and 10.30 pm.

Fantasy Lion is held at 5 pm, 7 pm, and 8.30 pm. Mr Pop is at 4.15 pm, 6.45 pm, 8.45 pm and 9.45 pm and 3D mapping is at 6.40 pm and 8.40 pm.





GCC common market discussed at economic committee meeting

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Finance, took part in the 118th extraordinary meeting of the GCC Financial and Economic Cooperation Committee and the joint meeting with the Trade Cooperation Committee, held via video-conferencing.

The meeting discussed the remaining steps towards establishing the customs union in accordance with the set timeframe and implementing the steps needed for the GCC Common Market.

The meeting was held under the chairmanship of Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance.

During the meeting, the



ministers and under-secretaries reviewed economic decisions issued by the GCC Supreme Council in its 43rd session.

The meeting also covered various topics, recommendations and matters related to financial and economic joint cooperation.

As for the joint meeting with the Trade Cooperation Committee, the ministers and undersecretaries touched on economic decisions issued by the ministerial council in its 154th session.

It was attended by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister

of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

Moreover, the ministers and under-secretaries underscored the importance of integrative coordination and boosting the role of committees in implementing decisions. — ONA

Omani Culture Festival from March 19

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth will organise the Omani Culture Festival 2023, from March 19 to 22, with the participation of poets and guests both from inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman.

The four-day festival includes a variety of events, including poetry both in its popular and classical form and folk arts. Sixteen Omani poets will participate in the festival, in addition to poets from the Gulf and Arab countries.

As for the Omani folklore event, the folklore groups qualified to participate will present their paintings that represent some of the Omani arts from various governorates during the festival.

Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture, explained that the Omani Culture Festival touches the reality and aspirations of the artists. The festival aims to be one of the cultural forums for poets, artists, connoisseurs of arts from inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman.

He also added that the festival also includes Omani folklore, which is part of the personality of the citizen and reflects his



interaction with his environment and society.

The idea of the festival comes as an embodiment of the Omani heritage and the various arts that accompany it. The festival sheds light on poetry in both its eloquent and popular parts, as well as folk arts, according to a creative vision in which elite Omani poets and guests from inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman meet.

Abdullah bin Mohammed al Harthy, Director General of Knowledge and Cultural Development, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, said Omani poets will be given the opportunity to participate in the festival, and their participation will not be limited to a specific topic or age group, or the poem's affiliation with any form of poetry.

Al Harthy confirmed that the qualified poets will announce their poems through various media platforms, well in advance of the festival, and the owners of the qualified texts must attend the festival's activities.

Ahmed bin Abdullah al Busaidy, Director General of Arts

at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, explained that Omani folk arts will be a distinguished feature at the festival. A committee will select the best paintings for these troupes, by specifying conditions, namely that the troupe be registered with the Ministry and hold a valid licence.

The festival programme includes many events like a symposium on folk poetry and eloquent poetry, a symposium on preserving the Omani heritage, in addition to individual and group performances by folk groups and several links for individual performance in folk arts. — ONA

UTAS holds workshop for design, communication staff

BADRIYA MOHAMMED AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JAN 29

The College of Creative Industries at The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) organised an informative two-day workshop for Mass Communication and Design lecturers from six branches of the University at UTAS recently.

Around 80 Master and PhD holder lecturers from the majors of Mass Communication and Design attended the workshop. The six branches of UTAS taking part in the workshop are from Muscat, Nizwa, Sur, Ibri, Suhar and Salalah.

Dr Fatima al Amri, Dean, College of Creative Industries, started with a welcome talk. This was followed with a presentation by Dr Amna al Abri, lecturer in Mass Communication department, and Assistant Dean of Creative Industries College, UTAS Nizwa.

She explained about writing new courses' aims, objectives and learning outcomes since most of lecturers were working on programme revision and designing new courses of different majors.

Attendees were trained on how to align the course learning outcomes with Oman Qualification Framework. Activities on how to write objectives for some courses were also held. Some of the teams displayed their accomplished tasks during the workshop. Question and answer session was held after each workshop.

Dr Sara al Bahlani, Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs and Scientific Research , from Nizwa UTAS, who handled the assessment elaborated on how to write assessments and the best ways of choosing the right assessment for the targeted year of students and the course nature. Writing an high quality rubric for the assessments was also highlighted. At the end of the workshop, the participants were told on how to write a correct rubric and on the elements to mark the students.

The two-day workshop was effective and all participants had an effective discussion amongst each other. The workshop provided an opportunity for networking among the lecturers from the different branches of UTAS.

A feedback survey was also e-mailed to all the participants.



RE-TENDER

Nama Shared Services invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their best offers for the tender below:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR)
Re NSS/2022/7	METER DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM UPGRADE FOR NAMA DISTRIBUTION COMPANY	5-Feb-2023	12-Feb-2023	100/- Plus VAT Amount (5 OMR) Total: 105 OMR (Non-Refundable)

- Interested party may purchase the tender through the company website (www.nama.om/ar/new-tenders) and Supplier User Guide is available to be downloaded at the same page.
- Payment of the tender fees to be done online through the link available in website. The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 12.00 pm.
- Bids shall be submitted online through I-supplier portal before 03.00 pm, time of the Sultanate, on Sunday 12-Feb-2023.
- Each bid should be accompanied with a temporary insurance, in the form of a bank guarantee from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate, covering (1%) of the total bid value and valid for a period of (90) days from the last date for submission of offers. Tenders that do not include the required temporary insurance will not be considered. The original hard copy of the bid bond should be dropped in the tender box at Nama Holding reception.
- NSS is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.



Nama Holding
In Beach One Building, 3rd Floor (Units 305 & 307), Shatti Al Qurum
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جامعة الشرقية
A' SHARQIYAH UNIVERSITY

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

A'Sharqiyah University (ASU) is a private higher education institution located in Ibra, North of A'Sharqiyah Governorate of the Sultanate of Oman, about 150 km from Muscat. It was established in 2009 by Ministerial Decision (78/2009) issued by the Ministry of Higher Education.

Tender details:
ASU's Tender Committee has the pleasure to invite the companies who are experienced in Design, Supply & Installation of 980 KWP Grid Connected Solar PV Project:

Tender No.	Description	Document Collection Deadline	Site Visit Date	Bids Submission Deadline	Document Fees
ASU/05/2023	Design, Supply & Installation of 980KWP Grid Connected Solar PV Project at A'Sharqiyah University	05/02/2023	08/02/2023 11:00 am	23/02/2023	100 OMR

- The participated companies of this tender should have (DCRP License) of Grade 2 or 3.
- The specialized companies of the above assignment can obtain the tender document from Procurement and Contracts Department at A'Sharqiyah University, Ibra, during the working days from 9:00 am to 03:00 pm.
- Bids have to be submitted in closed sealed envelopes with red wax, addressed to (Tender Committee, A'Sharqiyah University - Ibra), bearing the tender subject with its reference number with no indication to the name of bidders.
- The submitting of the main envelope should contain the following:
 - Separate sealed envelope contains technical proposal (1 original copy + 2 copies).
 - Separate sealed envelope contains commercial proposal (1 original copy + 2 copies).
 - Separate sealed envelope contains tender bond.
- ASU general terms and conditions of tenders shall apply on all submitted bids.
http://www.asu.edu.om/downloads/purchase_terms_conditions.pdf
- ASU is not bound to accept the lowest bid.
- For more details, please don't hesitate to contact us on: (+968) 25401115/25401116.



Nato chief in South Korea to deepen ties in Asia



Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (L) shakes hands with South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin during their meeting at the Foreign Ministry in Seoul on Sunday. – AFP

SEOUL: Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg arrived in South Korea on Sunday, the first stop on a trip that will include Japan and is aimed at strengthening ties with the US allies in the face of the war in Ukraine and rising competition with China.

In the South Korean capital, Seoul, Stoltenberg met Foreign Minister Park Jin, and was expected to meet President Yoon Suk-yeol and Minister of National Defence Lee Jong-Sup.

Nato is concerned about North Korea’s “reckless” missile tests and nuclear weapon programme, while the war in Ukraine had ramifications for Asia, Stoltenberg told Park in remarks at the beginning of their meeting, citing suspicion that North Korea is providing military support to the Russian war effort.

“This just highlights how we are interconnected,” he said.

Both officials cited “shared

values” between Nato countries and South Korea.

“Given today’s unprecedented global challenges, we believe that solidarity among countries that share values of freedom, democracy, and rule of law is more important than ever,” Park said. Flying to Tokyo on Monday, the secretary general has meetings scheduled with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and other Japanese officials.

While Nato will remain focused on Europe and North America, its members are affected by issues around the world, Stoltenberg told South Korea’s Yonhap News agency in an interview.

“We need to address these global threats and challenges, including the challenges coming from China, and one way of doing that is, of course, to work more closely with partners in the region,” he said.

Yoon and Kishida became the

first leaders from their countries to attend a Nato summit, joining alliance leaders as observers last year.

Following the summit, South Korea opened its first diplomatic mission to Nato, vowing to deepen cooperation on non-proliferation, cyber defence, counter-terrorism, disaster response and other security areas.

North Korea has said Nato involvement in the Asia-Pacific region would import the conflict raging in Europe.

Both North Korea and Russia have denied US accusations that North Korea is supplying weapons for the war in Ukraine.

North Korea on Sunday criticised for a second day a US decision to send tanks to Ukraine, calling it an “unethical crime” aimed at perpetuating an unstable international situation.

— Reuters

At least 51 killed in twin Pakistan transport tragedies

BELA, Pakistan: At least 51 people were killed in two separate transport accidents in western Pakistan on Sunday, when a bus plunged off a bridge and a boat carrying a class of children capsized.

Forty-one are so far confirmed dead after their bus crashed into a ravine in southwestern Balochistan province, while at least 10 students died in the boating accident in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, officials said.

As many as three are still missing in the waters, with a rescue operation under way.

At the remote site of the bus crash, north of the city of Bela in Lasbela district, senior administration official Hamza Anjum said “the dead bodies... are beyond recognition”.

Anjum said 40 corpses were retrieved from the wreck alongside three injured, one of whom died shortly after. The remaining two survivors were in “serious” condition.

The charred brown husk of the vehicle chassis smoked on a dry riverbed under the bridge on Sunday, according to video released by the provincial government.

A team of men used heavy machinery to move the twisted metal aside and pull out the burnt remains, which were then shrouded in white cloth.

Head of the local rescue service Asghar Ramazan said the bus had been loaded with containers of oil.

“When the bus fell down, it immediately caught fire,” he said. The oil “caused the fire to flare up so much that it was difficult to control”, he added.

The bus was reportedly carrying a total of 48 passengers



Men mourn the death of their relatives, who were killed after a bus crash in Lasbela District of Balochistan province, outside a hospital morgue in Karachi, Pakistan, on Sunday. – Reuters

The charred brown husk of the vehicle chassis smoked on a dry riverbed under the bridge, according to video released by the provincial government

when it hit a pillar on the bridge and careened off course earlier on Sunday.

It had been travelling overnight between Balochistan’s provincial capital of Quetta and the southern port city of Karachi.

“It is feared that the driver may have fallen asleep,” Anjum said, also mentioning the possibility he had been speeding during the long-distance trip.

“We will investigate the causes of the accident,” he said, adding that DNA tests would be needed to determine the identity of the remains, which had been “badly mutilated”.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, local police official Mir Rauf said all of the drowned so far recovered from the boating accident on

Tanda Dam lake were aged between seven and 14. A total of 17 were rescued alive from the reservoir by Sunday afternoon.

“Everything was normal until suddenly the boat overturned,” said 11-year-old survivor Muhammad Mustafa from his hospital bed in the nearby city of Kohat.

“I got stuck under the boat,” he said. “My shawl and sweater weighed me down, so I took them off.”

“The water was extremely cold and my body went numb. I thought I was going to pass out when a man on an inflatable tube saved me.”

One of the rescued was a teacher, who remained unconscious as the rescue operation continued for up to three pupils still missing. The class of madrassa students “went out for a picnic and boating” at the scenic location, district police chief Abdul Rauf said.

“According to the information so far, the boat was in a dilapidated condition and it was overloaded too,” he said.

— AFP

Few voting in Tunisian poll amid rise in president’s powers

TUNIS: Tunisian polling stations were quiet on Sunday for run-offs in a parliamentary election that drew only 11 per cent turnout in December’s first round, an outcome critics of the president said undermined his claims of public support for sweeping political change.

With political parties boycotting the vote, most candidates are independents and attention is likely to focus on whether there will be higher participation than there was in December.

The electoral commission said

that turnout stood at 4.7 per cent at 11 am on Sunday, three hours after polls opened. In December it had announced turnout of about 3 per cent at 10 am.

The commission will use Sunday’s figure as the overall one for both rounds of the election and the opposition has said it fears the authorities will try to inflate the figures.

“I’m not interested in elections that do not concern me,” said Nejb Sahli, 40, passing a polling station in the Hay Ettahrir district of Tunis shortly before voting was due to begin.



A man shows the ink on his finger after he voted at a polling station during the second round of the parliamentary election in Tunis, Tunisia, on Sunday. – Reuters

Inside the polling station, a Reuters journalist said no voters had appeared during the 20 minutes he spent there after polls officially opened.

President Kais Saied has decreed the new, mostly powerless, parliament as part of a reconfigured presidential system that he introduced after shutting down the previous parliament in 2021 and assuming broad control over the state.

Saied’s critics accuse him of seeking to dismantle the democratic system enacted after Tunisia’s 2011 revolution, which

sparked the Arab Spring, and they ridiculed December’s ultra-low turnout as evidence that his changes lack popular support.

At a cafe in Ettahrir only Mongi Layouni, one of seven men sitting drinking coffee, said he might vote.

“I don’t know. Maybe I will go later,” he said.

Another man sitting in the cafe, who gave his name only as Imad, said he did not believe his vote mattered after Saied’s political changes.

“The president alone is deciding everything,” he said. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

BEIJING

China approves two domestic Covid drugs

China has approved two domestically developed oral medicines for Covid-19 patients with mild symptoms, the National Medical Products Administration said on Sunday.

The drugs, used for treating adult patients with mild to moderate Covid-19 infections, have been developed by Simcere Pharmaceutical Group and a unit of Shanghai Junshi Biosciences Co Ltd, the administration said in a statement on its website.

China abandoned its stringent



“zero Covid” policy in early December after protests against it, allowing people to travel and the virus to spread rapidly throughout the country, boosting demand for Covid treatments.

MALE

Maldives President Solih wins party primary

Maldives President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih won the ruling Maldivian Democratic Party’s (MDP) presidential primary election, the first time an incumbent has faced a primary challenge, according to preliminary results on Sunday.

But his challenger, former President Mohamed Nasheed has not accepted the results reported by the party.

An official from his campaign said on Saturday the results were questionable, as voter tallies



in some ballot stations did not match total eligible voters.

Nasheed’s supporters and representatives have alleged voter fraud and vote rigging in the election.

TEHRAN

Quake kills three, injures 800 in Iran

A 5.9-magnitude earthquake hit northwestern Iran overnight, killing at least three people and injuring more than 800 in the region near the border with Turkey, state officials and media said on Sunday.

Panicked residents fled their homes as buildings collapsed and rubble crushed cars, with hundreds seeking shelter from freezing winter conditions in evacuation centres as more than 20 aftershocks rattled the region.

The shallow quake hit the



city of Khoys, with a population of around 200,000, in West Azerbaijan province at 9:44 pm (1814 GMT) on Saturday, said the Seismological Center of the University of Tehran.



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In brief

■ VATICAN CITY



POPE CONDEMNS INCREASING 'DEATH SPIRAL' IN MIDEAST

Pope Francis on Sunday condemned a resurgence of violence in the Middle East, calling on both sides in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to engage in a "sincere search for peace." "The death spiral that increases day by day only closes the few glimmers of trust that exist between the two peoples," said the pope following his traditional Angelus prayer in St Peter's Square.

Francis, 86, cited 10 Palestinians, including a woman, killed in an Israeli army raid on a refugee camp in the West Bank, and an attack on Friday by a Palestinian gunman that killed seven Israelis outside a synagogue in east Jerusalem.

■ MOSCOW



PUTIN OPEN 'TO CONTACTS' WITH GERMAN

Russian President Vladimir Putin is open to contacts with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz though has no phone call scheduled with him, a Kremlin spokesman told the state RIA Novosti news agency on Sunday.

Germany, previously the West's main holdout on providing modern battle tanks to Ukraine to help it fight off Russia's invasion, said last week it would send 14 of its Leopard 2 tanks to Kyiv and also approve Leopard shipments by allied European countries.

The announcement, followed shortly afterwards by a US pledge of M1 Abrams tanks to Kyiv, infuriated the Kremlin.

■ CAPE TOWN



RUSSIAN RESEARCH VESSEL DOCKS IN CAPE TOWN

A Russian polar research vessel docked in South Africa's Cape Town harbour at the weekend as climate protesters raised fears it could be used to help Moscow explore for minerals in protected Antarctica. The Akademik Aleksandr Karpinskiy icebreaker is on its way to the Antarctic as part of a scientific expedition launched late last year, according to Russian media. The ship is owned by the Polar Marine Geosurvey Expedition, a subsidiary of the Russian state-owned mineral exploration company RosGeo. "We believe that exploitation will be happening next," said Extinction Rebellion spokeswoman.

INDEPENDENT ADVISER FINDS SERIOUS BREACHES OF CODE

British Premier Sunak sacks party chairman Zahawi over tax affairs

LONDON: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak sacked Conservative Party chair Nadhim Zahawi on Sunday after an investigation found he committed a serious breach by not being open about a tax probe, the latest scandal to hit one of Sunak's top ministers.

Sunak had initially stood by Zahawi before ordering an independent adviser to investigate questions over his tax affairs after it emerged Zahawi had settled a probe by Britain's tax authority HMRC last year.

Zahawi has said the tax body ruled he had been "careless" with his declarations but hadn't deliberately made an error to pay less tax, confirming he paid a penalty to HMRC.

Sunak's independent adviser Laurie Magnus said that Zahawi didn't declare that his tax affairs were being investigated when he was briefly made finance minister last year, and failed to disclose details when Sunak appointed him to his current role.

"Following the completion of the Independent Adviser's investigation... it is clear that there has been a serious breach of the Ministerial Code," Sunak said in a letter to Zahawi.

"As a result, I have informed you of my decision to remove you from your position in His Majesty's Government."

Zahawi's response to Sunak did not mention either the HMRC or independent adviser's investigation.

He expressed concern at the conduct of some in the media in recent weeks and said he would support Sunak's agenda as a backbench lawmaker.

"I am sorry to my family for the toll this has taken on them,"



A protester holds a placard outside Number 10 Downing Street, in London, Britain, last Wednesday. — Reuters

he said. It is a setback to Sunak's attempt at a government reset after a chaotic year that saw three different British prime ministers. An investigation into alleged bullying by Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab is ongoing and could cause further headaches.

One Conservative lawmaker said sacking Zahawi was "clearly the right decision," adding Zahawi "should have resigned to avoid the embarrassment."

"Raab is rather different," the lawmaker, who declined to be named, said.

"One man's bullying is another's firm direction." Raab has denied bullying allegations.

The opposition Labour Party said that Sunak had shown weakness in how he had handled the Zahawi and Raab cases.

"It's vital that we now get

answers to what Rishi Sunak knew and when did he know it," Labour's education spokesperson Bridget Phillipson said on Sunday.

Zahawi's sacking comes as Sunak's government, facing decades-high inflation and a wave of public sector strikes, trails badly in opinion polls ahead of an expected 2024 election.

Magnus said that the details of HMRC's own investigation - relating to Zahawi's co-founding in 2000 of opinion polling firm YouGov, and how many shares his father had taken to support its launch - was outside the scope of his own inquiry.

But he found that Zahawi had failed to declare HMRC's probing of affairs, or acknowledge that they were a serious matter.

Zahawi had characterised reports last July over his tax affairs as "clearly smears." Zahawi did not

correct the record until last week, when he said he had reached a settlement with the authorities.

"I consider that this delay in correcting an untrue public statement is inconsistent with the requirement for openness," Magnus said in a letter to Sunak.

He added that Zahawi had shown "insufficient regard" for the requirement "to be honest, open and an exemplary leader through his own behaviour."

Zahawi became finance minister following Sunak's own resignation from the role in July last year, which helped end Boris Johnson's scandal-hit premiership.

When he replaced Liz Truss as prime minister after her brief but tumultuous time in power, Sunak promised that "this government will have integrity, professionalism and accountability at every level."

— Reuters

French PM says no dice on pension age as strikes loom

PARIS: France's prime minister on Sunday ruled out backtracking on a plan to raise the retirement age as unions prepared for another day of mass protests against the contested reform.

An increase in the minimum retirement age to 64 from the current 62 is part of a flagship reform package pushed by President Emmanuel Macron to ensure the future financing of France's pensions system.

After union protests against the change brought out over a million people into the streets on January 19, the government signalled there was wiggle room on some measures, including the number of contributing years needed to qualify for a full pension, special deals for people who started working very young, and provisions for mothers who interrupted their careers to look after their children.

But the headline age limit of 64 was not up for discussion, Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne said on Sunday. "This is now non-negotiable," she told the FranceInfo broadcaster.

While unions have welcomed the government's readiness for negotiation on parts of the plan, they say the proposed 64-year rule has to go. — AFP



Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne

India's space startups are in for exciting growth

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

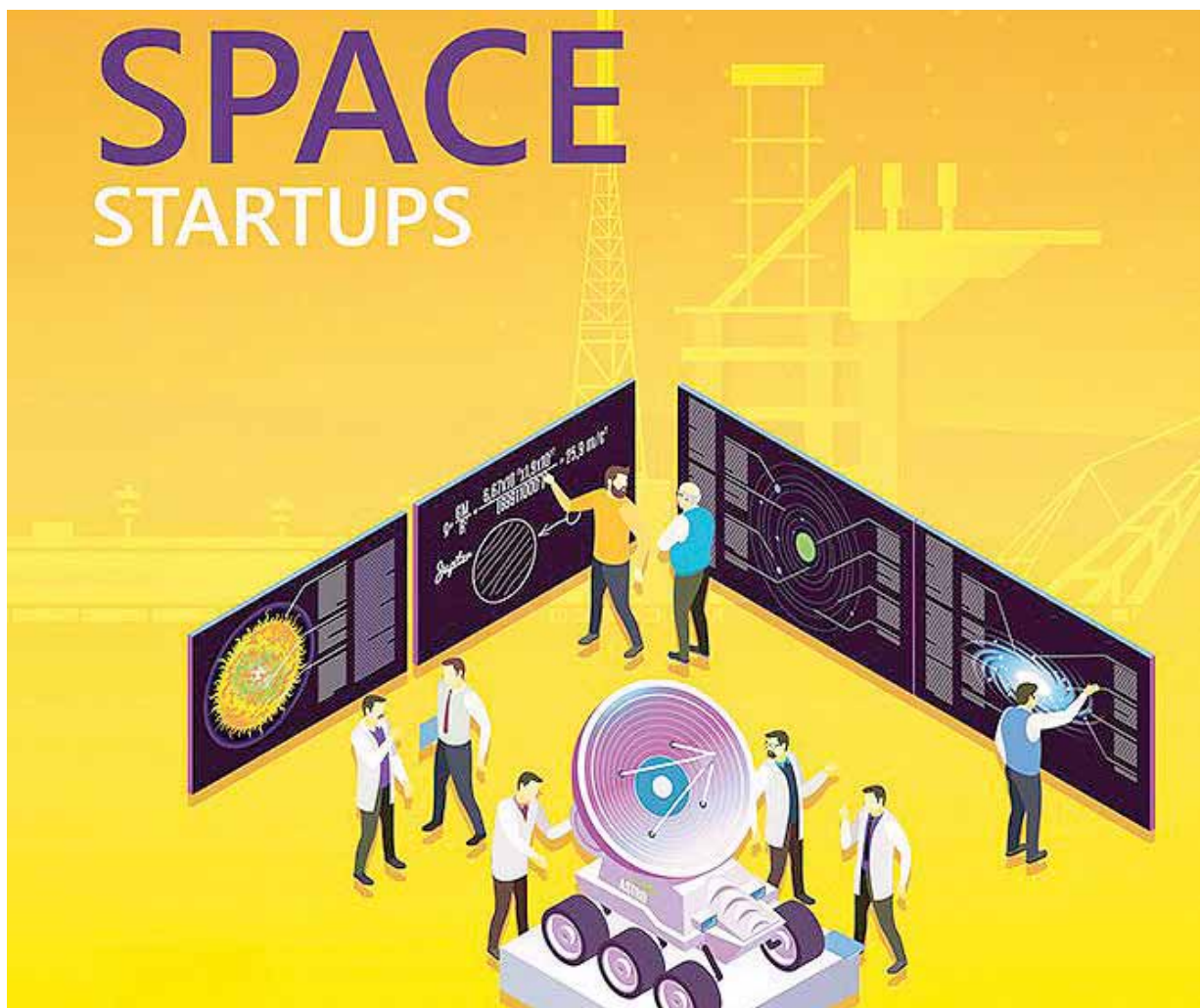
@patkaushal

With the opening of the 'space doors' for new players in recent years, India's space startups are in for exciting developments in 2023. In 2022, the space industry of India hit several key milestones, including Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV), the first trial launch of the Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro); two rounds of satellite launches from private space firms, and India's first private rocket launch.

The space startups are looking for key announcements from Isro in terms of the ambitious Gaganyaan, and the private startups could find regular launch footing.

The startups that made headlines in 2022 included, Skyroot, Pixxel, Agnikul Cosmo, Dhruva Space, and Bellatrix Aerospace. The Skyroot start-up's milestone achievements in 2022 were \$50.5 million raised funding for Series B round and its investment led by the foreign investor — Singapore's sovereign fund, GIC.

"Not only did this make Skyroot the most-funded private space startup in India at the moment, it also made the funding round the



largest single round of funding to date for India's fledgling space sector," Techcircle, which keeps an eye on technological developments, reported. "The

funding round showed that international investors are harbouring increasing amounts of confidence in the Indian space sector," Techcircle quoted Sheetal

Bahl, partner at venture capital firm GrowX Ventures, saying to the Mint. Among only three private startups in India to have flown at least one of its satellites

or launchers to space is Dhruva Space, with its headquarters in Hyderabad. It made two launches with tech demonstrator satellites that can prove its capability as a contract manufacturer for satellites.

Among the first successful private Indian startups is Pixxel, which sent its first satellite, Shakuntala, to a low Earth orbit (LEO) aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket in April 2022.

As the startup followed the launch aboard Isro's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)'s C54 mission for its second satellite, it took a step closer to establishing a high-resolution satellite imaging constellation. Agnikul also has the distinction of becoming the first space startup to open its own ground station and mission control room in the Isro's premises. "Agnikul also opened doors to its own rocket engine manufacturing facility. At the moment, it remains the only private startup with its own assembly chain to make its robots — and not need to partner with a vendor," Techcircle report said. With a strong ecosystem, many new space startups are in the pipeline in India and the year 2023 needs to be watched for the sector.

Progress beyond the instant gratification loop



Hyesha Barrett
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The writer is a Life Coach and NLP practitioner

With the fast paced race of the instant world we are living in, with online gaming, social media and virtual reality (VR) highly influencing the youth of today; and with most things happening at the speed of a click, we cannot then be surprised by our desire for momentaneous manifestation or instant gratification.

Who doesn't get frustrated when the connection is low?

By connection, I mean with the online world, not with the physical world. We want things quicker, easier, faster all the while disregarding the breadth of our feelings.

We are too eager to attain rapid results quickly, impatient to allow the necessary passage of time for

developments to unfold and for us to go through the full set of emotions and deep desires time brings.

Studies have shown that at the end of 100 peoples' lives who have been documented from their 40's till 80's, the things they are grateful for and happy about are the long-term relationships they cultivated, with like-minded spirits and also having delved deep into the understanding of their own person.

The main achievements they were thankful for and talked about with pride were reaped from the hard, arduous periods they invested in learning from mistakes and growing in spite of them.

Being aware of the loop we are stuck in and finding means

ALWAYS KEEP THE GOAL
IN SIGHT AND WORK
CONSISTENTLY TOWARDS
STRENGTHENING THOSE
MUSCLES OF RESILIENCE,
PUSHING YOURSELF
THROUGH YOUR FEAR ZONE
TOWARDS YOUR GROWTH
ZONE

to change it slowly and steadily, step by step with daily consistent actions can reap the rewards we are seeking.

How can it not?

Let's take some time to think about the plants we wish to grow, the seedlings we can sow today and nurture daily so we can look back

one year, five years and ten years from now contend that we chose to spend the right energy, time and effort on the foundational growth of our long-term dreams and goals.

In believing our vision projected into the future, we can learn to quieten the noise of the external world, unlearn the bad behaviours we have acquired over time and relearn a new way of building healthy and happy habits into our daily routines.

Always keep the goal in sight and work consistently towards strengthening those muscles of resilience, pushing yourself through your fear zone towards your growth zone. This practice comprises the epitome of true fulfilment.

The instant click is unfortunately short lived, for the serotonin levels in our brain need a constant spike in order to re-feel that pang of joy.

Ultimately, stable happy hormones are what we are on the steady quest for. Moving out of the instant gratification loop and focusing on long term objectives can only create a sustainable and successful outcome. The results you will reap will be the evidence of your regular daily actions.

When we spend the time and effort conserving our relationships, with self and with other living things, we grow into developing a much more meaningful connection with this wonderful life that surrounds us and breathes inside of us.

Sudanese tighten belts as economic crisis grinds on

ABDELMONEIM ABU IDRIS ALI

As Sudan's economic crisis drags on, grocer Hassan Omar keeps busy cleaning packaged food items that have been gathering dust for months as his dwindling customer base make fewer purchases.

"People can no longer afford to buy all their needs," Omar, 43, said, at his grocery store in the capital Khartoum.

"Purchasing power has significantly declined over the past six months," he said, noting that his sales had plummeted from 500,000 Sudanese pounds (\$877) to 200,000 pounds (\$350) per day over that period.

His plight reflects Sudan's spiralling economic crisis which has forced many households to tighten their belts as nearly one third of the 45 million population face acute hunger.

Some 65 per cent of the population live below the poverty line, according to a 2020 report by the United Nations.

The country's economic troubles stem from decades of government mismanagement, armed conflict and international sanctions against the government of president Omar al Bashir, who was ousted in April 2019 following mass protests against his rule triggered by biting hardship.

The crisis further deepened following a 2021 military coup led by army chief Abdel Fattah al Burhan, which upended a transition to civilian rule and triggered cuts to crucial international aid.

"We are trying to find cheaper alternatives to the food we normally consume," said Soaad Bashir, a government employee and mother of four.

"My income is very low and expenses are too high," said the 43-year-old who makes less than 200,000 Sudanese pounds per month.

North Khartoum vegetable seller Al Nour Adam says he has suffered heavy losses over the past nine months.

"Much of the produce spoilt because no one was buying it," said Adam, who now offers a smaller range of vegetables in an attempt to cut his losses. "It can't go on like this or I will have to find another job."

Inflation in Sudan has eased over the past year, falling to 87 per cent in December from 318 per cent in the same month of 2021 but analysts say that is not a sign of the economy improving.

"Inflation has simply declined because market activity has for months been at a standstill," said Abdalla al Ramady, economics professor at Al Nilin University.

"There is no demand, so prices of commodities are not going up. It's a complete recession." Grocer Omar confirmed he had not raised his prices in months. The economic crisis has hit wide sections of Sudanese society not just the poor. — AFP

To fix its problems in Ukraine, Russia turns to the architect of the war

HELENE COOPER, JULIAN E BARNES AND ERIC SCHMITT

NOW ON
HIS THIRD
OVERALL WAR
COMMANDER,
PUTIN HAS
ACCOMPLISHED
FEW OF HIS
GOALS.
RUSSIAN TROOPS
HAVE FAILED TO
SEIZE KYIV,
THE CAPITAL
WHILE
PRESIDENT
VOLODYMYR
ZELENSKYY IS
STILL IN POWER

Gen Valery Gerasimov, the architect of President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, took over the day-to-day running of Russia's war effort this month by convincing his boss that his predecessor was too passive, US and European officials say.

But Gerasimov's turbocharged strategy is what led to Russia's problems to begin with, and Moscow still does not have the troops, ammunition or equipment that military officials say it needs to mass the big offensive promised by the country's senior military leader.

Since Gerasimov replaced Gen Sergei Surovikin, who was in the job for three months, Russia's military leadership has focused on tactical issues like whether troops should travel in civilian vehicles and the dangers of their cellphone use, Western officials say.

But while those matters have certainly bedevilled service members, there is no evidence that the Russian military has begun to address its fundamental problems, like shortages of ammunition and well-trained troops, despite the musical chairs of generals, according to these officials.

In Washington, where military and defence officials walk the halls of the Pentagon with lists of the steadily growing number of Russian generals who have been fired or demoted during 11 months of war (nine so far), the latest instalment of who's in charge is viewed as part of a drama with an ever-evolving cast of characters who have not gotten the job done.

"It's kind of like a reality TV show," Colin Kahl, the undersecretary of defence for policy, told reporters last week.

"And I think it's more indicative that the Russians have still not figured it out about how they intend to command the fight, and I think the dysfunction among Russian commanders is pretty profound."

Now on his third overall war commander, Putin has accomplished few of his goals.

Russian troops have failed to seize Kyiv, the capital; President Volodymyr



A Ukrainian wrapped in the country's flag at Maidan Square during the parade of captured Russian tanks as they celebrate Independence Day in Kyiv.

Zelenskyy is still in power; Ukraine has closer ties to the West than ever; and despite signs of some cracks, Nato remains united. Even Russia's more limited goal of taking over the entire eastern region of the Donbas remains elusive.

To fix this mess, Putin has turned to none other than Gerasimov.

For 10 years, Gerasimov was believed to be working to modernise the Russian armed forces as the chief of general staff for the military — the equivalent of the US chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

He had studied US misadventures in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, the former Yugoslavia and Libya, and aimed to incorporate those insights into the plans.

But evidence of that effort has yet to emerge on the Ukrainian battlefield.

Gerasimov, 67, comes complete with contradictions that characterise senior Russian leaders: His counterparts in the West say that he has personal integrity but that he pushes the lies of his government.

He told Western officials early last year that Russia had no intention of invading Ukraine; weeks later, Russian troops had crossed the border.

He has also remained close to Putin, who appointed him head of his

military more than a decade ago.

As he sought to overhaul the Russian military, Gerasimov elevated the irregular warfare tactics that he falsely believed that Americans were conducting, instead of focusing on what the United States did well — combined arms warfare, blending various military capabilities to create overwhelming force, Seth G. Jones, a national security expert, argues in his book "Three Dangerous Men."

As a result, Russia's military gained expertise in subterfuge and clandestine tactics, like sending Russian Spetsnaz special forces units, without insignia, to Crimea before Russia illegally annexed the peninsula in 2014.

But the war in Ukraine has required a different kind of manoeuvring: offensive campaigns by large numbers of ground forces operating in different areas with the goal of seizing land. There, Gerasimov has been ineffective.

The troops sent to take Kyiv in the early days of the war lacked even basic supplies and soon stalled outside the city.

He did not hone the military's ability to move large numbers of different kinds of troops, by land, air and sea, yet his invasion plan depended on that.

— *The New York Times*

Mirroring characters on stage of life

Life is like a play performed in the theatre where you play your role with other people who have different characters. However, it becomes difficult when you have to interact with people of dissimilar attitudes, and motives.

It becomes further complicated if you are thorough professional; there are many who will try to demoralise and bring you down.

At the same time, there are also good people who will understand you and help you achieve your aspirations by inspiring you with their support.

Whether the situation is adverse or favourable, you should be thankful to both categories of people while trying to help yourself to become what you want to be in life.

As Mahatma Gandhi advised, “You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty.

Honest differences are often a healthy sign of progress.” We all have to take part in the play of life, in which we play with actors and actresses of different intentions, mindsets, attitudes and principles.

Nowadays, not only professional stage artists, but many people in real life are forced to play drama making it part of their daily life.

With stage artists, acting is life by entertaining others, for many it is act of escaping from real life by hiding their real personality! Possibly, some are deceiving people by playing a character that is different from their real one!

As William Shakespeare stated, “All the world is a stage, and all the men and women merely players.”

Generally, life is just a combination of good and bad memories, which we experience with different humans around us! Life is too short to get up every day with your mind recalling regrets and negative thoughts of the past memories.

Perhaps all you need to do is to admire those who give you good memories, true experiences and



Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami
aljahdhami22@gmail.com

An author, columnist, creative writer, translator and a communications professional

WE ALL HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE PLAY OF LIFE, IN WHICH WE PLAY WITH ACTORS AND ACTRESSES OF DIFFERENT INTENTIONS, MINDSETS, ATTITUDES AND PRINCIPLES

commendable respect!

Forget the ones who gave you hard times, disrespect and heartbreaking feelings.

Therefore, always remember that there is a reason behind everything happens and every experience you come across in your life!

So, you shall take nothing and nobody for granted. Just keep in mind the fact that your life is a series of actions reflecting back what you have staged on life of others; a non-deniable fact that one shall never forget!

Just stay tuned to get back what comes in return; the good or bad you do comes back to you in a way or another!

It is not too bad to get a bite of someone’s upsetting words or provoking attitude; it could possibly be a recall of a past experience or a reminder of a memorable moment!

Sometimes, one does not realise the true value of a moment until it becomes a memory.

Life is a tragedy when seen in close up, but a comedy in long run for it is a drama where everyone plays a different role on its stage.

Life as a play doesn’t matter how long it lasts, but how well it was played.

In the meantime, distinguish between friends, foes, benefactors and antagonists and identify their role in your life.

The lights dim, the audience settles, the curtain rises, preparation comes to execution and a story comes to life. As the year 2023 kicked off, the curtain is up and you are on stage now, so get out there and give it your best shot!

Closing the door, flipping the page or moving on; regardless what you call it, all that matters is you leave the past where it belongs and make the best out of the rest of your life.

Whatever you have experienced is not the end; it is just your life starting a new chapter.

It is a turning point in your story where one chapter transitions into the next.

WHERE’S THE SNOW?



This combination of pictures created on January 27 shows photos taken on January 7 (top) and January 25 (bottom) of people crossing the Brooklyn Bridge in New York City. New York in wintertime tends to conjure up images of Times Square and Central Park shrouded in snow. The city is forecast to surpass a 50-year record for the latest first snowfall of the season. – AFP

New Czech president expected to foster EU and Ukraine ties

JAN FLEMR

Newly-elected Czech president Petr Pavel, a former Nato general, will promote close ties with the European Union and offer firm support for Ukraine in the face of the Russian invasion, analysts said.

The 61-year-old war hero beat billionaire populist Andrej Babis to win Saturday’s presidential election.

A former chief of Nato’s military committee, he will replace outspoken, divisive incumbent Milos Zeman who had fostered closer ties with Moscow and Beijing before making a U-turn when Russia waged war on Ukraine last year.

Analysts said that Pavel’s experience in military diplomacy would be a clear asset as he held a very different presidency than his predecessor.

“We know that his contacts at Nato, as well as with peers from Nato member states... are very strong, and foreign policy will be his domain,” said Pavel Havlicek, a scientist at the Association for International Affairs in Prague.

“I think he will be a proficient president if we realise the war in Ukraine is one of the key problems

AFTER CZECHOSLOVAKIA SPLIT INTO THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND SLOVAKIA IN 1993, PETR PAVEL BECAME AN ADVOCATE OF EU AND NATO MEMBERSHIP

Europe is facing,” Havlicek said.

Pavel was a member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in the 1980s and began a rapid rise through army ranks until communism fell in 1989. After Czechoslovakia split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993, Pavel became an advocate of EU and Nato membership.

During campaigning he argued there was still “no better alternative.”

He also called for more aid to Ukraine, which was invaded by Russia in February last year.

“He is very much in favour of Ukraine, he has repeatedly voiced his support, and he’s very critical towards Russia,” said Jiri Pehe, a political analyst at New York University Prague.

“His stance will entail strong support to Ukraine without any conditions,” Pehe said.

European leaders have welcomed Pavel’s win, which follows the Czech Republic’s 2022 EU presidency.

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier said Berlin would work “hand in hand for a stronger EU and Nato” with Pavel, while European



Petr Pavel, former Chief of the General Staff of the Czech Army, and his wife Eva arrive for a press conference in Prague, Czech Republic, on Saturday. – AFP

Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen praised his “strong commitment to our European values”.

Pavel is also in favour of adopting the euro as the currency of the Czech Republic.

He is expected to work closely with his country’s governing

centre-right coalition led by Prime Minister Petr Fiala, which also provides military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

“Pavel will draw upon the government’s policy in this sense, and I think there will be no fundamental disputes,” said Palacky University analyst Pavel

Saradin.

“There will be none of that ambivalence we had with Milos Zeman,” said Pehe.

Analysts also expect Pavel to turn a more critical eye towards his country’s close ties with the so-called Visegrad-four group, which consists of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has been at odds with the EU over the rule of law in his country and his ties with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Pavel has criticised Orban on several occasions and met with opposition figures when he visited Hungary last December.

“He would rather redefine the regional cooperation to a broader format of more countries, meaning that Hungary’s influence would be neutralised,” said Pehe.

Havlicek said he also expected Pavel to strengthen ties with the United States.

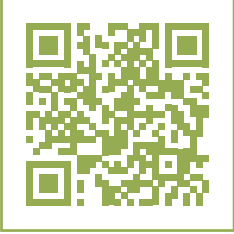
“(Pavel) has great and strong experience with meetings and negotiations and he will show it,” said Havlicek.

“He will be in his element when it comes to foreign policy.”

— AFP

sport

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Muscat Classic to act as prelude to Tour of Oman

OMAN TO HOST CYCLING SHOWDOWN FROM FEB 11 TO 15



ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, JAN 29

Muscat Classic, a new professional road race, will add to the excitement for cycling enthusiasts on the eve of the 12th edition of the Tour of Oman, featuring five stages from February 11 to 15.

In another first for the 2023 edition, the final stage leads the riders to Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, on the slopes of the iconic 'Green Mountain', after an ascent of nearly 6km at more than 10 per cent gradient.

Nine UCI World Teams have confirmed their participation and the national team of Oman will return to action after their debut in 2022, according to the organisers.

The Muscat Classic has joined the international calendar as the only 1.1 race organised in Asia. The riders will have to tackle the course that explores demanding roads towards Al Bustan during the one-day event on February 10.

Peter Sagan, Alexey Lutsenko, Fabian

Cancellara and Andre Greipel are among some cycling superstars who had already won the honours at the course.

FIRST STAGE

On February 11, the Tour of Oman Stage 1 will run from Al Rustaq Fort to Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre. Fernando Gaviria took the first leader's jersey at the sprint-friendly course in 2022.

Stage 2 is in Qurayat, where Anthon Charmig displayed his talent in 2022. The irregular slopes of Jabal Haat (4.6km at 8%) hosts the third stage, before another tough finish on the Yitti hills (stage 4). On this day, the riders will face the longest stage (195.5km), with two climbs inside the last 10 kilometres. After the last summit, there will only be 800 metres left.

GREEN MOUNTAIN STAGE

The decisive stage of the Tour of Oman 2023 is set on the slopes of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar (Green Mountain), the iconic



ascent in the area. The winner needs to climb 5.7km at an average of 10.5% to succeed last edition champion Jan Hirt.

9 UCI WORLD TEAMS

The Muscat Classic and the Tour of Oman 2023 bring together 18 teams,

including nine from the World Tour, which is two more than in 2022.

Six teams from the UCI Pro Teams division will join the action. Recently-relegated Lotto Dstny will be keen to regain their place in the elite while Uno-X Pro Cycling Team will look to repeat their 2022 show at the Tour of Oman.

SCHEDULE

Muscat Classic:
Al Mouj Muscat to Al Bustan

2023 STAGES TOUR OF OMAN:
Stage 1: Al Rustaq Fort to Oman Convention & Exhibition Center (OCEC)
Stage 2: Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex to Qurayat
Stage 3: Al Khobar to Jabal Haat
Stage 4: Izki to Yitti Hills
Stage 5: Samayil 'Al Feyhaa Resthouse' to Al Jabal Al Akhdhar (Green Mountain)

18 TEAMS SELECTED

9 UCI World Teams:
AG2R Citroen Team
Astana-Qazaqstan
Team Bora-Hansgrohe
Cofidis
Intermarche-Circus-Wanty
Movistar Team
Soudal Quick-Step
Team Arkea-Samsic
UAE Team Emirates

6 UCI Pro Teams:
Bingoal WB
Burgos-BH
Equipo Kern Pharma
Human Powered Health
Lotto Dstny
Uno-X Pro Cycling Team

2 Continental Teams:
JCL Team Ukyo
Terengganu Polygon

National Selection:
Oman National Team

Germany overcome Belgium to win hockey World Cup

BHUBANESWAR, India: Germany came from 2-0 behind to overcome defending champions Belgium and win the hockey World Cup on Sunday in a dramatic see-saw final ending in a sudden death shoot-out.

Belgium went ahead in the first quarter in Bhubaneswar, India with Florent Van Aubel collecting the ball after a deflection and smashing it powerfully into the backboard.

Moments later Tanguy Cosyns doubled Belgium's lead,

collecting a neat cross in front of the German goal for an easy tap-in. Germany reviewed the goal decision but it stood.

Early in the second quarter Belgium's keeper Vincent Vanasch saved a penalty stroke but just before half-time Niklas Wellen got one back for Germany.

Germany then scored through Gonzalo Peillat to make it 2-2 and in the final period captain Mats Grambusch squeezed a shot between Vanasch's legs to go ahead 3-2.



Germany players celebrate after winning the FIH Men's Hockey World Cup 2023 final match against Belgium at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar. — AFP

But with under two minutes remaining, Belgium's Tom Boon equalised from a penalty corner, taking the game into a shoot-out. This went to sudden death and Germany won 5-4.

Belgium "is a world-class team... They have so much quality. We knew it would be a huge clash against them," Wellen, named player of the match, said afterwards.

"If you come back from two goals down three times in a row, it's not luck. It's our quality, it's our mentality. And

we showed that again today," he said.

Belgium hockey's golden generation were hoping to win their second World Cup in a row, after cruising into the final despite having the tournament's oldest side.

Their passage to the final included a shoot-out victory over the Netherlands in the semifinals and a 2-0 thumping of New Zealand in the quarters. On their way to the final, Germany beat England and then Australia. — AFP

NATIONAL TEAM ATHLETES DOMINATE OMAN LEAGUE



AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JAN 29

The first round of the Oman Athletics Federation League, organised by the Competitions Committee of the Oman Athletics Association, was held at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher on Friday.

In the general competitions, athletes of the national teams dominated the top places as Barakat al Harthy was ranked first in the 100-metre sprint. Rashid al Asmi claimed the second place while Khaled al Ghailani came in third.

In the 400 metres, Mohammed al Mabsali came in first place. Ahmed al Saadi claimed the second spot, while Othman al Busaidi finished third.

In the 1,500 metres, Hussein al Farsi topped the race, while Ahmed al Amri came in second place, and Mohammed al Sulaimani finished third.

In the long jump, Nawaf al Azki won first place, leaving second place to Bashar al Hadrami, followed by Abdullah al Salmani in third place.

In the youth competitions, national teams athletes showed impressive performance.

In 100 metres sprint, Ali Haji finished first, followed by Moayad al Salami and Abdullah al Handali in second and third respectively.

In the 400 metres race, Hamza



al Jabri came first, Reda al Shizawi and Saifah shared second spot, followed by Hamza al Hinai in third place.

In the 1,500 metres race, Ghosn al Farsi was ranked first, Muath al Jaldani finished second and Abdul Rahman al Kharousi got third place.

ABDULLAH WINS JUNIOR SPRINT

In the 100 metres race for juniors, Abdullah al Balushi came in first place, Salem al Daghishi claimed the second spot and Salem al Khaduri finished third.

In the 1,500 metres race,

place, while Noah al Battashi finished runner-up and Elias al Nahdi finished third.

Osama al Riyami won the long jump title.

In shot put competition, Al Yaman al Hinai won first place, Al Waleed al Hinai came in second and the third place went to HH Sayyid Turki al Said. Mohammed al Balushi claimed the hammer throw honours.

MAZOOON CLAIMS WOMEN'S 100M

In the women's section, national team star Mazoon al Alawi claimed the 100-metre crown. Alaa al Zadjali came in second place and Hajar al Habsi finished third.

In the 1,500 metres race, Hana al Qasimi clinched the honours. Ragah al Zubaidi bagged the shot put title.

Asaad al Hosani, Secretary-General of the Oman Athletics Federation and head of the Competitions Committee, said: "The new year 2023 calendar is full of activities and events that serve teams in all age groups and stages, and the new direction of the OAA is to enter into new partnerships with a number of institutions in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. The youth will manage the technical and arbitration aspects by the federation in coordination with the company supervising the organisation."



Royal Cavalry crowned show jumping champions

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, JAN 29

As part of the Muscat Nights, the activities of the show jumping competition were concluded in the Qurum Natural Park on Friday, organised by the Oman Equestrian Federation in cooperation with the Muscat Municipality and the Olympic Equestrian Centre.

The competitions included the government cavalry units, private stables and equestrian enthusiasts, divided into seven categories.

The Royal Cavalry won first place in the Grand Class of the government units at a height of 130 cm. Mohammed bin Salim al Hadhrani on 'Thikrayat', from the local generation of Royal Cavalry, claimed the title.

Al Rayyan Stables round for the juniors (105 cm) saw six horses in action. Natasha Anwar won the first place on 'Linka' from Al Seeb Equestrian Club, Tariq bin Zaid al Balushi finished second on 'Edelbert' from the Seeb Equestrian School, and Sultan bin Rashid al Touqi claimed third place on 'Gatusha' from the Olympic Equestrian Centre.

Five riders took part in the Grand Class round for Al Rayyan Stables with height of 110 cm.

Haider bin Anwar al Rashed on 'Qawim' from Al Arabiya Stables bagged the top honours. Mohammed bin Hamoud al Touqi won the second place on 'Fanayk' from the Olympic Equestrian Centre and Al Yaqeen bint Tahir al Kindiyah finished third place for Al Rayyan Stables.

The junior category of the government units saw participation of 17 horses at a height of 110 cm.

Al Rayyan Stables came on top through Khalid bin Darwish al Subhi on 'Tcharming Geel'. Khalfan bin Hamad al Hattali on 'Ibis' from Royal Cavalry was second, while Mazin bin Fadhil al Ghafri on 'Al Shumoukh' from Oman Royal Guard came third.

Nine horses were in action in the middle-class round of the public units at a height of 120 cm.

Mohammed bin Salim al Hadhrani on 'Raja' from Royal Cavalry clinched the title. Khalid bin Darwish al Subhi

on 'Otanía' from Al Rayyan stables claimed second spot, while Madian bin Saeed al Yousifi on 'Wadood' from Royal Cavalry finished third.

Three horses were in the highest category of 130 cm. Mohammed bin Salim al Hadhrani on 'Thikrayat' from Royal Cavalry came on top while Hamoud bin Sultan al Touqi claimed the second place on 'Talbot' from Olympic Equestrian Centre.

Sultan bin Mohammed al Harasi on 'Al Jawhara', won the first place in public unit category (height of 100 cm), out of 17 horses. Vanida Ahmed on 'History' from Olympic Equestrian Centre finished second and Barakat bin Muhanna al Hadi on 'Haya' from ROP ended third.

'MUKHTAR MUSCAT' CLINCH TITLE IN BARKA

The competition continued in the third horse race of 2022-23 season with seven races organised by the Royal Horse Racing Club at Al Rahba race track in Barka.

In the first round of the 'Ain Al Kasfa' race for purebred Arabian horses for 1,200m, 'Mukhtar Muscat' owned by Khalid bin Mohammed snatched the title.

In 'Ain Athum' race for purebred Arabian horses for 1,200m, 'RB Poker Face' won the first place, owned by Sadiq bin Suleiman al Fayrouz.

'BF', owned by Fahad bin Khamis al Balushi, claimed the honours in the 'Ain Razat race' for purebred Arabian horses for 1,200m. 'Bahr Muscat', owned by Faisal bin Ali al Fanah, came on top in the 'Ain Al Thawwara' race for purebred Arabian horses of local production for 1,600 metres.

'Nawaya', owned by Hamoud bin Saeed al Nahdi, won the 'Ain Hamran' race for purebred Arabian horses, locally produced, for 1,800m.

In the 'Ayn Sahalnoot' race for purebred Arabian horses (2,000m), 'Sanad', owned by Shabib bin Nasser al Yazidi, claimed the honours.

In the 'Ain Jerziz' race for purebred hybrid horses (2,000m), 'Roger', owned by Salim bin Saeed al Rashidi, won the first place. 'Roman Rousseau', owned by Moataz bin Nasser al Naabi, came first in the 'Ain Darbat' race for purebred hybrid horses for 2,000m.

WORLD TENT PEGGING CHAMPIONSHIPS 2023

Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and India secure spots

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JAN 29

Egypt and Saudi Arabia advanced into finals of World Tent Pegging Championships which will be held in South Africa in August. Both countries progression to the world-class event came after they secured the top two places in the qualifier that took place in Egypt capital city Cairo under organisation and supervision of International Tent Pegging Federation (ITPF).

The hosts of the qualifiers Egypt managed to earn the first place in the teams category competitions while Gulf country Saudi Arabia finished in second place. UAE came in third position. In the singles competitions, the Egyptian riders proved their top show as they owned all the top three places.

Sudan was the hosts for the group four qualifiers which featured Canada, South Africa, India and Norway. The competitions in the qualifiers was very tight among



all the participating teams. Sudan and India secured spots in the world finals while South Africa confirmed their presence as they are the hosts of the event.

Sudan riders delivered solid performance and managed to earn the top points and placed in the top place of the teams category competitions. South Africa came in second position while India were placed third.

Pakistan will be the host the forthcoming qualifiers of the second group which will witness

participation of the Libya, Iran, Syria, Russia and Belarus teams.

The forthcoming qualifiers of the first group will take place in Muscat in March. The qualifiers of first group will comprise of participation of the Kuwait, Yemen, Germany, Iraq and USA teams. Oman team riders will look to qualify for the world championship by targeting top places. The World ITPF Championships was supposed to take place in 2021 but postponed due to the pandemic.

DJOKOVIC EQUALS NADAL'S RECORD

MELBOURNE: An emotional Novak Djokovic called it “the biggest victory in my life” after beating Stefanos Tsitsipas to win a 10th Australian Open title and equal Rafael Nadal’s 22 Grand Slam crowns on Sunday.

The Serb will return to world number one as he overcame a hamstring injury and off-court drama to sweep past the Greek third seed 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/5) on Rod Laver Arena.

The 35-year-old climbed to his player’s box afterwards to embrace his mother and broke down in uncontrollable tears, collapsing to the ground sobbing.

His father Srdjan was again missing after he sparked controversy by posing with a fan carrying a Russian flag featuring Vladimir Putin’s face following his son’s quarterfinal win.

The emphatic victory over Tsitsipas capped a remarkable return for Djokovic to Melbourne Park, having missed last year’s tournament when he was deported over his Covid vaccination stance.

“I have to say this has been one of the most

challenging tournaments I’ve ever played considering the circumstances, not playing last year, coming back this year,” he said at the presentation, wearing a jacket with 22 emblazoned on it.

“I want to thank all the people that made me feel welcome, comfortable, to be in Melbourne.

“I try to pinch myself and really live through these moments, it’s a long journey,” he added.

“Only my team and family know what we have been through in the last four or five weeks and this is why I’d probably say this is the biggest victory in my life considering the circumstances.”

There had been an air of inevitability about Djokovic triumphing once more.

After his three-year ban from Australia was lifted, Djokovic won the lead-up Adelaide International before reinforcing his stature as an all-time great in Melbourne.

His dominant win drew him level with Nadal on a record 22 Slams, two clear of Roger Federer.

The Spanish great made a shock second-round exit with

SERBIAN BATTLES PAST TSITSIPAS TO CLINCH AUSTRALIAN OPEN



Serbia's Novak Djokovic celebrates with the trophy after winning his Australian Open final match against Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas. — Reuters

a hip injury, but is targeting a return for the clay-court season and another crack at the French Open, and with it a 23rd Slam title.

Nadal, though, is set to slide down the rankings when they are released on Monday, in contrast to Djokovic, who will dethrone Spanish teenager Carlos Alcaraz and return to the top for the first time since June. Tsitsipas will climb one place to three.

“Novak, I don’t know what to say. It speaks for itself what you have achieved so far. It’s all in the numbers. Congratulations,” said the 24-year-old Tsitsipas, who is still yet to win a major.

“I’ve had the privilege to play a lot of difficult, high-intensity matches, but I would like to say one more time Novak brings the best out in me. “He’s the greatest that has ever held a tennis racquet, for sure.”

GRIPPING

Both men were back on a court that helped them rise to stardom.

Djokovic won his first Grand Slam in 2008 on Rod Laver Arena while Tsitsipas burst on the scene in 2019

when he stunned defending champion Federer in the last 16.

With sizeable Greek and Serbian communities in Melbourne, and Rod Laver in attendance, there was a raucous atmosphere.

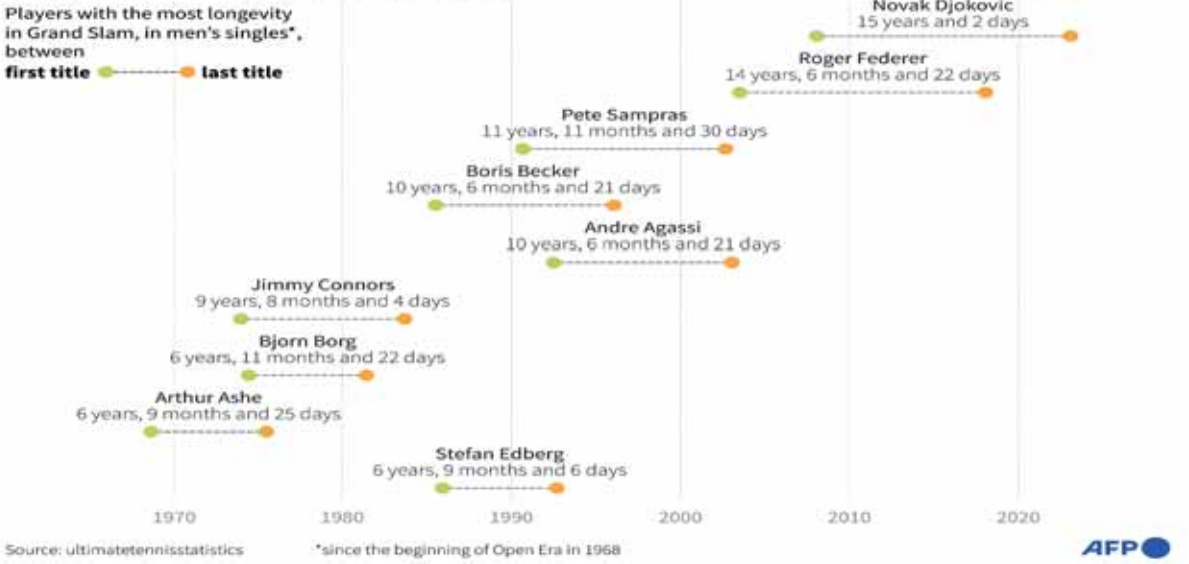
Djokovic came into the match with his confidence sky-high having won all nine of his previous Australian Open finals and with a 10-2 career advantage over the Greek.

Moving freely with only minimal strapping on his troublesome left hamstring, he opened with a comfortable hold after being greeted by huge cheers.

Djokovic worked two break points on Tsitsipas’s opening serve, to no avail, but kept probing and the Greek handed him a break for 3-1 with a careless double fault.

Tsitsipas, in only his second Grand Slam final to Djokovic’s 33rd, appeared nervous, losing the first set in just 36 minutes. But he battled back into contention in a much closer second set as his confidence grew, improving his serve and winning some pressure points. — AFP

Longevity at the top: Djokovic overtakes Federer



Serbia's Novak Djokovic and runner-up, Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas pose with former player Ken Rosewall and their respective trophies after their final match. — Reuters

India crowned ICC U19 Women's T20 world champions

POTCHEFSTROOM, South Africa: India became the first-ever ICC Under-19 Women's T20 World Cup winners on Sunday, after a comprehensive, seven-wicket victory over England in Potchefstroom.

It was another clinical display with the ball that held the key to India's march to victory, with Titas Sadhu setting the pace, with the spinners delivering another telling performance when it mattered.

Supplementing the fine bowling was outstanding fielding. The dismissal of England's captain, Grace Scrivens, epitomised the sheer determination in the Indian ranks. The left-hander hit Archana towards long-off, where Gongadi Trisha sprinted in, and then leapt forward to take a wonderful, tumbling catch.

It was the key wicket, in many ways, and the celebrations



from India confirmed as much. Scrivens would go on to scoop the Player of the Tournament award, but she would have given all of that up for a better English display with the bat.

Shafali Verma won the toss and elected to bowl, and Sadhu struck yet again in the first over. She hurried one onto Liberty Heap, who could only loop her

attempted pull straight up and back to a gleeful Sadhu.

Her figures of two for 6 in four overs deservedly earned her the Player of the Match award with just the start that India craved. She was backed up well by Archana (two for 17) and the irrepressible Parshavi Chopra, who snared two for 13 to close out a terrific tournament



offering.

There were also wickets apiece for Mannat Kashyap, Verma and Sonam Yadav, as England tumbled to 22 for four and then eventually 68 all out in 17.1 overs. After a tournament of free scoring, only Ryana Macdonald-Gay (19 off 24 balls), Niamh Holland (10) and Sophia Smale (11) could reach double figures.

England's hopes for more heroics with the ball were raised when they removed Verma (15) and Shweta Sehrawat (5) inside the first four overs. Verma hit a four and a six as she tried to put the heat on England early, before she top-edged Hannah Baker to short fine-leg.

Soumya Tiwari and Trisha were having none of it. Tiwari

smacked three fours in her 24 not out from 37 balls, while Trisha got more and more fluent as the target came into sight. Her 29-ball stay was ended on 24, bowled by Alexa Stonehouse as she tried to finish it off in style.

The end came soon after, and India could finally celebrate their fairytale finish in South Africa. They came, they saw, and they conquered the newest crown available in women's cricket.

BRIEF SCORES

England 68 all out in 17.1 overs (Ryana Macdonald-Gay 19, Sophia Smale 11, Titas Sadhu two for 6, Parshavi Chopra two for 13, Archana two for 17)

India 69 for three in 14 overs (Soumya Tiwari 24 not out, Gongadi Trisha 24, Shafali Verma 15, Alexa Stonehouse one for 8, Hannah Baker one for 13)

RESULT: India won by seven wickets, with 36 balls to spare.



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Oman’s oil production jumps 9.6 per cent in 2022

MUSCAT: Crude oil and condensate production in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 9.6 per cent to reach 388.434 million barrels in 2022, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Crude oil production alone increased by 12.8 per cent, while the production of oil condensate decreased by 1.4 per cent compared to the same period in 2021.

The average price of Omani crude soared 48.4 per to \$95.4 per barrel in 2022, up from \$64.3 per barrel during the same period in 2021. The average daily oil production increased by 9.6. per



cent, the Centre noted.

Oil exports to Japan recorded a remarkable growth of 179.3 per cent to reach 11.697 million barrels in 2022. Oil exports to South Korea increased by 92.8 per cent, followed by India by 7.8 per cent, then China by 7.6 per cent.

Domestic production of natural gas — including imports via the Dolphin System — increased 3.7 per cent to reach 52.061 billion cubic metres (bcm) in 2022, up from 50.190 bcm in 2021.

Associated gas production increased by 9.3 per cent to 10.064 bcm, while non-associated gas production and imports increased

by 2.5 per cent to reach 41.997 bcm.

The data indicated an increase in the consumption of natural gas in each of: industrial areas (including industrial areas, Oman Mining Company and Oman Cement) by 12.6 per cent, and industrial projects by 7.4 per cent.

As for gas consumption in oil fields (including losses, metre differences and shrinkage coefficient), it decreased by 1.6 per cent, and power plants (including gas consumption at Sultan Qaboos University and the Ministry of Defence) decreased by 1.4 per cent. — ONA

Philex Oman to start packaging vaccines by year-end

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, JAN 29

Philex Pharmaceuticals, which celebrated the inauguration of its factory in Salalah Free Zone in Dhofar Governorate last week, says it plans start packaging vaccines in collaboration with Bio-Invest by the end of 2023.

Speaking to the Observer, Dr Samir Machour, Executive Chairman of Bio-Invest, shared the following: “Bio-Invest signed an agreement with Philex, that is specific to a portfolio of vaccines, whereby Philex will be first responsible for the registration and then the fill-finish of those vaccines.”

“Bio-Invest has a portfolio of over 20 vaccines, which covers probably 90 per cent of vaccines needed in Africa and the Middle East,” he added. The signed agreement also includes biologics, medications made using living organisms.

According to Dr Machour, the agreement will expand



the coverage of healthcare for vaccines and biologics specifically due to their expensive price point. “If you have cancer — and I don’t wish that upon anyone — the likelihood that you wouldn’t find the drug in Oman is probably 90 per cent. So you have to go abroad to get it.”

“The likelihood is that you will buy it probably for a thousand dollars minimum for one injection, sometimes it’s 5,000, sometimes it’s 10,000.”

In addition, Dr Machour believes that the agreement will allow for the transfer of

technology in the pharmaceutical industry.

“Transferring technology was never easy, no big company voluntary transfers its technology, so we learned the lesson from Covid that if you rely on those that own the technology in terms of prices, it’s their country first and you have seen some countries — without naming any — they just closed their doors and Africa was left behind, the Middle East had to struggle even to acquire those vaccines for the Covid-19 virus.”

“It was a question of life and death in many countries, so I

think the lessons learned here is that we need to have the ability to scale up the technology transfer so that it allows us to start thinking about research development, and we cannot have self-sustainability anyway for the long term with manufacturing only.”

The transfer of technology would not be limited to Philex only, but will also extend to the government.

“We will do this with Philex and the government as well, just to allow the government to be able to know how to regulate vaccines and biologics, and how to test those vaccines and biologics. So it’s a win-win basically, it is scaling up the government’s capabilities and the industry’s.” Philex Pharmaceuticals is expected to fill-finish three or four vaccines, and one or two biologics at the end of this year.

The pharmaceutical plant, set up with an investment estimated at \$150 million, has a production capacity of one billion capsules and one billion tablets per year.

Gulf Stone in talks with investors to help revive operations

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JAN 29



Gulf Stone, a publicly traded company, announced on Sunday that it is exploring options to increase its capital with a view to reviving the operation of its Suhar-based factory, which is currently shuttered due to financial difficulties.

The firm said in a filing to the MSX that an extraordinary general assembly, that was convened recently, had urged the board of directors to study ways to remedy the company’s situation by raising the capital.

Accordingly, the board of directors is currently negotiating with potential investors with the aim of restructuring the company, it said in the filing, noting that no agreement has

been reached yet.

Earlier, on January 8, 2023, the regulator suspended trading in the shares of Gulf Stone Company following the latter’s disclosure that it has halted operations of its Suhar plant due to acute cash-flow challenges. The pause in operations, which was effective from January 5, 2023, was in response to “severe cash flow problems” at the company.

In a separate filing to CMA, the company’s Chairman attributed Gulf Stone’s financial troubles to a decline in sales of its products following a slump in demand brought on by the pandemic.

Oman seeks consultant to advise on Muscat Metro project

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JAN 29

Efforts to establish a first-ever metro network across the capital city of the Sultanate of Oman are now off the starting blocks with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) inviting qualified international consultants to bid for its contract to provide advisory services linked to the landmark project.

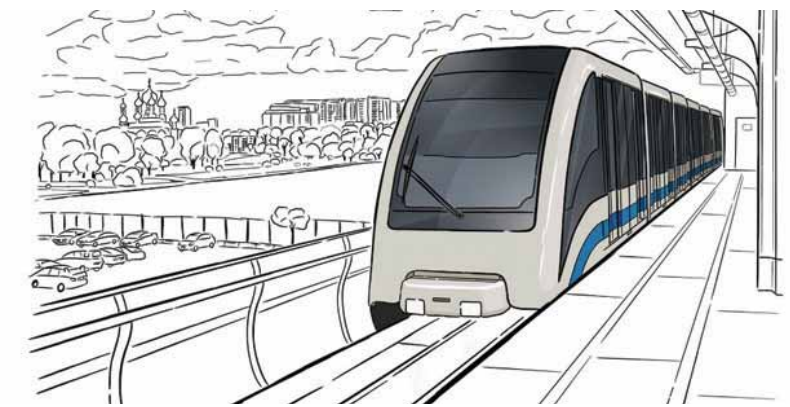
Dubbed ‘Muscat Metro’, the project is envisioned as a mass transit system suitably integrated with other modes of public transportation to offer the inhabitants of the city an efficient and world-class sustainable

transportation solution.

The selected consultant will support the Ministry in “delivering key decisions” pertaining to the prestigious project, described as a “key mass transit” system as identified by various studies, the Ministry said.

With the launch of the tendering process, Phase 1 of the Ministry’s strategy the procurement of the Muscat Metro project is officially underway, with a primarily focus on the pre-feasibility stage of its development. Separately, the Ministry has also commissioned a study to assess the socioeconomic benefits of the project for Muscat Governorate, as well as the wider economy.

In a recent interview to Oman



TV, Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, said a team of experts has been assembled to study the overall economic impact of the Muscat Metro project with a view to ensuring its long-term viability.

Bids for the consultancy contract are due to be opened on February 1, 2023, with an award to be finalised either through negotiations or a direct award, according to the Ministry.

According to industry experts, a metro system will not only add a

new mode of public transportation to Muscat’s current offerings, presently limited to bus, cab, taxi pool and ride hailing options, but also boost the city’s urban and tourist appeal.

Most importantly, the network will help reduce congestion on main streets, thereby contributing to a lower environmental footprint from the transport sector.

Moreover, with the Sultanate of Oman transitioning away from planet-warming hydrocarbon resources for its energy needs to greener fuels and zero-carbon fuel cells, a metro powered by electricity, and potentially green hydrogen in the future, will contribute to the nation’s overall decarbonisation strategy, it is pointed out.

Earlier visions for a mass transit system for Muscat, integrated with a national rail network, included proposals for, among other alternatives, an elevated network running along the length of Sultan Qaboos Street from Al Wadi Al Kabir to Al Khoudh / Al Seeb in the north of the capital.

But with the city having since grown horizontally as well, particularly in the wake of the construction of the Muscat Expressway, new neighbourhoods have mushroomed all across the suburbs.

Consequently, branch lines will be necessary to connect populous suburbs, notably Al Amerat, Al Ansab, Rusayl and even Halban, to the network, experts add.

Meethaq Islamic Banking launches Ikram package for pensioners to improve financial inclusion

MUSCAT: In line with its strategies aimed at sustaining the country’s progress, development and improving financial inclusion for different segments of society, and offering the best Islamic banking services, Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat has launched the Ikram package for pensioners, which is a specialised package of Sharia-compliant financing products with attractive profit rates catering to Omani pensioners.

It was introduced after studying and understanding the needs of retirees who were earlier working in government and private institutions.

Committed to innovation in its services and products and offering the best services possible, Meethaq developed the Ikram pensioner package to offer a full package of Islamic financial services. It is designed to provide tailored financial facilities and services that meet its customers’ needs and aspirations.

Meethaq’s current and new customers will be able to benefit from the wide range of services this package offers, including exclusive offers related but not limited to auto, goods, personal and home finance offers, credit card offers and discounts at selected outlets and personalised campaigns.

Customers who wish to benefit from this package, can apply by visiting their nearest Meethaq branch. Customers can get further details about the new package offers by contacting call centre 24/7 on 24656666.

Meethaq is continuously introducing new financial products and services targeting different sections of society in line with the changing needs of its customers and the nation’s progress and



development.

On this occasion, Sami Bait Rashid (pictured), Assistant General Manager, Retail Banking – Meethaq, said: “We are pleased to launch this package, focusing on providing specialised services for pensioners.

continue developing its products and services to meet the needs of customers and help them achieve their financial goals.

Wetake this opportunity to thank our valued customers for their trust in Meethaq products and services.” With its innovative Sharia based products, Meethaq’s services witnessed a remarkable rise especially with the new offers and financial facilities which are designed to meet customers aspiration.

Meethaq Islamic Banking continued working on its strategy

to launch innovative services and products to enhance customers experience. It must be noted that every Meethaq product goes through the process of Sharia compliance certification by the Sharia Supervisory Board and is created in line with the guidelines of the Central Bank of Oman.

Meethaq’s adoption of AAOIFI standards (Accounting & Auditing Organisation for Islamic Financial Institutions) further distinguishes Meethaq Islamic banking practices in terms of standardisation of its products and services complementing its world-class Islamic banking experience.

As the leader in the Islamic banking industry in Oman, Meethaq has a strong track record of winning many prestigious local, regional and global awards for its outstanding achievements in Islamic banking.

Buy Toyota genuine parts and get a chance to win exciting prizes

MUSCAT: Toyota Oman has recently launched a rewarding campaign for customers buying Toyota Genuine Parts (TGP) across all branches of Saud Bahwan Automotive. As per the campaign, customers who make purchases above RO 10 get a chance to scratch a coupon & win exciting prizes.

The prizes include 3 iPhone 13 mobile phones, 4 Huawei Smart Watches, 3 HP Laptops and 8000 complimentary gifts. The campaign will last until February 28, 2023 and is available at all Saud Bahwan Group retail outlets across Oman. (Conditions apply).

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made investments in establishing a nationwide network of parts outlets, ensuring that no matter where a customer may be, he is always close to a Toyota parts outlet.

Apart from this, a well-trained and customer-friendly staff, serve customers with a smile while ensuring customers always find the right fit for their Toyota.

Cadillac CT5 turns heads with its blend of luxury and sport

MUSCAT: Combining luxury and sport, the Cadillac CT5 is a powerhouse of a sedan that takes performance to the next level. Its bold, expressive design, striking cabin and exceptional performance have earned it legions of devoted enthusiasts across the world, and in the Sultanate of Oman as well — fans who see in the CT5 a reflection of their own persona as high-achievers.

The CT5 — the biggest of Cadillac’s sedans — owes its enduring appeal to its makeover as a luxurious American blend of design, performance and comfort, while incorporating the latest automotive technologies.

The result is a luxury sedan that exudes athleticism, sophistication and confidence, while ensuring a distinctive driving experience. Available in four trims — Luxury, Premium Luxury, Sport and V-Series — the CT5 is powered by a turbocharged propulsion portfolio that also leverages Cadillac’s award-winning rear wheel-drive (RWD) architecture.

The CT5’s athleticism, amplified by bold lines running along the length of the vehicles, is a dominant feature across the line-up. Unique fascias and grilles distinguish the Luxury and Premium Luxury models from the Sport and V-Series variants, which come with rocker extensions, rear spoiler and exclusive performance-design wheels. But standard across the trims are Cadillac’s signature vertical lights at all four



corners.

Under the hood is a 2.0L Twin-Scroll Turbo engine standard on Luxury, Premium Luxury and Sport, that is paired with a 10-speed automatic transmission system that generates 237 horsepower and 258 lb-feet of torque. Standard for the CT5-V but optional for the Premium Luxury trim is a 3.0-litre twin-turbo V6 that generates 335 horsepower in the Premium Luxury model and 360 horsepower in the CT5-V.

Equally striking is the interior of the cabin as is evident from the craftsmanship and choice of premium materials used. Further, in keeping with the driver-centric design and layout of the cabin, all of the displays are thoughtfully laid out on the panels in front.

LuLu Exchange opens 38th branch at Ohi Sanaiya Suhar

MUSCAT: LuLu Exchange, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, opened its 38th branch in the country, at Ohi Sanaiya Suhar on Wednesday. The branch was inaugurated by Shaikh Mohammed bin Hamed bin Ali al Ghazali, Director, LuLu Exchange.

Other attendees at the opening ceremony included Narayan Pradhan, COO, LuLu Exchange, Lathish Vichitran, General Manager, LuLu Exchange, and other senior management of the company.

The new branch also marks the 265th global branch of LuLu Financial Holdings and Adeeb Ahamed, Managing Director of LuLu Financial Holdings congratulated the team on the milestone occasion.

“The expansion of our branch network reflects our ambition to innovate in matters of customer experience and convenience for both retail and corporate customers. We are fully committed to the growth prospects of the Omani economy, and are actively driving the future of the payments ecosystem by putting technology and innovation at the heart of all things new.”

LuLu Exchange provides remittances, currency exchange and value-added services in a timely, transparent and reliable manner through its network of branches and mobile payments app, LuLu Money.



Malabar Gold & Diamonds launches ‘Heart to Heart’ jewellery collection

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest global jewellery retailer with a strong retail network of over 300 outlets spread across 10 countries, has launched a special collection of diamond and 18K gold jewellery named ‘Heart to Heart’ to celebrate the season of love.

The ‘Heart to Heart’ jewellery collection showcases exclusive heart-shaped jewellery that will cater to the increasing demand for such jewellery during this period. With over 150 designs symbolising love in various ways, this unique jewellery collection serves as a perfect gift to express love to dear ones.

With prices starting from just RO 100, there is something to fit everyone’s budget.



Apart from pendants in diamonds and 18k, customers can also choose heart-shaped, beautifully crafted bangles, bracelets and rings to gift their loved ones.

Additionally, the brand has also launched heart-shaped

solitaire rings, which are available in different centre stone sizes and specifications. The diamond jewellery featured in the collection includes designs studded predominantly with red and multicoloured stones as well.

This offer will be available across all outlets of Malabar Gold & Diamonds until February 14, 2023. Customers can also buy this unique collection online through www.malabargoldanddiamonds.com.

‘It is the season of love and there is no gift more thoughtful than jewellery to be given to your loved ones as it is the most preferred gift by women and its charm lasts for a lifetime. Additionally, the special ‘Heart to Heart’ collection we have launched in diamond and 18k

gold jewellery are classic designs that can be used at any point in time, serving as an heirloom that can be passed onto generations and an ideal investment as well,’ said Shamlal Ahamed, Managing Director — International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

‘Love needs no reason’ is the key message of the campaign, with all communication reflecting the concept that although there may be a million reasons to love someone, there needn’t be any particular reason to make them feel special.

Apart from these, Malabar Gold & Diamonds also showcases an incredible collection of unique designs in gold and diamond jewellery to suit the tastes and budgets of its different customers.



Environment Authority, MDO sign pact to facilitate environmental approvals

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 29

Minerals Development Oman (MDO) and the Environment Authority (EA) have signed a technical cooperation agreement aimed at accelerating and facilitating the environmental services through the established government services portal for investors.

The portal will facilitate the procedures for obtaining environmental licenses and inspections to ensure that permits are granted efficiently, in accordance with the regulations.

The agreement was signed by Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of Environment Authority and Nasser bin Saif al Maqbali, CEO of MDO.

It targets a set of procedures for obtaining environmental licenses, including issuing environmental licenses and approvals, evaluating environmental applications and



studies after issuing licenses and responding to them within two weeks of receiving the study, reviewing project requirements, conducting periodic inspections to ensure compliance with requirements, and coordinating

with the consultant appointed for the project.

Dr Abdullah al Amri commented: "This technical cooperation programme with MDO falls under the partnership umbrella aimed at consolidating

THIS PROGRAMME FACILITATES OBSTACLES FACING NATIONAL PROJECTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS AS IT FALLS WITHIN THE MANDATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT AUTHORITY, WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR POLICIES RELATED TO THE PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT.

the cooperation in environmental permits and licenses, as well as inspecting institutions and facilities regularly to ensure compliance with Sultanate of Oman's environmental laws and requirements.

Also, this programme facilitates obstacles facing national projects in accordance with environmental laws and regulations as it falls within the mandate of the Environment Authority, which is responsible for policies related to

the protection and preservation of the environment."

Nasser al Maqbali, MDO CEO, added: "This programme is part of Minerals Development Oman's commitment to adhere to the highest environmental standards, regulations, systems, and laws in place in the Sultanate of Oman, which contributes to enhancing sustainability concepts in mining projects."

He added: "This programme will improve and accelerate the process of obtaining and following up on environmental licenses for the company's projects, establishing a modern and integrated work system between MDO and the Environment Authority."

Covering a two-year timeframe, the programme targets fast and efficient process to obtain environmental licenses for the company's projects in accordance with the provisions of the regulation governing the issuance of environmental permits.

Inma finances 144 SME projects in 2022



MUSCAT: The total number of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the Sultanate of Oman funded by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Fund (Inma) in 2022 reached 144 projects in various economic sectors with a total value of RO 20 million.

It is led by the industry sector by 20 per cent, then the services sector by 19 per cent, then the transport and logistics sector by 16 per cent, then the infrastructure sector by 15 per cent, then the trade sector by 10 per cent, followed by the tourism sector by 9 per cent, and the oil and gas sector by 8 per cent.

The sectors financed by the

Inma in the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman were able to increase their production lines and provide a number of products and services to the local market, which contributed to revitalising the economy and increasing cash flows, given the importance of SMEs and their impact on advancing development and encouraging their owners to continue their activities and operations.

The industrial sector, which received the highest percentage of Inma funding during the past year, is one of the vital sectors in the Sultanate of Oman that contribute to reviving the GDP.

— ONA

Omran Group signs pact to develop tourism projects in Al Buraimi

MUSCAT: Omran Group signed a cooperation agreement with the Office of the Governor of Al Buraimi to develop a number of tourism projects in Al Buraimi Governorate, as part of the group's efforts to strengthen partnership with various entities with the aim of advancing tourism development in the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

The agreement was signed by Sayyid Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidy, Governor of Al Buraimi and Eng Mohammed bin Salim al Busaidy, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Omran Group.

Under this agreement, Omran Group will provide technical support and supervise the implementation of a platform project to interact with visitors at Al Buraimi Gate and the Al Abeela Park project in the governorate.

The first project will be implemented to be a platform for interacting with visitors and other activities through interactive digital panels and display screens that will showcase the history and culture



that characterises Al Buraimi Governorate. Meanwhile, the Al Abeela Park will be developed on an area of more than 181,000 square metres to include many basic facilities to create a natural and recreational park.

Sayyid Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidy said that this cooperation will work on creating value-added projects that stimulate tourism in Al Buraimi Governorate and contribute to raising the level of tourism facilities and services provided to visitors.

He also pointed out that the governorate witnessed, during the last period, the

implementation of a number of important and vital projects that would attract visitors and promote economic development in the governorate, which would open up promising prospects and rewarding business opportunities for local companies and small and medium enterprises in the governorate.

Engineer Mohammed bin Salim al Busaidy confirmed that the Omran Group is exerting its efforts towards enhancing cooperation with various parties to achieve the goals of comprehensive tourism development. — ONA

Jet fuel prices up as demand jumps

LONDON: Jet fuel prices have risen to levels never recorded in January as demand from China's lifting of Covid-19 travel restrictions and US refinery outages, with the surge likely to continue, analysts and refining executives say.

Chinese flight activity has more than tripled since early December to more than an average of 10,700 flights per day, according to data from flight tracking firm Airportia.

Jet fuel this year will be the largest source of oil demand growth, says the International Energy Agency, which monitors energy consumption.

This month's demand should hit 6.6 million barrels per day, the highest reading since February 2020, said Viktor Katona, an analyst at data firm Kpler.

Prices are climbing in Asia, Europe and the United States. In Singapore, jet fuel is trading around \$122.30 per barrel, up 14 per cent in the last two weeks. Europe's price for the fuel has climbed to \$115 per tonne, the highest since June.

New York spot prices were quoted at \$2.45 above US ultra-low sulfur diesel, a premium not seen at this time of the year since at least 2011.

Refining outages in the United States are feeding the price run-up. Cold weather along the US Gulf Coast recently knocked out some processing plants and pushed up the premium for jet fuel, said Gary Simmons, chief commercial officer at Valero Energy.

"Overall, we expect jet demand to increase significantly this year," he told an earnings call, as air travel continues to rise. US East Coast supplies are likely to remain scarce until mid-February, he said. — Reuters

China accounts for 90 per cent of Oman crude exports

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JAN 29

China accounted for 90 per cent of Oman's total crude exports of 23.4 million barrels in December 2022, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals said in a report. India was the next leading market with a share of 5 per cent, followed by Japan (4 per cent) and Thailand (1 per cent).

The average total production of crude oil and oil condensates in the Sultanate of Oman for the month of December 2022 amounted to about 1.063 million barrels per day (bpd), an increase of 0.5 per cent



compared to the previous month and 5.3 per cent increase compared to December 2021.

The Sultanate of Oman exported 26 million barrels of crude in December 2022.

Crude oil production climbed 10.5 per cent in December 2022 compared to the same period in 2021. Production of crude and oil condensates totalled 33 million barrels in December 2022.

The average price of Oman's Crude Oil Futures Contract on the Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME) slumped 10.12 per cent in December compared to the previous month.

The monthly official selling price for Oman Crude oil for February 2023 delivery (traded during December 2022) averaged \$77.43 a barrel, which was lower by \$8.72 compared to the November 2022 selling price, which was \$86.16 a barrel.

Meanwhile, natural gas production averaged 141.09 million cubic metres per day in December 2022, an increase by 13.2 per cent compared to the average production in November 2022 (124.6 m3/day). This is due to the increase in gas production in Block 8 of the Musandam Company for Oil and Gas.

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Omani company invents environment-friendly coal from coffee ground

Founded by seven students as part of a government initiative to encourage entrepreneurship among young people, Jathwa aims to produce environmentally friendly coal made from coffee ground to contribute to world sustainability... **P20**

Italian De Sarno appointed Gucci creative director

ITALIAN SABATO De Sarno has been appointed creative director at Gucci, the luxury label and parent group Kering announced on Saturday.

De Sarno, who until now supervised the men's and women's collections at Valentino, will present his debut runway collection for Gucci at Milan Women's Fashion Week in September.

The designer from Naples suc-

ceeds Alessandro Michele, who left the Italian luxury brand in November after seven years as creative director.

Called in 2015 to relaunch sluggish sales, Michele breathed new life into the label with daring collections, often very flowery and playful but did not succeed in boosting sales with the same vigour as Gucci's rivals.

De Sarno will lead Gucci's



Design Studio and will report to the fashion house's CEO Marco Bizzarri.

His role will be "defining and expressing the House's creative vision across the women's, men's, leather goods, accessories and lifestyle collections," Bizzarri said.

"I am proud to join a House with such an extraordinary history and heritage, that over the years has been able to welcome and cherish values I believe in," said De Sarno. "I am touched and excited to contribute my creative vision for the brand."

De Sarno began his career at Prada in 2005, then moved to Dolce & Gabbana before joining Valentino in 2009 where he rose through the ranks to become fashion director.

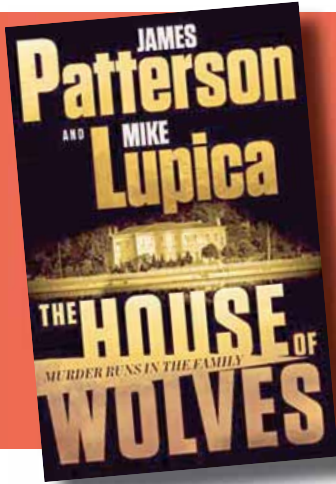
Francois-Henri Pinault, chairman and CEO of Kering, said: "With Sabato De Sarno at the creative helm, we are confident that the House will continue both to influence fashion and culture". — **AFP**

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THE HOUSE OF WOLVES

BY JAMES PATTERSON AND MIKE LUPICA

After her father is murdered, Jenny Wolf becomes the head of a powerful family in California.



CULTURE

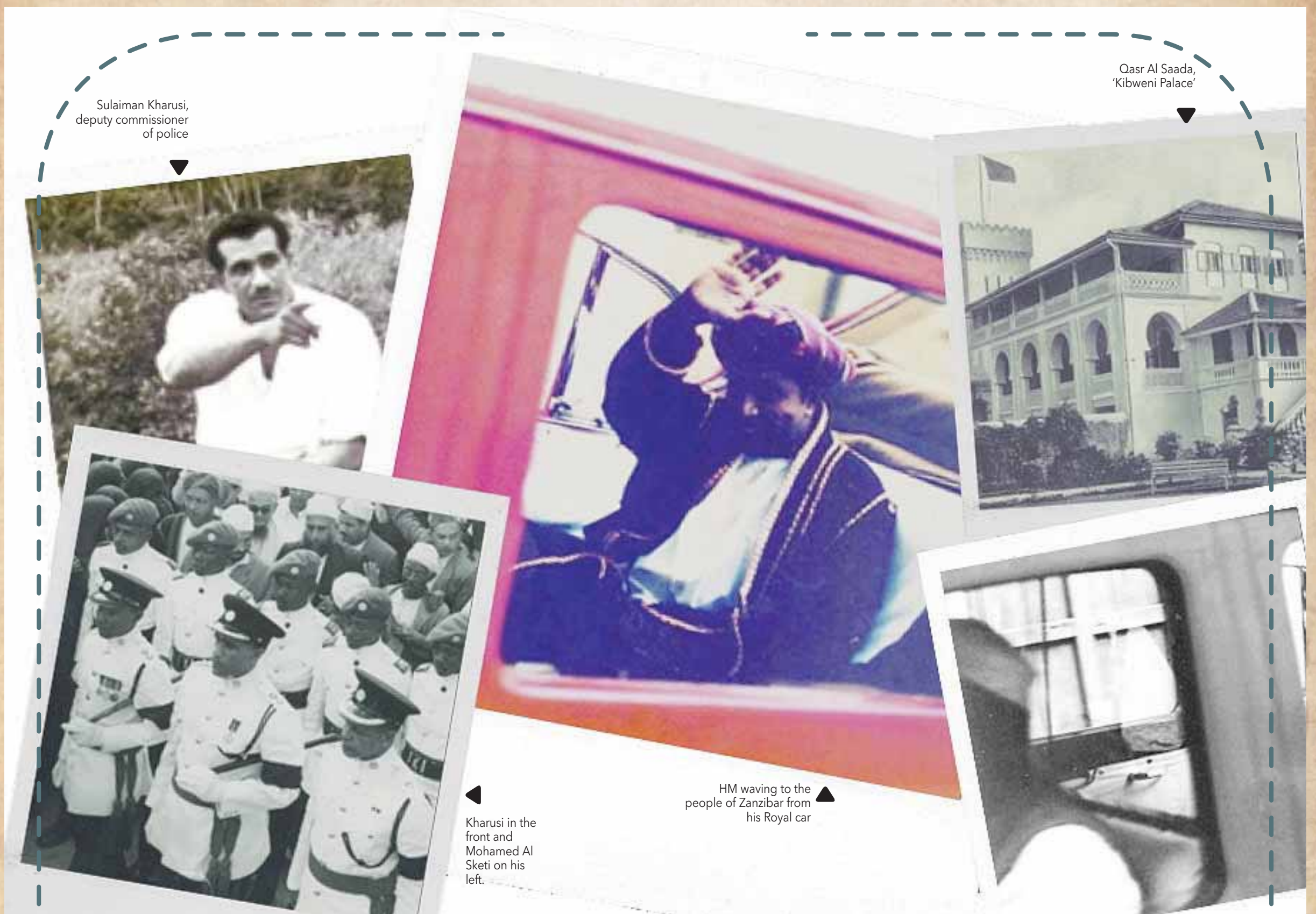
A flamenco dancer performs to present a creation by Molina during the Simof 2023 (International Flamenco Fashion Show) in Sevilla. — **AFP**



LIFESTYLE

Barbie dolls are displayed prior to the auction service of 318 batches of Barbie dolls dated from 1960's to 1990's in Pau, Southwestern France. This is the most important auction service in Europe for Barbie dolls belonging to a unique French collector, Sylvette Lhoste, coming from Orthez. — **AFP**



Sulaiman Kharusi,
deputy commissioner
of policeQasr Al Saada,
'Kibweni Palace'HM waving to the
people of Zanzibar from
his Royal carKharusi in the
front and
Mohamed Al
Sketi on his
left.

Remembering A Dawn That Changed Fate Of Zanzibar (Part 3)

By Nasser bin Abdullah al Riyami
Translated by Dr Ali bin
Rashid al Abri

AL KHAROUSI BLAMES the Commissioner of Police, Jack Sullivan, among many other reasons, for the fall of independent Zanzibar. He explained this by saying: two days before the Invasion, the recently appointed Commissioner, ordered both Al Kharousi, in his capacity as the second man in the police force, to head to Urowa, 24 miles from Zanzibar on the east coast, and Mohammed bin Salim al Sukaiti, the third man in the police force, to go to Makunduchi, 41 miles South West from the City of Zanzibar.

Their mission, as he told them, was to gauge the pulse of the man in the street in these two areas which were known to be strongholds of the opposition party. As their respective missions coincided with the weekend before the beginning of Ramadhan, the two officers took their families with them for some quality time together.

In Urowa on Sunday 12th of January 1964, just after Al Kharousi had performed the Fajr prayer, he was surprised to see the Sheha (chieftain) of Urowa knocking on his door to tell him that riots had broken out in the City of Zanzibar and the situation had become extremely volatile and untenable. Without further ado, Al Kharousi left the area, along with his family, heading to Zanzibar to deal with the situation. When he got as far as Mwera, some 6 miles from the city centre, he decided to stop in at the Police Station to check on the security situation in the town as he had just heard on the radio the news of the government's overthrow, and the

calling to the government to surrender, and to HM the Sultan to hang himself. His nephew Lieutenant Mohammed bin Ali Kharousi was the station officer and was on duty along with 12 policemen all armed with rifles. Sulaiman al Kharousi telephoned Commissioner of Police Sullivan who was barricaded in Malindi Police Station. He asked him about the security situation there and Sullivan told him that the City of Zanzibar had fallen under the control of the rebels who were shooting indiscriminately at anyone in their way. Sullivan advised Al Kharousi to seek a hideout and to keep a low profile for his own safety. Al Kharousi decided not to give up. He at once sent his family to an Omani family that he knew in Urowa, very close to the police station, and gave his wife a (.22 m) pistol to defend themselves in case the house was raided or broken into. However, she did not have to use it. Al Kharousi went back to the police station, took command of the station from his nephew, the young Al Kharousi, and reordered the deployment of the available workforce in view of his vast experience in police operations. Indeed, being well equipped, he and his men were able to repel the attacks by the rebels, who were armed only with sharp weapons such as spears and machetes.

The Commissioner of Police's treason is evident in his response to Al Kharousi's requests. Al Kharousi had phoned Sullivan to inform him that he had the situation under control at Mwera Police Station, and asked him to provide a means of transport in order that he and his men could go to support and assist Malindi Police Station which was still showing resistance against the rebels. The Commissioner of Police

gave him the same answer as before - that there was no way they could reach the town as all roads were closed. Al Kharousi then asked Sullivan to send a boat to the Sultan's Rest House in Kibweni, to take them to the city. But again the Commissioner said that it was not possible as the boats were engaged in other security tasks, the nature of which he did not reveal. Al Kharousi maintains he later learned that the few available Police boats were being kept on standby just in case there would be a need to evacuate European families to the British ships. Clearly he had put the interest of his compatriots before the interest of the state in repelling this aggression.

Sullivan's treason did not end at deliberately keeping away from Zanzibar the two highest ranking officers in the Police Force; his meanness went further by playing down the Prime Minister's directives. On Friday evening, 11th January 1964, the Prime Minister had conclusive information to the effect that the ASP was plotting to stage a string of riots.

He summoned Commissioner of Police, relayed this information to him and ordered him to take the appropriate security measures and precautions to maintain law and order. The Commissioner reassured the Prime Minister by saying: "the situation will be under control." However, instead of distributing adequate quantities of weapons and ammunition to the police personnel, he thought it was enough to simply declare a third class alert, i.e. a type of alert that is normally issued for an important football match.

To be continued...



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AROUND THE WORLD

ART

French court orders return of Nazi-looted painting



A PARIS COURT on Friday ordered Christie's auction house to return a painting stolen by the Nazis to the heirs of its owner, a cousin of the writer Marcel Proust.

Occupying Nazi forces seized "The Penitent Magdalene" by the Dutch artist Adriaen van der Werff (1659-1722) in October 1942 from Lionel Hauser, said the court ruling, seen by AFP.

Hauser, who came from a French Jewish family, fled to the south of France after German forces invaded. He was a distant cousin and confidant of Proust, author of the 20th-century masterpiece "In Search of Lost Time".

The painting's whereabouts were largely unknown until 2017, until its owner asked the London-based auction house to sell it.

Christie's had previously sold the same work in 2005 for 60,000 pounds (\$74,000 at current



exchange rates).

This time, it researched the painting's provenance and discovered that it had been part of Hauser's collection — and was also listed on a record of works plundered in France during the war.

It contacted Hauser's heirs and proposed splitting the profits of the sale but the offer was refused, according to French media reports.

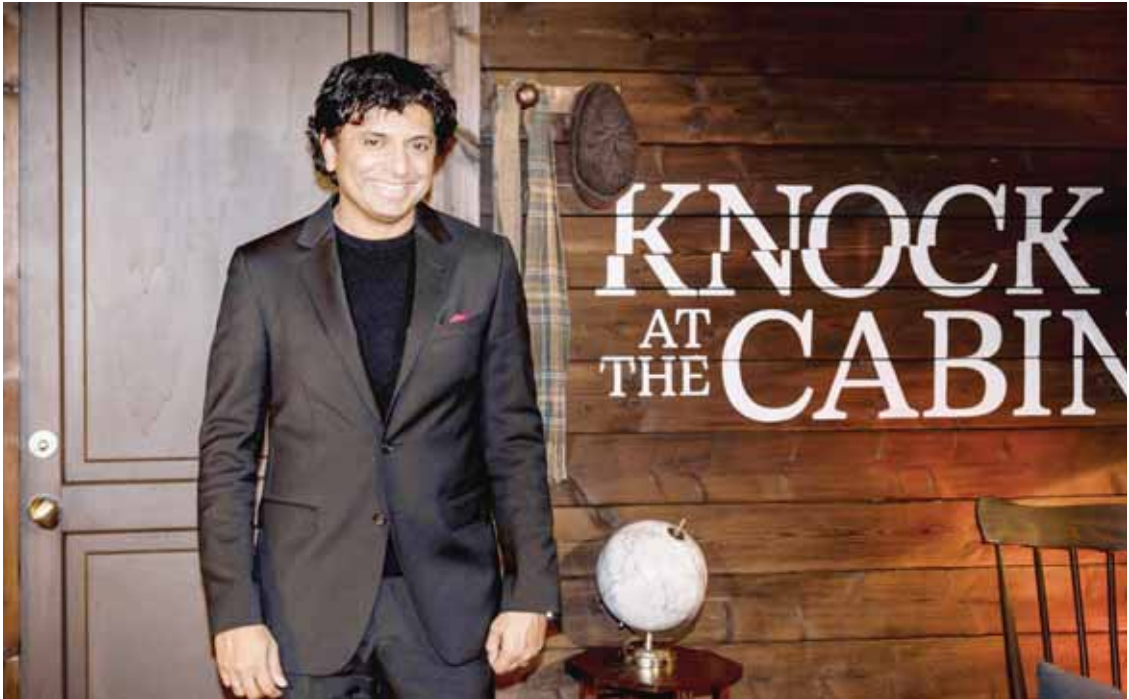
The court also ordered Christie's to pay the heirs 10,000 euros (\$10,900) and reveal the identity of the painting's current owner and its current whereabouts, as well as its sales record.

The case was the latest in France aimed at restoring artworks looted by the Nazis to their rightful owners.

The Nazis are estimated to have plundered some 600,000 artworks in Europe, according to a US congressional report. Courts on both sides of the Atlantic have regularly heard cases designed to restore items to their original owners. — AFP

ENTERTAINMENT

Hollywood has become 'completely dysfunctional': Shyamalan



FROM "THE SIXTH SENSE" to "Old", director M. Night Shyamalan has had a unique string of hits, but these days he works outside the Hollywood studio system, which he says has grown "sick".

Balancing art and commerce has always been the great game of Hollywood and few have played it as well as Shyamalan, who returns to cinemas next week with the apocalyptic horror tale, "Knock at the Cabin".

Still just 52, he has been cranking out box office hits every couple of years since the iconic "The Sixth Sense" in 1999, through "Unbreakable", "Signs", "Split" and many more.

They have been almost entirely original, rarely based on pre-existing franchises or superhero characters that the major studios now rely upon.

Watching how Hollywood has evolved in that time has left him deeply disillusioned.

"If you look at the industry right now... there are movies that feel incestuous, they're just masturbatory.. It's just Hollywood talking to themselves," he told AFP.

"And then there are movies where they're saying: the audience is dumb so we're going to take all the soul out and we're just going to do it by numbers," he said.

"These are signs of complete dysfunction."

He looks back in wonder at his breakthrough year in 1999, when studios backed several highly original films such as "American Beauty", "Magnolia", "Being John Malkovich" and "The Insider".

"The industry was different then. It was aimed at — how do you get the best sto-

rytellers to tell stories for the widest audience? That's not the case now," Shyamalan said.

- 'HUGE RISKS' -

His response has been to go it alone, even if that means giving up on big budgets.

"I found the only way is to leave the system and pay for it myself... to make small movies but take huge risks — not having to ask whether they like having a gay couple at the centre, or whether I should hire a wrestler..." he said.

"This is my way of staying healthy after spending a long time in a kind of sick industry," he added.

"Knock at the Cabin" stars former wrestler Dave Bautista in the story of a family isolated in the woods who are taken hostage by an armed group and told they must sacrifice one of their own to avert the apocalypse.

At the core, said Shyamalan, is a question that resonates in our "post-truth era": do we trust each other?

"Does the husband believe in the other husband? Do they believe what the strangers are saying? Do we believe in our society and what we're seeing?"

And of course, being a Shyamalan film, there are plenty of twists, which he still loves to write.

"That's the fun part!" he said. "Even until late in the writing of the movie I was like, how many times can I flip you back and forth? Because I had thought of another way, and I was worried the audience are going to get whiplash if I do one more," he said. — AFP

Academy launches probe after indie film's surprise Oscars nod

THE ACADEMY OF Motion Picture Arts and Sciences said on Friday it was launching a review of Oscars campaigning, days after a small indie film surprised industry-watchers with a shock nomination to Hollywood's most prestigious awards.

"To Leslie" had taken just \$27,000 at the box office when star Andrea Riseborough's name appeared on the shortlist of nominees for Best Actress.

Riseborough, who plays a Texas single mother struggling with alcoholism, beat out presumed front-runners Viola Davis ("The Woman King") and Danielle Deadwyler ("Till").

The nod came after an intense, last-minute social media campaign mounted on her behalf by celebrity friends including Edward Norton, Gwyneth Paltrow, and Sarah Paulson.

Movie industry magazine *Variety* said the Academy had received multiple calls and emails in the wake of the nomination, and there was a raging debate among movie-makers over whether rules had been broken.

On Friday, the Academy said it would be examining its processes, although it did not mention the film by name.

"It is the Academy's goal to ensure that the Awards competition is conducted in a fair and ethical manner, and we are committed to ensuring an inclusive awards process," a statement said.

"We are conducting a review of the campaign procedures around this year's nominees, to ensure that no guidelines were violated, and to inform us whether changes to the guidelines may be needed in a new era of social media and digital communication." — AFP

DISCOVERY

'Love hormone'? Not so fast, new study suggests



THE "LOVE HORMONE" oxytocin has long been thought key to behaviours including pairing up with a partner and nurturing offspring, but a new study in prairie voles is raising doubts.

The research found that voles bred to lack functioning receptors for oxytocin were still able to form strong pairs, produce young and nurse — all behaviours previously believed to depend on the hormone.

Prairie voles are one of the few mammals that mate for life, and are often used to study social behaviours like pair-forming in animals.

In past studies, voles given drugs that stopped oxytocin being processed no longer formed pairs, and mothers failed to produce milk for their young.

Psychiatrist Devanand Manoli and neurobiologist Nirao Shah produced genetically altered prairie voles without working oxytocin receptors, and then observed how the mutant male and female voles behaved.

To their shock, the mutant voles appeared to have no difficulty pairing up with non-genetically altered partners, and mutant females could still deliver and nurse young, unlike those in the drug-driven studies.

"We were certainly surprised," said Manoli, an assistant professor at the University of California, San Francisco.

The results suggest that oxytocin is not the main, or only, driver of activities like partnering or nursing, he said.

"What the genetics reveals is that there isn't a 'single point of failure' for behaviours that are so critical to the survival of the species," he told AFP.

- 'VERY COMPLEX BEHAVIOURS' -

That didn't mean there were no differences, however. Some male mutant voles that paired with ordinary female partners didn't show the aggression towards interloping females that would normally be expected.

And while mutant females produced and nursed litters, some had fewer pups per litter than their counterparts, and fewer of their offspring survived to weaning, the paper published on Friday in the journal *Neuron* explains.

Pups born to mutant mothers also tended to weigh less, suggesting that they were not able to nurse as effectively.

The study only involved pairing of mutant voles with "wild-type" partners, and the researchers said pairings with two mutant partners could produce different results.

Still, as a whole, the findings suggest a different picture of oxytocin's role in several important behaviours.

That could be because animals bred without the receptors developed "other compensatory pathways" that helped them pair up and nurse, said Shah, a professor at Stanford University.

But the researchers suggest it likely means oxytocin is only part of a set of genetic factors that control social behaviour.

"What I think our studies reveal is that there are multiple pathways that regulate these very complex behaviours," said Manoli.

Oxytocin has sometimes been suggested as a way to treat attachment disorders and other neuropsychiatric issues, but there is little settled science on how effective it is.

Now the researchers hope to investigate what other hormones and receptors may be involved in behaviours like pairing and nursing.

"These other pathways might serve as new therapeutic targets," Manoli said. — AFP

art & life

Local Scene

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MONDAY | JANUARY 30 | 2023

Omani company invents environment-friendly coal from coffee ground

By Zuwaina Al Sulimani

With the world becoming more concerned about sustainability, seven young Omanis from the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Muscat came together to form the company Jathwa which is now producing environmentally friendly coal made from the coffee ground.

The company was created to help create solutions to universal problems affecting the world and for the coal made from coffee, to become an alternative to the phenomenon of cutting trees for coal.

By providing this alternative, the founders also wanted to emphasise the maintenance and increase of green spaces not just in cities but also in areas that are badly affected by illegal logging.

"Cutting off trees is a serious problem around the world and causes severe damage to the environment as the trees are our main source of life-giving oxygen. The majority of the coal sold at markets today is from cutting of these trees which is why we believe it was essential to come up with this alternative," the founding students shared.

Oman and the Arab region have been big consumers of coffee. In Oman, it is an aggressively growing industry with coffee shops popping up all over Muscat and even in far-flung villages in the mountains.

Currently, the team has an agreement with different coffee shop owners to collect the leftover coffee to be recycled and processed.

Jathwa Company participated in a competition named "Student Company" for the year 2021, held by INJAZ Oman, which is an organisation concerned with youth encouraging them to start their own companies and supporting them to be a success in their projects.

The seven founders of the company come from different majors in university and currently divided the company into four major departments including the human resources department, the production, and development department, the finance department, and the media and marketing department.

The name of the company "Jathwa" is derived from the 29 verses of Surah Al-Qasas in the Quran "(29) And when Moses had completed the term and was travelling with his family, he perceived from the direction of the mount a fire. He said to his family, 'Stay here; indeed, I have perceived a fire. Perhaps I will bring you (some) information or burning wood from the fire so that you may warm yourselves.' Which means burning coal. "One of the advantages of our product is that it is the first environment-friendly coal for grilling. The difference between the coal the company makes and the market's coal is that a small amount of it is more effective than the coal in the market," the marketing department issued in a statement.

Regarding the manufacture of the product, it goes through different processes, first, they collect leftover coffee from the contracted coffee shops, and then they make the product. After that, they dry it in the sun or ovens which takes approximately three days. Then they add natural ingredients to the product and make it in the same shape. All the team members used the product as part of their testing process and confirmed its effectiveness. The team is currently working with authorities to get the licence to make it available in the market.

Hamed al Zakwani, the chief executive officer of the company, explains that "the beginning of making the product was home-made, because we did not have the capital to found a factory, and since we were all students, we started by using the simplest ingredients then we started making the product. After that, we got a chance to make it in one of the factories in Muscat Governorate, and after the first manufactured product, we concluded that the product is suitable for use. But this is only our experience, we as students, and the product is still developing, and we are now at the stage of searching for a laboratory that can test the product, so it can reach the local market.

He adds, "our future vision is that this product spreads in markets around the Sultanate of Oman, then the Gulf region as well, and the Middle East and the world, God willing. Also, our future vision is not limiting the coal to grills only, but also for incense. Likewise, when we have a factory and our company grows, we will help young Omanis looking for work, training, and employing them in the company, God willing."

Finally, he said, "on the 12th of May 2022, we participated in the Boulevard Innovations Competition, and we got third place at the level of 60 companies participating in the competitions, and this was our achievement in 2022."

