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NO GOING BACK, RONALDO CLOSES DOOR ON RETURN TO EUROPE



P13

OMAN AIRPORTS WITNESS IMPRESSIVE GROWTH IN PASSENGER TRAFFIC



P18

INSPIRING OMAN'S NEW GENERATION THROUGH CINEMATIC VISION



MUSCAT

HM RECEIVES MESSAGE FROM MAURITANIA

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Tuesday received a written message from President Mohamed Ould Cheikh Ghazouani of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, dealing with bilateral relations between the two countries. The message was received by Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy during his meeting with the Mauritanian President's envoy Mohamed Salem Ould Merzoug, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Mauritians Abroad. — ONA

PICTURE ON P2

DUQUM



DRYDOCK'S NANO COATING FOR SHIPS

Asyad Drydock, part of Asyad Group, announced the successful application of high-quality nano-epoxy silicone coating on Asyad Shipping's Ultramax bulk carrier 'Jabal Al Kawr'. The brand-new coating technology was first applied by Asyad Drydock on Minoa Marine's 'MV Julia' earlier this year. — ONA

RIYADH

SAUDI ARABIA TO BUY TURKISH DRONES

Saudi Arabia agreed on Tuesday to buy Turkish drones in the biggest defence contract in Turkiye's history as President Tayyip Erdogan reaped the benefits of his diplomatic push to repair ties with Gulf powers and help Ankara's struggling economy. Erdogan and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman attended the signing ceremony between Turkish defence firm Baykar and the Saudi defence ministry, Saudi state news agency SPA reported. SEE ALSO P6

GCC-CENTRAL ASIA SUMMIT BEGINS TODAY

DELEGATED BY HIS MAJESTY, ASAAD ARRIVES IN JEDDAH



JEDDAH: Delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Turki al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, arrived on Tuesday in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to lead the Sultanate of Oman's delegation to the 18th consultative meeting of leaders of GCC countries, as well as the GCC-Central Asia Summit.

His Highness was received upon his arrival at King Abdulaziz International Airport (KAIA) in Jeddah by Deputy Governor of Makkah Region Prince Badr bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz, Jassem Mohamed Albudaiwi, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), HH Sayyid Faisal bin Turki al Said, the Sultanate of Oman's Ambassador

to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Abdullah bin Saud al Anzi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman, and a number of officials in Saudi Arabia.

His Highness was accompanied by an official delegation comprising Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, HH Sayyid Faisal bin Turki al Said, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and two advisers at HH Sayyid Asaad's office.

Earlier, delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Asaad left on Tuesday heading to the Kingdom of Saudi

Arabia to lead the Sultanate of Oman's delegation during the 18th consultative meeting of leaders of GCC countries, as well as the GCC-Central Asia Summit.

The meeting and the summit will be held in Jeddah today.

HH Sayyid Asaad and his accompanying delegation were seen off upon their departure by Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Secretary-General at HH Sayyid Asaad's office and the Chargé d'affaires of the Embassy of Saudi Arabia. — ONA

Majlis discusses taxation, wages, global agreements

MUSCAT: Majlis Ash'shura on Tuesday held its 16th regular session for the 4th annual sitting (2022-2023) of the 9th Term during which six urgent statements were delivered on various economic and social issues.

The session discussed a report by the Economic and Financial Committee on the efficiency of the Tax Authority's taxation scheme.

It endorsed a report by the Youth and Human Resources Committee on a proposal to raise the wages of Omani private sector's workers.

The session looked into the Media and Culture Committee's report on initiating a 10-year 'cultural visa' to help benefit from the contribution of innovators and specialists in intellectual fields and enrich the cultural scene in Oman.

Further, the session exchanged views about the Economic and Financial Committee's report on strategic projects proposed to be implemented in governorates of Oman. It also approved a report by the Food and Water Security Committee on a study about the future of frankincense trees in the Dhofar Governorate.

Additionally, the session elaborated on draft agreements with other countries. It endorsed the vision of the Services and Social Development Committee on a draft cooperation agreement in the field of maritime transport and ports between the governments of Oman and Egypt.

The session also endorsed draft air services agreements between Oman and a number of countries, including Tanzania, Guyana, Belize and Egypt.

— ONA



SEAMLESS ENTRY, SAFETY PRIORITISED

ROP is dedicated to providing a smooth and hassle-free entry process for tourists, streamlining customs, passport and visa procedures. They also offer advice and assistance to ensure travellers have a pleasant experience. **DETAILS ON P3**

Europe on red alert as heatwave brings health warning

ROME: Large swathes of southern and eastern Europe were placed on heatwave red alert on Tuesday and the World Meteorological Organization warned of an increased risk of deaths as extreme weather gripped the continent, Asia and the United States.

The Mediterranean island of Sardinia could see highs of more than 47 Celsius and forecasters said temperatures could hit 40 degrees in several Italian cities, including 42-43 degrees in the Lazio region that includes Rome.

With baking temperatures hitting Europe during the peak summer tourist season, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said the heatwave in the northern hemisphere was set to intensify. An estimated

- Heatwave in northern hemisphere to intensify in coming days
- US hopes climate cooperation with China could redefine ties
- WMO warns of increased risk of deaths from heatwaves

61,000 people may have died in heatwaves last year in Europe alone.

The EU's emergency response coordination centre issued red alerts for high temperatures for most of Italy, northeastern Spain, Croatia, Serbia, southern



A policeman evacuates a child from wildfire at the village of Agios Charalabos near Athens. — AFP

Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro.

Heatwaves this summer, which saw temperatures climb to 53 degrees in California's Death Valley and over 52 degrees in China's northwest, have coincided with wildfires from Greece to the Swiss Alps and deadly flooding in India and South Korea.

They have added fresh urgency to talks this week between the United States and China, the world's top greenhouse gas polluters.

US climate envoy John Kerry met Chinese officials in Beijing and expressed hope that climate cooperation could redefine troubled ties between the two powers.

Chinese President Xi Jinping

stressed Beijing's commitment to carbon neutrality and a carbon peak was certain but that it would not be influenced by others.

"Temperatures in North America, Asia, and across North Africa and the Mediterranean will be above 40°C for a prolonged number of days this week as the heatwave intensifies," the WMO said. Overnight minimum temperatures were also expected to reach new highs, the WMO said, creating the risk of increased cases of heart attacks and deaths.

"Whilst most of the attention focuses on daytime maximum temperatures, it is the overnight temperatures which have the biggest health risks, especially for vulnerable populations," it said.

— Reuters



HM receives written message from Mauritanian President

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Tuesday received a written message from President Mohamed Ould Cheikh Ghazouani of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, dealing with bilateral relations between the two countries.

The message was received by Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy during his meeting today with the Mauritanian President's envoy Mohamed Salem Ould Merzoug, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Mauritians Abroad. — ONA



Royal Office Minister receives Ambassador of Iran

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan Mohammed bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office received in his office on Tuesday Ali Najafi Khoshroudi, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Sultanate of Oman.

The ambassador expressed his appreciation for the Sultanate of Oman's stances regarding various regional and international issues.

During the meeting, the two



sides discussed several matters of mutual interest. They also reviewed the march of bilateral relations. — ONA

Shura gives nod to wage hike demand in private sector

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

As part of efforts to raise the living standard of a large segment of workers employed in the private sector and increase their contribution to the per capita income, the Majlis Ash'shura on Tuesday approved the requests to raise the wages of Omanis working in the private sector.

Raising the minimum wages of Omanis in the private sector will aid their purchasing power and subsequently improve the

cash flow in the local market.

Earlier in the day, Dr Tahira al Lawati, representative of the Wilayat of Muttrah, issued an urgent statement regarding the conditions for obtaining housing assistance, where she asked about the mechanism for determining the mechanism.

She added that there had been an increase in inflation in the Sultanate of Oman between 2000 and 2022 by 150 per cent, according to figures from the Central Bank of Oman, and the value-added tax (VAT) of 5 per

cent increased the burden on families with limited income, and low levels of salaries for workers in the private sector, which has been set at RO 325. She also pointed out the continuous problem of layoffs in the private sector, and many of them are reassigned to low salaries and wages.

She added that the living situation of low- and medium-income families whose income is less than RO 500 must be taken into account in the housing assistance programme, and RO



500 must be set as the appropriate limit for the conditions for applying for housing assistance instead of RO 300.

The Majlis Ash'shura also approved the expressed requests

to improve the efficiency of the tax system while collecting dues and also approved the requests to implement the production of medical water and submit it to the government to consider its medical

aspects and their compatibility with the health standards required for such projects.

Yousef bin Salim al Mashikhi, representative of the state of Rakhout, read an urgent statement about Salalah International Airport and the high prices of domestic tickets between Muscat and Salalah airports where he mentioned that there are some challenges and obstacles that exist at Salalah Airport and called for measures to increase air traffic for various airlines at Salalah International Airport.

Qaderoon to support 100 physically challenged



KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

As many as 100 physically challenged will enjoy the fruits of a major initiative called 'Qaderoon', a venture collaborated by many ministries and other public and private entities, according to the programme promoters.

A meeting to announce the whereabouts of the project was held under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Fahr bin Fatik al Said and in the presence of senior government officials recently. A work plan was introduced, and the names of those who are eligible for the support announced the second edition of the Qaderoon electronic platform held under the auspices of Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture recently.

Introduced in 2007 in the region, the project has seen success in numerous Arab nations, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates, before coming to the Sultanate of Oman in 2017.

It is the largest and first platform for people with disabilities in the region and was built at a cost of more than RO 350,000; its market value will be estimated in the coming year at more than 600,000 Omani riyals.

Qaderoon includes 100 sustainable projects for people

with disabilities and aims to allocate stores for direct online marketing and sale of all products offered through the platform.

"The Qaderoon programme aims to empower and rehabilitate the physically challenged Omanis and will support 100 such people by providing soft skills and enable them with means of survival that help them secure jobs and sustain them," a representative of the project told the Observer.

Accordingly, the programme will offer sustainable projects to persons with diverse disabilities, which include kinaesthetic, visual, auditory, autistic, intellectually challenged and the like.

Qaderoon project is implemented with the strategic partnership of the Supreme Committee of Justice (SCJ), Royal Court Affairs (RCA), General-Secretariat of National Day Celebrations, Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), Dhofar Governor's Office, Oman Investment Authority (OIA), Ministry of Labour (MoL), Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI), Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), General Directorate of Traffic, Muscat Municipality, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), The General-Secretariat



The Qaderoon programme aims to empower and rehabilitate the physically challenged Omanis and will support 100 such people by providing soft skills and enable them with means of survival that help them secure jobs and sustain them

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PROJECT

of the Majlis Ash'shura, OCCI Dhofar Branch, Khimji Ramdas Institute (Eshraqa), and Al Batinah South Governor Office.

"As of now, 14 projects were handed over to eligible persons with disabilities after they took a qualifying course to manage the same on their own and make a living for the future," he added.

These projects were distributed in several governorates in the Sultanate of Oman, including Al Batinah North and South, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Dhahirah, and Dhofar. According to the plan, ten projects will be delivered

in the near future in Dhofar Governorate.

As a result, various stores in different sectors are currently managed by people with disabilities and contains mobile phone store, perfume store, watch showroom, furniture store and many stores on the electronic platform, thanks to the Qaderoon initiatives. A number of disabled people have been employed in some companies, such as Lulu Hypermarket chain.

"The quality of projects varies according to the environment, the labour market, and the ability and capabilities of people with disabilities, but the most important focus is always on sustainability in these projects," he added.

According to him, the Qaderoon envisages serving the community and seeks to transform the idea of a merger from a theoretical perspective into a practical application on the ground by educating the community about the importance of persons with disabilities by highlighting their rights to integrate and interact with other members of society.

The ongoing project envisages of establishing a special institution for people with disabilities with sustainable projects, building partnerships, and creating opportunities for the specially-abled to support their projects and provide job opportunities.

Sunan al Bahr committees to boost fisheries sector

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@AfrahAlBalushia

The fisheries sector is set to get a boost through committees formed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR). Under the plan, the Sunan al Bahr committees will have presence in all the coastal areas.

The ministry issued a special regulation for the smooth functioning of the committees, as a Ministerial Resolution (24/2000) issued the first regulation concerning Sunan al Bahr in 2000 and some amendments were made in 2002.

This regulation worked to organise the work of these the committees in terms of their formation at the level of the states of the coastal governorates, their tasks, terms and duration of membership, procedures for selecting members, cases of membership falling out, and conditions for vacancies.

The committees having four-year-term have 256 members with 136 fishermen.

The nature of the committees are consultative and complementary to manage the fisheries sector with close co-ordination between the ministry, fishermen, and representatives.

The tasks and functions of the committee include submission of proposals and recommendations related to the development of fisheries in a way that it achieves sustainable development and ensures the maximum benefit from fish resources.

It aims to resolve disputes and conflicts between fishermen with regard to use of fishing equipment, methods, sites and seasons within the framework of the laws and customs without prejudice to the provisions of the Marine Fishing Law, its executive regulations and the decisions issued in implementation of the provisions of the law.





Law compliance must to handle influx of tourists, says ROP

MAI AL ABRI
MUSCAT, JULY 18

There has been an impressive rise in visitors coming to the Sultanate of Oman in personal vehicles using land borders from the Gulf Cooperation Council in recent times. The visitors are mainly tourists who love exploring various tourist destinations, especially Dhofar Governorate, known for the scintillating Khareef season.

In the given situation, Major Badr al Yaarubi, Director of Passports and Civil Status in Al Buraimi Police Command, emphasised the commitment and dedication of the Royal Oman Police in facilitating a seamless passage for tourists through various borders.

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has implemented measures to streamline customs, passport and visa procedures, ensuring a hassle-free entry process for visitors.

In addition to the administrative aspects, the Royal Oman Police goes beyond their duties by providing valuable advice, guidance and addressing inquiries or concerns from tourists.

They aim to ensure that travellers are well-informed and have a smooth experience during their visit to Oman.



Major Badr al Yaarubi

Furthermore, the Royal Oman Police takes proactive steps to meet all necessary requirements and make preparations ahead of the Khareef season. This includes coordinating with relevant authorities to ensure the availability of essential services, facilities and infrastructure to accommodate the inflow of tourists. By doing so, they strive to create a welcoming and enjoyable environment for visitors.

Major Badr al Yaarubi underscored the significance of adhering to traffic laws to ensure the safety of individuals arriving through the land borders. Travellers must prioritise their well-being and that of others on the roads. This begins with proper vehicle maintenance, including regular inspections and ensuring the vehicle's overall condition is roadworthy.

Respecting the specified speed limits is of utmost

importance. It not only ensures the safety of the driver and passengers, but also promotes a secure and harmonious traffic flow. Adhering to these limits minimises the risk of accidents and creates a safer environment for all road users.

Additionally, regulations regarding tinted windows should be followed. The tinting level should not exceed 30 per cent to ensure clear visibility for the driver and other road users. This limitation is crucial for maintaining a safe driving environment, especially during nighttime or adverse weather conditions.

When towing trailers behind vehicles, clear visibility of the

licence plate and unobstructed rear lighting are essential for the safety of everyone on the road. Proper attachment, securing the trailer and ensuring that it does not impede the vehicle's lights or licence plate functionality are crucial considerations.

Visitors from the Gulf Cooperation Council countries can bring companions such as household workers, drivers and private cooks. They can obtain an electronic visa in advance or get one upon arrival at the border. Residents of the GCC countries can enter the Sultanate of Oman with a tourist visa through various borders.

The Royal Oman Police reiterates its commitment to providing assistance, support and necessary facilities to visitors of the Sultanate of Oman. Individuals can reach out and request services through the emergency hotline (9999).

Crackdown on illegal transportation: MoTCIT clarifies



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 18

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) has responded to reports that a number of vegetable shop owners, including citizens, have been booked for various violations. In some cases driving licences have been revoked.

MoTCIT said such violations are not new and as per executive regulations of the Land Transport Law (Articles 19 and 20), all land transport activities must be licensed and operations have a registration card from the ministry.

The regulation specified a fine of RO 300 for the illegal transportation of goods and RO 2,000 for the activity of renting or leasing vehicles

to anyone who violates any of the licensing conditions stipulated in the regulation.

The ministry said that the field inspectors responsible for regulating the land transport activities take efforts to combat violations regarding the transportation of goods and individuals.

The ministry stressed the need for business owners to reconcile their conditions by not practicing land transport activities without a licence or in unequipped means of transport and added it welcomes all media inquiries, which it considers a key partner in improving its operations.

The ministry urged workers in the transport sector to adhere to the requirements of the Land Transport Law and its regulations.

RO 1,000 fine for violating E171 norm in food products

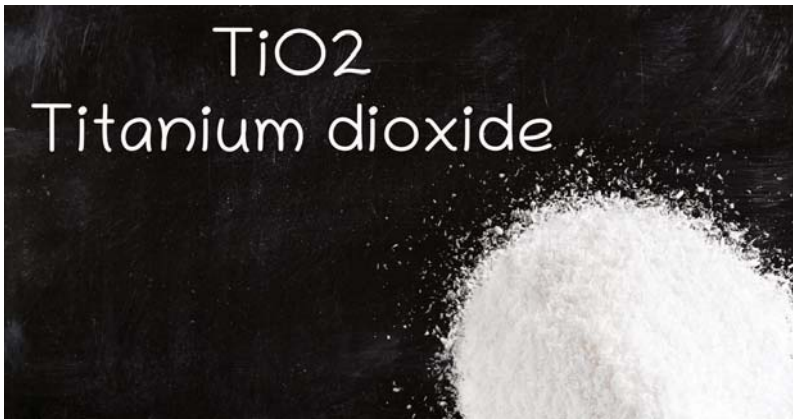
AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@Afrahbalushia

The Sultanate of Oman has decided to ban import, production and marketing of food products with titanium dioxide (E171). The ban will be effective from July 22 and a violator will be liable for RO 1,000 fine, which will be doubled in case of repeat violation.

A decision for this was taken through a ministerial decision (11/2023).

The Food Safety and Quality Centre announced on the social networking site that only four days were left when the decision, issued by Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, will be in force.

Titanium dioxide is a coloured substance that is added in toothpaste (whitening agent),



white paint, some types of sweets, chewing gum, candies, flour, vitamin supplements, mozzarella cheese, and other food products to whiten them. Products containing (E171) are referred to the food product's explanatory data card as an additive.

The decision to prohibit of using this substance came after it was monitored by some studies that indicated its harm to human

health, as it was banned from being added to foodstuffs by the European Union countries.

E171 is a white metal that is a food additive, used as a natural colouring agent in food and beverage products. The common name for E171 is titanium dioxide. It is also called titan white or tiox. It is possibly carcinogenic to humans, and studies have also found that

titanium dioxide nanoparticles cause an inflammatory response and genetic damage in mice.

Amal bint Issa al Hamimiyah, Food Specification Specialist from the Food Safety and Quality Centre, said: "A fine of RO 1,000 has been set for violations. It is expected that after implementing this decision, the products, whether they are locally manufactured or imported in the local market, should be free of any traces of toxicity of E171, and any imported food products with E171 will not be allowed at the Sultanate of Oman's border crossings."

In line with international trends, the Gulf Standardisation Organisation issued an international notification declaring that this substance was removed from the Gulf technical regulations, and prohibited its addition to food products.

Emirates marks 30 years of operation in Oman

MUSCAT: Emirates is celebrating 30 years of operations in the Sultanate of Oman. Since the inaugural flight in 1993, Emirates has carried 4.8 million passengers to and from the Sultanate on more than 37,200 flights, connecting travellers to and from 140 global destinations.

Emirates first began operations in Oman with a Boeing 777-200 aircraft with four weekly services. In 2019, Emirates launched the world's shortest scheduled A380 flight, flying a distance of 340 kilometres each way from Dubai to Muscat.

The Emirates Group employs over 40 Omanis, in multiple roles including cabin crew, pilots and other parts of the business such as Emirates Engineering, Emirates Airport Services and Airport



Operations.

Fahad al Hassawi, Country Manager Oman at Emirates, said: "Oman has been an important market for Emirates since the beginning of operations, providing flexible connections through Dubai to the wider world, for both passengers and air freight.

Over the last three decades, we are proud to have brought more choice, comfort and luxury to over 4.8 million travellers to and from the Sultanate, headlined by the deployment of the world's shortest A380 flight. We are committed to the country and look forward to the next 30 years."

Oman Cancer Association in Dhofar organises awareness forum

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 18

The Oman Cancer Association in Dhofar, in collaboration with the General Directorate of Culture, Sports and Youth, is organising the 'Health and Awareness' media forum. This highly anticipated event will take place at the esteemed Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah.

The forum aims to raise public consciousness about the significance of health and well-being in our community. By fostering cooperation and collaboration among various organisations, the forum seeks to address vital health issues and

promote healthy lifestyles.

One of the highlights of the event is an exhilarating running race scheduled for the 22nd of this month. Participants and enthusiasts alike can look forward to an invigorating experience as they test their endurance and spirit. Additionally, a walking march will accompany the running race, offering an inclusive opportunity for individuals of all ages and fitness levels to partake in the pursuit of a healthier lifestyle. The Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment will serve as the ideal venue for this exceptional event, providing a vibrant and conducive atmosphere for promoting health, well-being and community engagement.



"We are delighted to announce that the association achieved its financial and administrative independence back in 2018," said Ahmed al Najjar, Head of the association's office in Dhofar. "Our branches in Dhofar and Muscat have forged a strong partnership, working seamlessly together. Notably, the Dar Al Hanan service has been providing exceptional care to children under 17 suffering

from cancer," he added.

Exciting developments are on the horizon, as the association has acquired land in the Governorate of Muscat. "We envision constructing an independent building soon, enabling us to cater directly to the needs of our beneficiaries. The support and integration efforts from the public and private sectors have been remarkable, and community

awareness about our cause is continually growing," Al Najjar added.

Khaled al Shanfari, the association's media official, highlighted their commitment to spreading awareness. "Through numerous awareness lectures held across various governorates, we are making significant strides in raising awareness about cancer prevention and treatment," he

said.

"We express our gratitude to the supporting bodies and authorities for their cooperation. In collaboration with the Omani Women's Association, we have organised valuable courses for volunteers from different regions of Dhofar Governorate, furthering our mission to provide better services and community support," he added.

The association emphasises the importance of early cancer screening for prevention and timely treatment, urging everyone to take the necessary measures for their health. As they continue their vital work, their impact and dedication to the community remain unwavering.

OMAN’S MEAT CONSUMPTION TRENDS ARE EXPERIENCING A NOTABLE SHIFT, WITH POULTRY, SEAFOOD, BOVINE, AND MUTTON FINDING THEIR PLACE ON DINNER TABLES AS OMANIS EMBRACE THEIR CULINARY PREFERENCES REFLECTING A BLEND OF TRADITION, DIVERSITY, AND A GROWING CURIOSITY FOR GLOBAL FLAVOURS

OMAN’S EVOLVING PALATE

JOMAR MENDOZA

The Sultanate of Oman is known for its rich cultural heritage and stunning landscapes. However, behind the scenes, a quiet transformation is taking place in the country’s culinary preferences, particularly in the realm of meat consumption. As per data from Visual Capitalist, Omanis have been exploring diverse options, with poultry, fish and seafood, bovine, and mutton and other meats all playing significant roles in their diets. Let’s delve into the fascinating world of Oman’s evolving meat consumption patterns.

FISH AND SEAFOOD

A coastal nation’s bountiful catch As a nation blessed with a long coastline, it comes as no surprise that Omanis have a deep

appreciation for fish and seafood. The data reveals that the average Omani consumes around 26.1 kg of fish and seafood annually. With the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman as their playground, Omanis have a vast array of seafood options to savour, including hammour (grouper), kingfish, shrimps, and shellfish. Grilled, fried, or incorporated into aromatic stews, fish and seafood are integral to Omani cuisine, reflecting the country’s close relationship with the sea.

POULTRY: A FEATHERED DELIGHT REIGNS SUPREME

When it comes to poultry, Omanis have developed a penchant for its succulence and versatility. According to the data, the average Omani consumes approximately 19.7 kg of poultry per year. Poultry has become a staple in the country’s cuisine, always finding its way into Omani dishes. The popularity of poultry can be attributed to its relatively affordable price, lean meat, and ease of preparation.

MUTTON AND OTHER MEATS

A savory spectrum The Omani culinary landscape would be incomplete without the inclusion of mutton and other meats. The data indicates that Omanis consume approximately 14.3 kg of mutton and other meats annually. The data noted that other meat includes less frequently farmed animals like rabbit, horse, and camel, as well as game — meat from wild animals. Mutton, with its distinct flavour and tenderness, is a popular

choice in traditional Omani dishes like Shuwa and Kabsa. Additionally, other meats, such as camel and venison, are also relished by adventurous eaters seeking unique flavours. The consumption of mutton and other meats showcases Oman’s rich gastronomic heritage and the willingness of its people to embrace a wide range of meat options.

BOVINE: A GROWING TASTE FOR RED MEAT

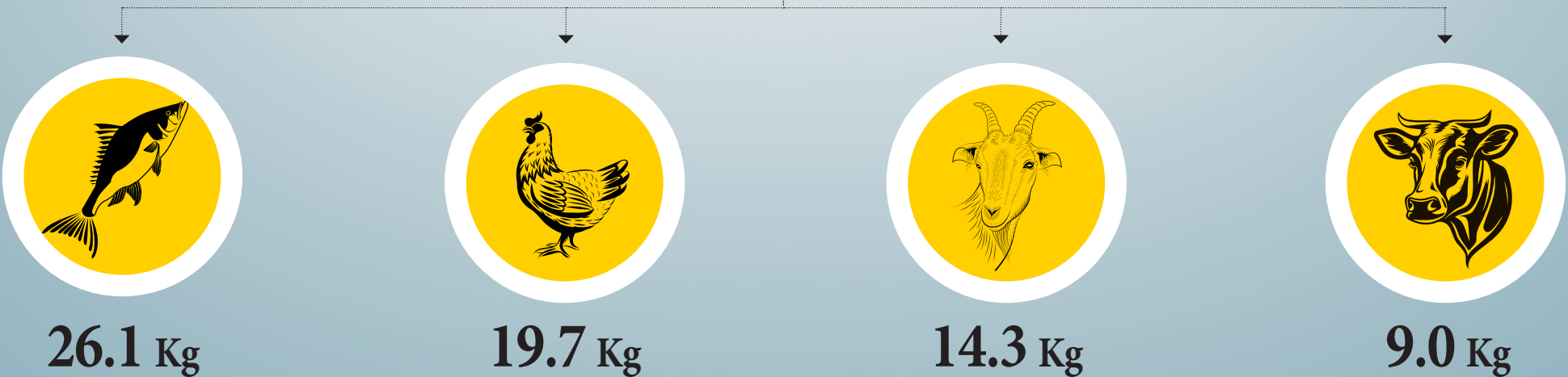
While poultry and seafood dominate the Omani palate, the data also highlights the country’s increasing appetite for bovine meat. Omanis consume an average of 9.0 kg of bovine meat per year, signalling a shift towards a more diverse meat selection. Juicy steaks, tender roasts, and hearty burgers are finding their way onto Omani dinner tables, complementing traditional dishes like Mashuai (roasted whole lamb or goat) and Harees (a meat and wheat porridge). This growing preference for bovine meat reflects changing dietary habits and a desire for culinary exploration.

Oman’s meat consumption patterns are undergoing a fascinating transformation, driven by evolving tastes, economic factors, and cultural influences. Poultry stands as a firm favourite, while fish and seafood celebrate the country’s coastal abundance. The increasing inclination toward bovine meat reflects a desire for variety and culinary exploration, while mutton and other meats showcase Oman’s rich gastronomic heritage. As Oman continues to develop and its

population becomes more exposed to global influences, it is likely that meat consumption patterns will continue to evolve. The culinary journey of Omanis, driven by a desire for exploration and a celebration of their cultural heritage, will shape the future of the country’s meat consumption landscape. Oman’s meat consumption trends are experiencing a notable shift, with poultry, fish and seafood, bovine, and mutton and other meats all finding their place on Omani dinner tables. As Omanis embrace a wider range of meat options, their culinary preferences reflect a blend of tradition, diversity, and a growing curiosity for global flavours. With every bite, Omanis are not only savouring the richness of their own gastronomic heritage but also embracing the world on their plates.

A GLIMPSE INTO MEAT CONSUMPTION TRENDS

AVERAGE ANNUAL CONSUMPTION BY OMANIS





AI is a human companion for future, say experts

KABEER YOUSUF
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While Artificial Intelligence (AI) has begun to touch on all spheres of life, people's daily affairs will purely depend upon the 'created' intelligence, experts say.

AI will not be a threat but indeed is emerging as a proactive and intelligent companion, reshaping the landscape of employment opportunities.

Speaking to the *Observer* on the sidelines of the AI Marketing Summit Oman, a one-day conference on AI and its impact in the field of marketing that addressed several issues, challenges, options and benefits for corporates and business houses, Sorav Jain, Founder, Digital Scholar, and one of the speakers, said the adoption of AI technologies promises a transition of jobs, where tasks



are delegated more efficiently between humans and machines.

"As Artificial Intelligence (AI) makes its way to personal and professional lives, the threat of job loss lurks all around. Yet contrary to the fear of job

loss, AI represents not a threat but a valuable ally that can revolutionise the world of work," he said.

"AI can be used as a 'friend' that is more smarter and proactive. While it is true that

certain routine tasks might be automated, this paves the way for the workforce to focus on more complex, creative and intellectually stimulating tasks that require uniquely human skills," he added.

The AI marketing summit empowers marketers, business owners and entrepreneurs to thrive in the digital age by harnessing the power of AI and staying ahead of the competition

SORAV JAIN
Founder, Digital Scholar

"The AI marketing summit empowers marketers, business owners and entrepreneurs to thrive in the digital age by harnessing the power of AI and staying ahead of the competition," Jain said.

Organised by Dentsu M21 at the Crowne Plaza Qurum, the event also showcased some of the best tools that one can use for marketing.

Rishi Jain, co-founder, Digital Scholar, who also spoke at the event, said, "With generative tools, we delve into the ways AI can become a powerful asset, enhancing our capabilities rather than undermining our value. Moreover, individuals can prepare themselves for this new landscape, harnessing AI's potential to unlock a world of opportunities. From text to image and text to video, AI will be able to assist small businesses."

He added that for job-seekers and employees alike, the key to thriving in AI-driven era lies in understanding the transformative nature of AI and actively participating in one's professional development.

Oman Airports organises ICV campaign at Muscat International Airport



MUSCAT: Acting in cooperation with Oman Investment Authority (OIA), Oman Airports carried out, on Tuesday, a public awareness campaign about in-country value (ICV).

The event, held at Muscat International Airport, highlighted benefits to be gained from applying ICV programmes in contracts and procurement deals by local companies, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and the community at large. The campaign was also aimed at encouraging the purchase of local products and the recruitment of local service providers. — ONA

CPA launches unified contracts initiative

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@AfrahAlBalushi

The Consumer Protection Authority (CPA), represented by the Directorate-General of Studies and Development, launched the unified contracts initiative for a number of sectors in the Sultanate of Oman.

The initiative aims at the continuous development of all services provided to the consumer, and the facilitation of all existing procedures in the market, of which the unified contract is the most prominent, as the initiative focused in its current phase on the sectors of aluminium and kitchen workshops, and electrical and electronic goods.

It also aims to define the supplier and the consumer of their rights during and after the purchasing process, provide consumer safety in the markets of the Sultanate of Oman, combat all forms of commercial fraud and reduce negative practices.

In addition, to identifying the problems facing the consumer and providing solutions to them, and reducing complaints and problems that may be encountered the consumer, and improving the quality of the awareness programmes provided by the Authority to the consumer.

CPA stated that the initiative will be implemented in two phases, the first centring on drafting, reviewing



and approving contracts, while in the second phase it will be applied to commercial establishments, followed by a follow-up process of implementing the initiative during the coming years by measuring verification indicators every year with the aim of overcoming difficulties and challenges.

By that, it will contribute to the improvement of the business environment, especially the retail and services sector in the Sultanate of Oman. Even, the development of legislation and field procedures, and the avoidance of violations and financial fines by raising the level of institutional awareness of the regulations and requirements of the Consumer Protection Authority.

It should be noted that the initiative was based on basic principles, including the realisation of the Oman Vision 2040, international, regional and Arab experiences based on the Consumer Protection Law.

Forum on water management in energy sector today: OQ

MUSCAT: As part of its commitment to water resources management and paving the way towards achieving water positivity in the energy sector, OQ, the global integrated energy group, will host a sustainability forum on water management at its head office on Wednesday, July 19, 2023.

This forum serves as a platform for OQ to contribute to global water conservation efforts and promote effective water resource management in the energy industry.

Aligned with the objectives of Oman Vision



2040, the initiative strives to facilitate a transition towards a sustainable future across all facets of the Group, seamlessly integrating sustainability into OQ's

The forum will illuminate key themes, fostering an ecosystem that promotes collective transformation. One primary objective is to enhance the maturity of companies and organisations in water management through comprehensive risk analysis, reduced water consumption and the adoption of leading practices.

Additionally, the forum will explore the utilisation of modern technology to optimise technical aspects of water management, while emphasising the significance of agile water resource management. — ONA



Pakistan School Muscat

ANNOUNCEMENT OF TENDERS

PSM intends to offer the tender of **Annual Contracts for the year 2023 - 2024**. The contractors with relevant experiences are invited for following bidding:

Tender No.	Tender's Name	Tender Collection Date & Time	Final Submission Date & Time
2023/010	Cleaning Services	July 19 to July 25, 2023 09:00 AM to 01:00 PM Working Days/Hours	Before and Until 11:00 AM July 26, 2023
2023/011	ACs Repair & Maintenance		
2023/012	Canteen Services		
2023/013	Photocopy Services		
2023/014	Supply of Stationery		

Experienced contractor(s) having relevant experience of at least 3 years of jobs of similar nature preferably in Oman, who wish to participate in the bidding may collect the documents after payment of RO. 20,000 only through POS (non-refundable) per Job.

Admin Office
Pakistan School Muscat
P.O. Box 987, P.C. 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman; Tel: 24702489 Fax: 24709746,
In case of any query you may contact 00968 93690691
Email: tulaib@pakistanischool.edu.om, director@financebids@pakistanischool.edu.om

The tenders shall be submitted in original and completed with all relevant documents. Tenders not in compliance with tender's requirements shall not be considered.

Tender Documents shall be submitted in sealed envelope with clearly mentioned Tender Number/name, Company Name and POC's Number/name. The sealed envelope shall be dropped in the Tender Box available at Admin Office on or before the date mentioned above and addressed to:

Pakistan School Muscat
(PSM is not bound to accept the lowest Tender or any Tender)



Saudi deal for Turkish drones during Erdogan visit

RIYADH: A Turkish firm will provide drones to Saudi Arabia, Riyadh said on Tuesday following a visit by Türkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that aims to attract foreign investment.

Several contracts, including the drone deal with the privately-owned Baykar, were signed during a meeting between Erdogan and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in the Red Sea port of Jeddah on Monday.

Haluk Bayraktar, CEO of the drone manufacturer which is co-run by one of Erdogan's sons-in-laws, in a tweet called the deal "the biggest defence and aviation export contract in the history of the Turkish Republic".

The value of the deal has not been made public.

Erdogan was in Saudi Arabia to kick off a Gulf tour seeking to drum up support for Türkiye's faltering economy.

After attending a Saudi-Turkish business forum in Jeddah on Monday, Erdogan and Prince Mohammed discussed "prospects for joint cooperation" in their meeting, SPA reported.



The two leaders signed cooperation agreements in the fields of energy, direct investment, defence and media, the report said.

It added that Saudi officials also signed "two contracts with the Turkish company

Baykar".

Drones developed by Baykar have been used in Azerbaijan, Libya and Ukraine.

Saudi Arabia "will acquire drones with the aim of enhancing the readiness of the kingdom's armed forces and bolstering its

defence and manufacturing capabilities", Defence Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman said on Tuesday.

He did not specify the type of drone the kingdom is looking to procure.

An Arab diplomat in Riyadh, requesting

anonymity as he was not authorised to speak to the press, said it was Baykar's TB2 model. Last month, Kuwait said it struck a \$367-million agreement to procure TB2 drones.

This week's visit is Erdogan's second to Saudi Arabia since a recent rapprochement between Ankara and Riyadh.

With ties on the mend, Erdogan visited Saudi Arabia in April 2022, and Prince Mohammed travelled to Türkiye in June last year. Erdogan's current Gulf trip comes as Türkiye battles a currency collapse and soaring inflation that has battered its economy.

In March, Saudi Arabia deposited \$5 billion in Türkiye's central bank.

The two countries also inked several memorandums of understanding in sectors including energy, real estate and direct investments.

Last month, Turkish Vice President Cevdet Yilmaz and Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek travelled to the UAE to discuss "economic cooperation opportunities" with counterparts.

— Agencies

Israelis march, block roads to protest judicial reforms



Demonstrators use flares as they stage a 'day of resistance' to protest the Israeli government's judicial overhaul bill, in Tel Aviv. — AFP

TEL AVIV: Israelis on Tuesday marched on highways and blocked army headquarters in Tel Aviv in the run-up to a parliament vote on the government's judicial reform agenda protesters say would "dismantle democracy".

The proposals have divided the nation and triggered one of the biggest protest movements in Israel's history since being unveiled in January by the hard-right government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Weekly rallies have drawn tens of thousands of protesters aiming to prevent what they believe could open the way to more authoritarian government.

Crowds gathered early on Tuesday in the coastal city of Tel Aviv, Israel's commercial hub, after organisers had called for a "national day of resistance" ahead of a planned vote by lawmakers on a key clause later this month.

Organisers urged supporters to rally at train stations, city squares, highways and roundabouts across Israel.

Thousands of demonstrators holding Israeli flags and chanting "democracy, democracy" marched on highways and bridges, and blocked several roads as well as an entrance to the military's headquarters in Tel Aviv.

Opponents of the government's reforms also entered the stock exchange building in the city and staged a rally there.

Police said they had arrested at least 19 protesters for violating public order.

Rallies were also held in Jerusalem, Haifa Rehovot and other cities.

The government temporarily paused the divisive legal overhaul in March in the wake of a general strike. — AFP

Japan prime minister in Qatar for energy talks on final leg of Gulf tour

DOHA: Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited gas-rich Qatar on Tuesday as he wraps up a Gulf tour centred on energy security and cooperation with Tokyo's main suppliers.

Tokyo is looking to work closely with Qatar to stabilise the global market for liquefied natural gas (LNG), Kishida earlier told the official Qatar News Agency.

He flew to Doha, on the first visit there by a Japanese premier in 10 years, from the United Arab Emirates after starting his tour in Saudi Arabia where he met the de facto leader, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Kishida and Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani discussed "developments related to energy security and supplies," the Qatari leader said in a statement.

They will attend a Japan-Qatar meeting that aims to "promote cooperation in energy security and in the field of clean energy and decarbonisation," said Japan's foreign ministry.

"The two countries will announce their expectations for further participation by Japanese corporations in large-scale projects, including upstream LNG projects."

The Doha visit comes as Japanese companies are negotiating new long-term LNG



Qatar's Emir Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani shakes hands with Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at the Amiri Diwan in Doha, Qatar. — Reuters

supply contracts with Qatar, according to Bloomberg.

Japan's top LNG importer, Jera, did not renew contracts that expired in 2021 for gas supply of 5.5 million tonnes per year, Bloomberg said.

Since Russia's Ukraine war, "Japan has been suffering from potential LNG disruption," said Takafumi Yanagisawa, a researcher with Japan's Institute of Energy Economics.

"Japan needs to secure more LNG from Qatar," he said, arguing

that a deal would provide Tokyo with "stable and reliable LNG supply".

China, meanwhile, has inked some of the industry's longest-running contracts with Qatar. Last month, Doha announced a 27-year deal to supply four million tonnes annually to the China National Petroleum Corporation.

It matches the terms of a November deal with China's Sinopec as the longest ever seen in the industry.

China, Japan, South Korea

and other Asian countries are the main market for Qatari gas, which has been increasingly sought by European countries too since Russia's invasion of Ukraine early last year.

By expanding activities at North Field, which has the world's biggest natural gas reserves and extends under the Gulf into Iranian territory, Qatar expects to raise its LNG production by at least 60 per cent, taking it to 126 million tonnes a year by 2027.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

THE HAGUE

ICC resumes probe into drug war

International Criminal Court judges on Tuesday rejected the Philippines' appeal to halt a probe into the nation's deadly anti-drug crackdown, clearing the way for the investigation to resume.

The so-called drug war launched under former president Rodrigo Duterte has killed thousands and drawn allegations of widespread rights violations.

ICC chief prosecutor Karim Khan later asked to reopen the inquiry in June 2022 and pre-trial judges at the court gave



the green light in late January, a decision which Manila appealed shortly afterwards. Judges confirmed a decision to resume the investigations in relation to the situation in the Philippines.

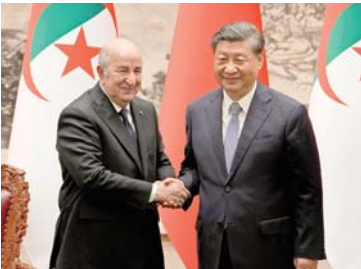
BEIJING

Xi pledges stronger ties with Algeria

China's President Xi Jinping pledged on Tuesday stronger ties with Algeria in a meeting with the gas-exporting North African nation's President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, as Beijing looks to diversify its energy supply.

Tebboune began a five-day state visit to China on Monday, his first since assuming the presidency in late 2019.

"China is ready to work with Algeria to strengthen strategic communications, deepen



exchanges and cooperation and ensure the steady and long-term development of China-Algeria comprehensive strategic partnership," Xi told Tebboune on Tuesday.

ISLAMABAD

Explosion kills two, wounds several

An Algerian court on Sunday sentenced to three years in jail a member of the "Hirak" protest movement that forced longtime President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to resign last year, a rights group said.

The group, CNLD, lists prisoners of conscience in Algeria. It said earlier this month that 61 people were still behind bars for acts related to "Hirak".

It described the three-year sentence handed down to Brahim Laalami as "incredible and unacceptable".



Khaled Tazaghart, a former deputy and anti-regime activist, was also sentenced to one year in a separate trial, the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LADDH) added.



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In brief

WASHINGTON



US SOLDIER CROSSES INTO NORTH KOREA

A US soldier facing disciplinary action crossed the inter-Korean border into North Korea on Tuesday and was believed to be in North Korean custody, US officials said, creating a fresh crisis for Washington in its dealings with the nuclear-armed state.

The United Nations Command that oversees the demilitarised zone area at the border earlier on Tuesday identified the individual as a US national who had crossed into North Korea without authorisation.

A witness said that “this man gives out a loud ‘ha ha ha,’ and just runs in between some buildings.”

LONDON



UK ANNOUNCES EXTRA £2.5 BN FOR ARMY

Britain’s Ministry of Defence said on Tuesday it plans to invest £2.5 billion in army stockpiles and munitions “to improve fighting readiness”, as it “takes learning from the war in Ukraine”.

It also announced the creation of a “global response force”, combining its deployed and high-readiness service personnel and drawing on “capabilities from all domains”.

The extra spending and new force follow a £5 billion funding boost to the country’s defence budget as part of a years-long review of its strategic foreign and defence policy.

PANAMA CITY



EX-LEADER GETS NEARLY 11 YEARS IN JAIL

Panama’s ex-president Ricardo Martinelli has been sentenced to almost 11 years in prison for money laundering, according to a court ruling made public on Tuesday.

Prosecutors had sought a 12-year term for 71-year-old Martinelli, who was president from 2009 to 2014, on charges that he used illegally-acquired state funds to buy a majority share in a publishing house in 2010.

According to the charge sheet, Martinelli and others used a series of front companies to siphon off almost \$44 million from state infrastructure contracts during his presidency.

Russia warns of Black Sea risks after grain deal exit



A combine harvests wheat in a field in the course of Russia-Ukraine conflict near Luhansk, Russian-controlled Ukraine. — Reuters

KYIV: Russia on Tuesday issued a veiled warning over the future of grain exports via the Black Sea, after Moscow refused to extend a key agreement to allow safe passage for cargo ships from Ukrainian ports.

The caution came hours after Ukraine said a Russian strike overnight had damaged facilities at the Odesa port in southern Ukraine, a transit hub key to grain pact signed with the UN and Türkiye.

“Without appropriate security guarantees, certain risks arise here,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Were a new arrangement to allow for exports “formalised without Russia, then these risks should be taken into account”, Peskov said.

But Peskov put Moscow’s

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Russia’s decision to quit the deal meant “the withdrawal” of navigation safety guarantees in the Black Sea

position in starker terms when he said the Ukraine was using the Black Sea export corridor “for combat purposes.”

Russia later told Türkiye that the coordination centre overseeing the deal would be disbanded in the wake of Moscow’s exit, and that Moscow was lifting security guarantees in the Black Sea.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told his Turkish counterpart Hakan

Fidan that Russia’s decision to quit the deal meant “the withdrawal” of navigation safety guarantees in the Black Sea and “the dissolution of the Joint Coordination Center in Istanbul,” according to a statement.

Russian forces struck “facilities where terrorist acts against Russia had been prepared using unmanned boats” similar to the ones said to have been used in the bridge strike, the army said in a statement.

Kyiv’s military earlier said it had “destroyed” six Kalibr missiles and 21 Iran-built attack drones targeted at the Odesa region, but that port facilities were damaged in an assault overnight.

“Unfortunately, the debris of the downed missiles and the blast wave from the downing damaged the port infrastructure facilities and several private homes,” Ukraine’s

military southern command said in a statement.

The Odesa region is home to the maritime terminals central to the export deal between Moscow and Kyiv that has enabled the shipment of more than 32 million tonnes of Ukrainian grain over the past year.

Moscow’s war last year saw Ukraine’s Black Sea ports blocked by warships until the agreement allowed critical grain shipments to restart.

The Kremlin said it was exiting the deal on Monday, after months of complaining that elements of the agreement allowing the export of Russian food and fertilisers had not been honoured.

Russia’s decision to quit the grain accord provoked an outraged response from the international community. — AFP



Emmanuel Macron

Macron sticks with prime minister after pensions crisis, riots

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron is keeping his prime minister in place, his staff has said, ending weeks of speculation about a possible reset after successive crises shaking his government.

Elisabeth Borne’s time heading up the government has included the most turbulent episodes yet for Macron’s second term leading France.

In the past months, the nation has been rattled by unrest over a contested pension reform and then rioting sparked by a policeman’s killing of a teen of North African descent.

Under France’s political tradition, prime ministers rarely last longer than a few years, with Macron on his third since taking power in 2017.

Persistent rumours had centred on Macron naming law-and-order Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin as Borne’s successor, in part as a recognition of his handling of the riots which eased after tens of thousands police were deployed.

But in the end Macron opted for the status quo, a member of his entourage said late on Monday.

“To ensure stability and in-depth work, the president has decided to keep the prime minister in place,” the official said. — AFP

EU’s Latin America summit underscores rift over Russia

BRUSSELS: A summit between European, Latin American and Caribbean leaders on Tuesday highlighted their differences over how to tackle Russia’s war in Ukraine.

As leaders from the EU and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) met for a second day, diplomats were struggling to agree the language of a final communique.

A handful of Latin American countries -- diplomats cited Nicaragua, Cuba and Venezuela as the most adamant -- were opposed to agreeing a text holding Moscow responsible for the conflict.

Other leaders from the region were ready to sign up in support of Ukraine’s sovereignty, but put more emphasis on the need for a negotiated peace, rather than a victory for Kyiv, in their their public declaration.

Leaders arriving for the talks expressed confidence that a text would be agreed, but some Europeans expressed frustration with the holdouts’ views on the conflict.

Latin American leaders came to the summit hoping to make



Senior officials appear on the European Union-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Summit (EU-CELAC) at The European Council Building in Brussels. — AFP

progress unblocking a stalled EU trade deal, and some Caribbeans wanted to discuss reparations for European colonialism and slavery.

They have expressed some frustration with Europe’s insistence on the importance of the war in Ukraine, but officials still hoped to be able to release a final text.

Irish leader Leo Varadkar said talks had gone late into the night on Monday and that the debate was a valid one, even if the conclusion should be clear.

“A lot of countries will point out that there are other conflicts in the world, and I hear that,” he told reporters.

“And they will say that other conflicts in the world perhaps

haven’t got the same amount of attention as Ukraine.”

In the opening session on Monday, CELAC president Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, cited the crisis in Haiti, the Palestinian struggle for statehood and various wars in Africa as deserving of European attention.

And he warned that “sanctions

and blockades” triggered by the war in Ukraine would only serve “to penalise the most vulnerable populations.

As the leaders met in Brussels, Russia refused to extend a deal to allow Ukrainian grain exports through the Black Sea, drawing a warning from the UN that millions of the world’s poorest would “pay the price”. — AFP

Malnutrition: Beyond appearance and food



Dr Nisma Haris

The writer is a general physician, content creator

As soon as the term malnourishment comes up, there comes a figure in the head with a pale look and weak gait. However, one can look perfectly well but still be malnourished. You can be eating belly full three times a day but your meals might be lacking the right balance of nutrients to keep you fit and healthy.

As per WHO's (World Health Organization) definition of malnutrition, 'Malnutrition' refers to deficiencies or excesses in nutrient intake, imbalance of essential nutrients, or impaired nutrient utilisation. The double burden of malnutrition consists of both undernutrition and overweight and obesity, as well as diet-related noncommunicable diseases.

Undernutrition manifests in four broad forms namely wasting, stunting, underweight, and micronutrient deficiencies.

This is specifically confined to low-income countries, poor living conditions, in access to food, and extreme poverty. Overnutrition showcases as insulin resistance, prediabetes or diabetes, cardiac conditions, or hypertension with overweight and

obesity ruling the overnutrition type of malnutrition. By and large, the perception flows that if one is eating enough or more than enough, he or she cannot be malnourished.

However, overweight or obese people constitute a substantial segment of malnourished people. If people stick to a particular type of food and are not incorporating variations in their food choices that leads to deficiencies of certain micro and macronutrients as well as hormones.

As this behaviour goes unnoticed under the impression of having a tummy full of food, it can lead to deficiency diseases and disrupted body functioning.

Speaking of urban lifestyle, possible reasons for malnutrition can be limited mobility, typical office culture leading to grabbing on-the-go meals, and medical conditions that can be both physical or mental.

Social reasons include living alone and not feeling like preparing and having meals alone, not having enough time for groceries and cooking, lack of cooking skills, or just not having enough means to

MALNUTRITION
ONCE IDENTIFIED
AND DIAGNOSED
THROUGH A
HEALTHCARE
PROVIDER
IS HIGHLY
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THROUGH
LIFESTYLE
MODIFICATIONS
AND
TRANSFORMING
EATING
PRACTICES
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INCLUSIVE
OF ESSENTIAL
NUTRIENTS

purchase and cook meals. Children and old age people are not an exclusion from malnutrition and they too possess an equally higher risk of becoming malnourished. The rapidly transformed eating habits of present-day children with an inclination toward higher calorie foodstuffs intake are even at greater risk of malnutrition. Feelings of tiredness or exhaustion, lethargy, higher tendency for falling sick, increased recovery time after an episode of illness, feelings of depression or anxiety, lack of focus, and weight loss or weight gain can be some of the identifying points for malnutrition. In children, malnourishment manifests as inadequate physical and mental growth and development, delayed learning abilities along with irritability. Sadly, the leading upshot of malnutrition is compromised of immunity of the body. But the good news is, once identified and diagnosed through a healthcare provider it is highly reversible through lifestyle modifications and transforming eating practices that are more inclusive of essential nutrients.

The 'kidneys of Kolkata': Indian wetlands under threat

LAURENCE THOMANN

Wetlands just outside India's Kolkata have for generations provided tonnes of food daily and thousands of jobs as they filter sewage through fish ponds — but rapid urbanisation is threatening the ecosystem. Conservationists warn that pollution and strong-arm land grabs are putting a lifeline for the megacity's 14 million residents at risk. "We are destroying the environment," said Tapan Kumar Mondal, who has spent his life farming fish in the ingenious system of canals and ponds stretching across about 125 square kilometres.

"The population... has increased, there is a pressure on nature, they are ruining it," 71-year-old Mondal added.

Listed as a wetland of global importance under the United Nations Ramsar convention, the waters offer natural climate control by cooling sweltering temperatures — and act as valuable flood defences for low-lying Kolkata. But Dhruba Das Gupta, from the environmental group Scope, said that short-sighted building development was encroaching on the wetlands. "The wetlands are shrinking," said the researcher, who is trying to finance a study of what is left of the waters.

Every day, 910 million litres of nutrient-rich sewage flow into the wetland, feeding a network of about 250 hyacinth-covered ponds.

"Sunlight and the sewage create a massive plankton boom," said K Balamurugan, chief environment officer for West Bengal state, explaining that the microorganisms in the shallow fish ponds feed rapidly growing carp and tilapia.

Once the fish have had their fill, the water runoff irrigates surrounding rice paddies and the remaining organic waste fertilises vegetable fields.

"The sewage of the city is being naturally treated by the wetlands," Balamurugan said, giving them the nickname the "kidneys of Kolkata".

The community-developed system was created by "the world's foremost connoisseurs of wastewater wise use and conservation", according to its UN Ramsar listing, which also warns it is under "intense encroachment stress of urban expansion".

The late ecologist Dhrubajyoti Ghosh, who played a key role in the 2002 Ramsar submission, called Kolkata an "ecologically-subsidised city". — AFP



Paul Krugman

The writer is a NYT opinion columnist, writes about macroeconomics, trade, health care

ALTERNATIVE
MEASURES OF
CORE INFLATION
THAT EXCLUDE
SHELTER BY AND
LARGE SHOW A
CLEAR PATTERN
OF DISINFLATION;
INFLATION IS
STILL RUNNING
HIGHER THAN IT
WAS BEFORE THE
PANDEMIC,

Can Biden change the economic narrative?

Back in the 1970s, Arthur Okun, an economist who had been a policy adviser to Lyndon Johnson, suggested a quick-and-dirty way to assess the nation's economic condition: the "misery index," the sum of inflation and unemployment. It was and is a crude, easily criticised measure.

The measurable economic harm from unemployment, for instance, is much higher than that from inflation. Yet the index has historically done quite a good job of predicting overall economic sentiment.

So it seems worth noting that the misery index — which soared along with inflation during 2021 and the first half of 2022 — has plunged over the past year. It is now all the way back to its level when President Joe Biden took office.

This remarkable turnaround raises several questions. First, is it real? (Yes.)

Second, will ordinary Americans notice? (They already have.) Third, will they give Biden credit? (That's a lot less clear.)

The plunge in the misery index reflects both what didn't happen and what did. What didn't happen, despite a drumbeat of dire warnings in the news media, was a recession.

The US economy added 4 million jobs over the past year, and the unemployment rate has remained near a 50-year low. What did happen was a rapid decline in inflation.

But is this decline sustainable? You may have seen news reports pointing out that "core" inflation, which excludes volatile food and energy prices, has been "sticky," suggesting that improvement on the inflation front will be only a temporary phenomenon.

But just about every economist paying attention to the data knows that the traditional measure of core inflation has gone rotten, because it's being driven largely by the delayed effects of a surge in rents that ended in mid-2022. This surge, by the way, was probably caused by the rise in remote work triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic rather than by any Biden administration policy.

Alternative measures of core inflation that exclude shelter by and large show a clear pattern of



President Joe Biden, seen through a window, addresses the nation from the Oval Office at the White House in Washington.

disinflation; inflation is still running higher than it was before the pandemic, but it has come down a lot. If you really work at it, it's still possible to be pessimistic about the inflation outlook, but it's getting harder and harder. The good news about inflation, and about the economy as a whole, does look real.

But are people noticing this improvement?

Traditional measures of economic sentiment have become problematic in recent years. Ask people how the economy is doing, and their response is strongly affected both by partisanship and, I believe, by the narratives conveyed by the news media. That is, what people say about the economy is, all too often, what they think they're supposed to say.

But if you ask Americans more specific questions, such as whether now is a good time to find a quality job, they typically say yes. At the same time, their expectations about future inflation have declined substantially.

And if you look at a novel indicator — what information people are searching for on the Internet — you'll find that searches for both "inflation" and "recession" soared in 2021-22 along with the misery index but have plunged over the past year.

Finally, as always, it's important to look at what people do as well as what they say.

Strong consumer spending, record levels of air travel and many other

indicators suggest that Americans are feeling pretty good about their economic circumstances.

But will Biden get credit? Polls suggest that voters are still giving him very poor marks for his handling of the economy, despite the decline in the misery index.

Some analysts have argued that this jaundiced view reflects a failure of wages to keep up with inflation. But this was true for most of the Reagan years too, and in any case real wages have been rising lately.

So will voters' views of the Biden economy eventually reflect the good news? Or did the inflation shock of 2021-22 establish a narrative of Biden as a poor economic manager that has become too deeply entrenched — both in the public consciousness and in the news media — to be dislodged even as the economy rapidly improves?

Biden himself is trying hard to change that narrative, by pointing both to the improving data and to an impressive surge in manufacturing investment. But I have no idea whether he'll succeed. One encouraging precedent for Biden: Ronald Reagan still had fairly low approval in mid-1983, then went on to win a landslide in 1984 on the strength of the economy's recovery. Biden might yet turn the narrative on his economic policy around.

And even if he can't, it might not matter. — **The New York Times**

Remembering a literary giant

With profound sorrow, the world of literature last week bid adieu to an acclaimed author whose words have left an ineradicable mark on the universal literary landscape. He was Milan Kundera, the esteemed Czech writer and original exotic novelist, who balanced comedy and tragedy while combining the absurdities of life and love in his writings. Kundera passed away in Paris on July 11.

Perhaps best known for his novels, Kundera was also a poet, playwright and essayist, and wrote several collections of short stories. He won accolades for his style in depicting themes and characters that floated between the mundane reality of everyday life and the lofty world of ideas.

From The Joke in 1967, The Book of Laughter and Forgetting in 1978, The Unbearable Lightness of Being in 1984 to The Festival of Insignificance in 2013, among a few, all his works bear witness to the human condition torn between the desire for freedom and the struggle to achieve it.

I learnt about this legendary intellectual heavyweight in the mid-eighties when I read Kundera's The Book of Laughter and Forgetting. Although I was too young to grasp the expanse of the intent in the book to a large extent, I still remember the content how the power of totalitarian regimes can tamper with history and create an alternate past.

Kundera's rise to international fame came with the publication of The Unbearable Lightness of Being in 1984. It is the story of four Czech artists and intellectuals and a dog caught up in the brief period of reforms that ended when Soviet tanks rolled into Prague. The novel was made into a film starring Daniel Day-Lewis and Juliette Binoche and directed by Philip Kaufman in 1988, earning two Academy Award nominations.

Kundera won global accolades for the way he depicted themes and characters that floated between the



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyp

The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

I LEARNT ABOUT KUNDERA, THE LEGENDARY INTELLECTUAL HEAVYWEIGHT IN THE MID-80S WHILE ASPIRING TO BECOME A JOURNALIST. ALTHOUGH I WAS TOO YOUNG TO CLASP THE EXPANSE OF THE INTENT IN THE BOOK OF LAUGHTER AND FORGETTING TO A LARGER EXTENT, I STILL REMEMBER THE CONTENT THAT HOW THE POWER OF TOTALITARIAN REGIMES COULD TAMPER WITH HISTORY AND CREATE AN ALTERNATE PAST

mundane reality of everyday life and the lofty world of ideas.

In 1985, he received the Jerusalem Prize - a prize given to writers whose works have dealt with themes of human freedom in society. While he was a frequent contender for the Nobel Prize for literature, the award remained elusive.

In these essays, too, he offered a workshop on how to write. How to manage voice and perspective. He taught us how to have fun with language and form - and let the imagination run wild, and how to deal with thought and concept, materiality and politics.

Through his works, Kundera gifted us a profound understanding of our shared humanity and an invitation to explore the boundless depths of our souls. His words will continue to resonate through the ages, reminding us of the power of literature to illuminate our lives and inspire us to seek truth, love and freedom.

While Czech President Petr Pavel called him a "world-class writer", Prime Minister Petr Fiala commented that Kundera's works "reached whole generations of readers across all continents".

Born in Czechoslovakia in 1929 into an elite family, Kundera first accessed the world of culture through music. His father, a pianist and musicologist, ensured his son received musical training at an advanced level. Kundera studied in Prague, becoming a lecturer in world literature.

Jobless in his early twenties, Kundera played jazz on the piano to make ends meet. By that time, he had moved to Prague. His first novel The Joke led to a ban on his writing in Czechoslovakia. It was audacious in form and theme. He emigrated to France in 1975 after being ostracised for criticising the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

No doubt, Kundera's words will forever echo through the corridors of our hearts as they remind us of our shared humanity, our capacity for love, and our eternal quest for meaning. And his voice will continue to resonate, whispering truths to us all!

GAZAN GIRL DEFIES HEATWAVE



A Palestinian girl swims in a swimming pool to cool down amid a heatwave as Gaza power shortages worsened by the heat, provoking protests, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip. – Reuters

Ukraine's Nato aspirations: Hurdles and victories at the Vilnius summit

Though, despite intense campaigning and pleading by Volodymyr Zelensky, the Vilnius summit did not give any timetable for Ukraine's path towards its membership, Nato acknowledged in paragraph 11 of its official communique that "Ukraine's future is in Nato".

For obvious reasons, the absence of clearly defined timelines and conditions for Ukraine's accession was projected by the media as a personal setback for Zelensky, who had harboured hopes that the Nato summit would culminate in a concrete invitation for Ukraine to join the alliance.

Ostensibly, the lack of such an invitation reflects the "cautious" approach taken by Nato member states, who remain wary of "provoking" further tensions with Russia, but the fact is that Nato has given much more than what Zelensky had expected from the Vilnius summit: unwavering pledges for extremely generous financial and military assistance to Kyiv as well as the creation of the Nato-Ukraine Council. President Zelensky may not have received the invitation, but the summit yielded a series of substantial victories for



Dr Imran Khalid

The writer is freelance columnist on international affairs

Ukraine.

Notably, Ukraine has secured a commitment of military and economic aid, while also embarking on F-16 fighter jet training in collaboration with 11 partner countries.

Most significantly, the formal affirmation that "Ukraine's future is in Nato" solidifies the nature of the partnership between Ukraine and the alliance.

At the same time, the Vilnius summit has yielded another significant development in relation to the Ukraine conflict: the inception of the Nato-Ukraine Council. In this major move, Kyiv and the alliance's 31 members will have a dedicated platform for consultation and joint decision-making.

Beyond its consultative function, the council will also serve as a vital mechanism for crisis management, enabling Kyiv to summon urgent meetings when necessary.

However, the establishment of the Nato-Ukraine Council, apparently aimed at enhancing channels of communication and consultations with Ukraine, may inversely

exacerbate tensions in the region. It is being viewed by Moscow as an indirect attempt to grant Ukraine a symbolic "seat at the table" without conferring formal membership status.

While the Nato-Ukraine Council may be seen as a symbolic gesture of support for Ukraine's aspirations, its implications and potential consequences for regional stability cannot be overlooked. The crisis meetings that Kyiv can convene through this council are considered to be a thinly veiled attempt to further stoke tensions and provoke Russia.

In 2008, Nato indicated that Ukraine could potentially join the alliance at a later time, but when Ukraine requested "fast-track" membership in September 2022, it was declined.

The reluctance to expedite Ukraine's entry into Nato is rooted in the potential implications of Article 5 in Nato's charter, which mandates that an attack on one member would trigger a collective defence response from all

others. If Ukraine were to join amid the ongoing conflict with Russia, it would necessitate all Nato member countries declaring war on Russia.

During the Vilnius summit, Nato reiterated that Ukraine

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATO-UKRAINE COUNCIL AIMS AT ENHANCING CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATIONS WITH UKRAINE, MAY INVERSELY EXACERBATE TENSIONS IN THE REGION

would be invited to join as a member "when allies agree and conditions are met," indicating that the decision is contingent upon consensus and fulfilment of specific criteria.

However, on this matter, Nato has again given a big concession by allowing Ukraine to bypass the Membership Action Plan, a step in the entry process.

Another key dilemma facing Nato in the foreseeable future lies in determining the circumstances under which Ukraine could potentially join the alliance — a decision that hinges not only on when the war concludes, but also on how it concludes. Complicating matters further is the fact that Putin may have a serious interest in perpetuating a "frozen" conflict with Ukraine, viewing the nation-state as fictitious and leveraging it for political legitimacy.

Ukraine's path to Nato membership is grappled with the complexities of the war's conclusion and the motives driving Russia's actions.

If the end of the conflict resembles a "frozen conflict" akin to the situation between Moldova and the Russian-backed separatist region of Transnistria, where Moscow retains the ability to manipulate tensions at will, Ukraine's aspirations for Nato membership could face significant hurdles for an extended period, possibly spanning years or even decades.

sport

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Real Madrid closes financial year with €12 million profit

MADRID: Real Madrid closed the 2022-23 financial year with a 11.8 million euro (\$13.25 million) profit, the Spanish club said on Monday, around one million euros less than in the previous season despite a higher revenue.

The Spanish club managed to remain in profit over the last four financial years despite the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the 893 million euros renovation project of their Bernabeu stadium, set to be concluded by the end of 2023.

“Operating income for the financial year 2022-23 has



reached 843 million euros, an increase of 121 million euros (17 per cent) compared to the 2021-22 financial year,” the club said in a statement.

They added, however, that stadium revenues, limited by the redevelopment project,

were still 13 per cent lower than in 2018-19 season but revenues from the remaining business lines have already exceeded pre-pandemic levels, with marketing revenues (up 12 per cent) standing out in particular.

Madrid said their net worth is 558 million euros, 12 million more than last season, and their net debt, excluding the Bernabeu project, stood at 46.7 million euros as of June 30 2023.

That is a major improvement from last year, when their net debt was 263.1 million. — **Reuters**



No going back, Ronaldo closes door on return to Europe

RIYADH: Cristiano Ronaldo said there is no chance of him playing club football in Europe again and that the Saudi Arabian League is better than Major League Soccer, where his great rival Lionel Messi has chosen to begin the next chapter in his career.

Ronaldo, who joined Al Nassr in December on a two and a half year contract following his exit from Manchester United, said he had paved the way for other top players to sign with Saudi teams and that more would make the move to the desert kingdom.

The 38-year-old Portugal captain, speaking after Al Nassr’s 5-0 loss to Celta Vigo in a pre-season friendly on Monday, said most European leagues were in decline.

“I’m 100 per cent sure I won’t return to any European club. I’m 38-years-old,” ESPN quoted him as saying.

“European football has lost a lot of quality. The only valid one and still doing good is the (English) Premier League. They’re way ahead of all the other leagues.”

Ronaldo’s long-time rival Messi was also linked with a move to Saudi Arabia before the Argentine World Cup winner completed a transfer to MLS side Inter Miami, signing a deal until 2025.

“The Saudi League is better than MLS,” Ronaldo said.

“Now all the players are coming here ... In one year, more top players will come to Saudi Arabia.”

Several high-profile players have followed Ronaldo to the Saudi league, including Ballon d’Or winner Karim Benzema from Real Madrid and N’Golo Kante from Chelsea, who both joined champions Al-Ittihad. — **Reuters**



Lille sign Iceland midfielder Haraldsson on five-year deal

LILLE: Lille have signed Iceland midfielder Hakon Haraldsson from FC Copenhagen on a contract until 2028, the Ligue 1 club said on Monday.

The two sides did not reveal the transfer fee but both Danish and French media reported that Lille had paid Copenhagen 17 million euros (\$19.11 million) for the 20-year-old.

“The battle was hard and long but with Hakon’s decisive support and determination, it is now done,” Lille President Olivier Letang told the club website.

“He is a player who was the subject of many requests in Europe and his profile allows him to play in different attacking positions. We will now be able to integrate him into the LOSC family so that he adapts to France and Ligue 1.”

Haraldsson joined Copenhagen as a 16-year-old from Icelandic side IA Akranes in 2019 and has made nearly 60 appearances in all competitions, including six in the Champions League, since his first-team debut in 2021.

He helped Copenhagen to win two Danish Superliga titles in the two recent campaigns, also winning the Danish Cup in 2022-23.

“Hakon has gone from a young talent to a top player and therefore it is logical that the interest in him has been great,” said Copenhagen sporting director Peter Christiansen.

Haraldsson, whose parents are former national team players, made his Iceland debut in June 2022 in a friendly 2-2 draw against Israel. Since then he has earned 10 more caps and scored one goal. — **Reuters**





Boston Celtics forward Jayson Tatum (0) shoots the ball past Philadelphia 76ers centre Joel Embiid (21) during the fourth quarter in game six of the 2023 NBA play-offs at Wells Fargo Centre. — USA TODAY Sports

Embiid wants NBA title: ‘in Philly or anywhere else’

LOS ANGELES: Philadelphia 76ers star Joel Embiid has given fans a jolt with an interview gaining steam on social media on Monday discussing his desire to win an NBA title “in Philly or anywhere else.”

The big man from Cameroon broke through for a first NBA Most Valuable Player award last season, his eighth with the 76ers.

But Philadelphia were eliminated by the Boston Celtics in the second round of the NBA playoffs, later sacking coach Doc Rivers and hiring former Toronto coach Nick Nurse.

“I just want to win a championship. Whatever it takes,” Embiid said in an interview with LeBron James’s longtime friend and business partner Maverick Carter that occurred on Thursday at the Uninterrupted Sports Film Festival.

“I don’t know where that’s going to be, whether it’s in Philly or anywhere else, I just want to have a chance to accomplish that. I want to see what it feels like

to win that first one, and then you can think about the next one.

“It’s not easy, but it takes more than one or two, three guys. You’ve got to have good people around you, and myself, every single day, I work hard to be at that level so I can make it happen. So, every single day, I’m working towards that.”

By Monday, the interview was popping up on social media sites alongside speculation that it signalled Embiid could soon be seeking to force a trade.

The 76ers are already reportedly pursuing options for trading All-Star guard James Harden, who opted into this \$35.6 million contract for next season so that the team could work out a deal with another team.

Embiid, who signed a four-year, \$213 million contract extension in 2021 that runs through 2027, said last month that he hoped Harden might change his mind and decide to stay.

Shakeel’s double century puts Pakistan on top in Galle Test



Pakistan’s Saud Shakeel (L) celebrates after scoring double centuries (200 runs) during the third day of the first cricket Test match between Sri Lanka and Pakistan at the Galle International Cricket Stadium in Galle on Tuesday. — AFP

GALLE, Sri Lanka: Saud Shakeel hit his maiden double century in Tests as Pakistan stretched their lead to a dominant 149 against Sri Lanka on day three of the rain-hit opening match on Tuesday.

Sri Lanka bowled out the tourists for 461 in the final session after a frustrating ninth-wicket stand of 94 between Shakeel, who remained unbeaten on 208, and Naseem Shah, who made six off 78 balls.

The 27-year-old Shakeel, who is playing his sixth Test, ruled as he cut Dhananjaya de Silva for a boundary to bring up his double century to a standing ovation.

The hosts ended the day on 14 for no loss after bad light stopped another rain-affected day. Sri Lanka still trail Pakistan by 135 runs in their second innings.

Nishan Madushka, on eight, and skipper Dimuth Karunaratne, on six, were batting

at close of play.

The Sri Lankan bowlers led by off-spinner Ramesh Mendis, who ended with a five-wicket haul, hit back in the second session but Shakeel combined with the lower-order including a 52-run seventh-wicket stand with Noman Ali, who made 25.

But it was his 177-run partnership with Agha Salman, who hit 83, that drove Pakistan’s bounce back from 101-5 in their reply to Sri Lanka’s 312.

Shakeel was dropped twice on 93 and 139 as he went past his previous best of 125 not out.

Both Shakeel and Salman scored runs briskly and hit regular boundaries but the run rate dipped after Salman’s departure.

The day started late due to rain, which affected play on the previous two days, prompting officials to re-adjust the session timings. — AFP

Sweden’s Norrman beats Kimsey in playoff for Barbasol title

WASHINGTON: Sweden’s Vincent Norrman won a playoff over England’s Nathan Kimsey with a par on the first extra hole on Sunday to capture the US PGA Tour Barbasol Championship.

The 25-year-old from Stockholm sank a clutch seven-foot bogey putt on the 18th hole in regulation just to force a playoff, then pitched from the rough to two feet in the playoff and made a par putt for the victory.

“I don’t think I can process this for a while. I’m at a loss for words,” Norrman said.

“It’s even beyond (a dream). I don’t think I’ve dreamt this big yet honestly. It’s amazing.”

Norrman fired a six-under par 66 to finish alongside Kimsey

on 22-under 266 after 72 holes at Keene Trace Golf Club in Nicholasville, Kentucky.

The US PGA Tour rookie claimed his first title in only his 23rd tour start, the 286th-ranked standout booking a place in next week’s British Open.

Norrman, whose best prior PGA result was a share of eighth in May at the Byron Nelson, wasn’t sure how the triumph would alter his goals and plans.

“We’re going to figure that out tomorrow,” he said.

Norrman led Kimsey by one at the 18th tee but his first two shots found the left rough. Then Norrman blasted over the green, pitched to just outside seven feet and saw his bogey putt catch the right edge and fall in to force a playoff.



“I just hit it left off the tee and I had a terrible lie,” Norrman said. “It was an impossible shot, I felt like. That was a really good bogey.”

The playoff began at the par-4 18th with Norrman finding right greenside rough and Kimsey a left greenside bunker.

Kimsey blasted out to 15 feet while Norrman pitched to two feet. Kimsey two-putted for bogey and Norrman tapped in moments later for the victory.

“Have a chance to win a PGA Tour event, I can’t complain really,” Kimsey said. “I feel like I barely missed a shot all day, holed a few nice putts and did a really good job of executing the whole back nine.”

Kimsey, a 30-year-old Englishman who plays on the

DP World Tour, missed a chance to become the first player since American Jim Benepe at the 1988 Western Open to win in his PGA Tour debut.

US rookie Trevor Cone, who made double bogey at the par-3 16th and missed a 12-foot birdie putt at 18 to miss the playoff, settled for a share of third with France’s Adrien Saddier on 267.

Lucas Glover, the 2009 US Open champion, fired his 12th consecutive round in the 60s with a 68 to finish fifth on 268 with Canada’s Taylor Pendrith sixth on 269.

With most of the world’s top players at the Scottish Open, the US event offered a prime chance for players trying to keep their tour status to grab valuable points or a victory. — AFP

ALCARAZ NEEDS NEW RIVALS FOR A NEW ERA



LONDON: Novak Djokovic was still trying to digest the loss of his Wimbledon crown to Carlos Alcaraz when one reporter asked him whether Sunday's clash was the start of a great rivalry.

The irony was not lost on Djokovic who, despite still operating at his peak, is 36-years-old and in sight of the end of his record-shredding career.

"I would hope so, for my sake," the Serb said. "He's going to be on the tour for quite some time."

"I don't know how long I'll be around."

Djokovic's rivalries with Roger Federer and Rafa Nadal, not to mention Andy Murray, have captivated the sport for close to two decades, but time is against him forming another one with Alcaraz, so Sunday's five-set duel should be savoured.

He played Federer 50 times, 17 of them at majors; Nadal on 59 occasions, 18 of them at majors and Murray 36 times with 10 of them at Grand Slam

level. So far he has faced the 20-year-old Alcaraz three times.

Certainly the prospect of another showdown at the U.S. Open in a few weeks is exciting, but whether or not 23-time Grand Slam champion Djokovic can stretch his career long enough to battle Alcaraz on a regular basis is questionable.

"I think it's good for the sport, one and two in the world facing each other in five-hours, five-set thrillers. Couldn't be better for our sport in general, so why not?" Djokovic said.

The reality, however, is that world number one Alcaraz could be left without a serious rival, certainly amongst the current Next Gen brigade who appear a long way behind the Spanish phenomenon.

"Who's going to match this kid for the next few years?" 1987 Wimbledon champion Pat Cash said after Alcaraz ended Djokovic's 34-match winning run at the grasscourt slam.

Hopefully, Alcaraz's meteoric

rise will have a positive impact on those around the same age group, just as Federer and Nadal inspired Djokovic to become the player he is.

Italian Jannik Sinner, 21, beat Alcaraz at last year's Wimbledon but has reached only one Grand Slam semi-final so far, losing to Djokovic in straight sets last week.

Denmark's new world number four Holger Rune, 20, has the game and personality to form a rivalry with his former junior sparring partner Alcaraz, while Italian Lorenzo Musetti, 21, is another with the potential to step up.

But for the likes of Stefanos Tsitsipas, Daniil Medvedev, Casper Ruud and Andrey Rublev -- players who were supposed to have filled the void after the 'big three' depart -- they have watched Alcaraz zoom by them.

Medvedev, the 2021 U.S. Open champion, was outclassed by Alcaraz in the Wimbledon

semi-final, lasting less than two hours on Centre Court.

While professional sport is full of pitfalls and those suggesting Alcaraz will be sweeping titles for another decade at least, should pause for thought.

Federer, Djokovic and Nadal often talk about the motivation each gave each other as the bar was pushed higher and higher.

Between them they won 65 Grand Slam titles and it has to be hoped that Alcaraz finds a couple of adversaries to share the load as tennis moves into a new era.

"I think he's already taken Sinner with him and he will take Holger Rune with him, although Holger Rune maybe hasn't latched on to the idea yet," seven-time Grand Slam champion Mats Wilander said.

"Roger made Novak and Rafa think 'hey this guy is not going to give us anything, we have to go and take it from him' and I think Carlos can definitely be that guy." — Reuters

Vondrousova ready to face more motivated rivals after Wimbledon win

PRAGUE: Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova said on Tuesday she was determined "not to push in anywhere" in her bid to avoid the media spotlight after her historic triumph.

The 24-year-old Czech beat Tunisia's Ons Jabeur in straight sets in Saturday's final to become the first ever unseeded female Wimbledon champion.

"The last few days were pretty tough, it was quite a merry go-round," she told reporters in Prague.

Vondrousova, who won her first major title at the All-England Club after finishing runner-up in the French Open in 2019 and taking the silver medal at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, said she expected the increased media interest to continue.

"I know it's part of the game. I'll just try to stick to my circle of people and not push in anywhere and hopefully I'll be OK," she said.

Vondrousova knows that other players will now be looking to measure themselves against her after a win which propelled her from 42nd to 10th in the WTA rankings.

"I think this is a good problem. Everyone will try to show their best against me," she said.

"I won a Grand Slam title, but I have to take this into account and learn to live with it."

Vondrousova is planning a trip to her native city of Sokolov in the west of the country and want to rests until the end of the week, also to spare her sore ankle she hurt during the first round at Wimbledon.

"I will have to start training again but I'll try to avoid publicity as much as I can," said Vondrousova, who is planning to return to competition at Montreal in August.

'CONTROL MY HEAD'

Looking back at the tournament, Vondrousova

I won a Grand Slam title, but I have to take this into account and learn to live with it.

MARKETA VONDROUSOVA
Professional tennis player

said she was still surprised by her achievement.

"It was great that I could control my head so well," she said.

"The two weeks are really tough, there are so many games, you get all kinds of news as you proceed. So I was surprised by the way I managed it."

She also laughed at a question about the lessons she learnt at the tournament, pointing at her poor record at Wimbledon until this year's edition.

"I guess I've learnt I can play on grass!"

Meanwhile Vondrousova revealed she had a lucky charm for Wimbledon — a drawing by the son of fellow Czech Barbora Strycova, who won the doubles title with Taiwan's Hsieh Su-wei on Sunday for a repeat of their 2019 trophy.

"He gave it to me before the quarter-finals, he coloured a picture and handed it to me," she said.

"I put it in my bag and it's still there."

On Sunday, Vondrousova relished the opportunity to attend the champions' dinner and ball, wearing white trainers with her long black dress.

"Nobody would have known if the photographer hadn't asked me to lift the dress a bit," said Vondrousova, known for her collection of some 200 pairs of trainers.

"I don't like high heels, they make my feet hurt. And I also had to mind my ankle." — AFP



Wimbledon champion Czech Republic's Marketa Vondrousova poses with the trophy. — Reuters

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Oman-China trade reaches \$40.45 billion

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, JULY 18

The bilateral trade between Oman and China reached \$40.45 billion in 2022, which was in the tens of thousands of dollars at the beginning of the diplomatic relations, according to the diplomatic mission of China to the Sultanate of Oman.

Oman exported as much as 39.381 million tonnes of crude oil to China in 2022, and Oman's trade balance was \$32 billion. Over the years, China has maintained the status of Oman's largest trading partner and largest crude oil importer, while Oman is China's fourth largest trading partner in the Arab world.

Speaking to the Observer on the sidelines of the year of 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the Sultanate of Oman, Li Lingbing, Chinese Ambassador to Oman said the economic and trade cooperation has brought huge benefits to both countries and peoples, and driven the overall development of relations between the two countries.

"The economic and trade cooperation between the two countries has made great progress in the last 45 years and both Chinese and Omani economies are highly complementary

and have great potential," her excellency said. The two sides have strengthened the docking of the 'Belt and Road' initiative with 'Oman Vision 2040' and developed practical cooperation in infrastructure, energy, communication technology, electricity, fisheries and other fields.

Oman exports a number of products to China and comprises mostly crude petroleum (\$19.7 billion), petroleum gas (\$2.51 billion), and cyclic hydrocarbons (\$288 billion). During the last 26 years the exports of Oman to China have increased at an annualised rate of 15.5 per cent, from \$562 million in 1995 to \$23.9 billion in 2021.

In 2021, China exported \$3.13 billion to Oman. On the other hand, Oman imports from China mostly mineral fuels distillation products, besides wood and articles of wood, wood charcoal, aircrafts, space crafts and ceramic products.

"Over the past nearly five decades, efforts were intensified to promote bilateral cultural tourism, building industrial parks, trade, investment, education and training, and play an active role in strengthening Chinese-Arab cooperation based on mutual benefit and common gain, and building the Chinese-Arab community for the future," Lingbing added.

Round 2 of hydrogen blocks to be awarded in Q1 2024: Hydrom

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 18

Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom), a subsidiary of Energy Development Oman (EDO), recently participated in the recent Green Hydrogen Conference and Exhibition - Europe 2023, held in Madrid, Spain.

As part of its participation, Hydrom presented the ambitious vision and strategic plans of the Sultanate of Oman in fostering the growth of the green hydrogen industry, with the aim of becoming a global hub for its production in the near future.

Eng Abdulaziz bin Said al Shaidhani, the Managing Director of Hydrom, took part in the conference, where he presented the results of the first public auction round in phase A. The event witnessed the signing of agreements to initiate the development of five projects in Al Wusta Governorate, spanning

an area exceeding 1,600 km2 and with a total investment of more than \$30 billion. Additionally,

Al Shidhani discussed the second round of the public auction within the same phase, as

well as the promising investment opportunities it offers companies interested in entering this industry. Commenting on Hydrom's participation in the conference, Eng Abdulaziz said, "The

Green Hydrogen Conference and Exhibition in Europe is a prominent global event that focuses on the future of renewable energy in the hydrogen sector.

TURN TO PAGE 15

Hotel revenue in Oman jumps by 32% until 1H

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, JULY 18

The revenue of 3 to 5-star hotels in Oman increased by 32 per cent until end-June 2023 in comparison to last year. According to data from the National Centre for Statistics & Information (NCSI), 3 to 5 star hotels reported a revenue of RO 110.031 million during the first half of this year marking a 32 per cent increase from last year's figure of RO 83.035 million.

The spike was a result of a 27.4 per cent increase in total guest numbers, and a 10.8 per cent increase in occupancy rate. The total number of guests during the 1H 2023 reached 943,068. The figure was the highest in

June with 140,440 guests. The month of April recorded the highest revenues of RO 17.661 million.

According to the data, Omanis represented 36 per cent of total guests, followed by Europeans who made up 27 per cent,

and Asians who made up 15 per cent. Moreover, GCC citizens made up 8 per cent of total guests, followed by other Arab nationalities (6 per cent), unstated nationalities (4 per cent), Americans (3 per cent), Australian / New Zealanders (2 per cent) and Africans (1 per cent).

Additionally, the data indicated an increase in the number of guests based on nationality in comparison to the previous year. Most notable is the increase of 252.2 per cent in the rate of hotel guests from Australia / New Zealand. During which the figure surged from 6,198 in 2022 to 21,834 in 2023.

This was followed by an increase of 54.0 per cent of Asian guests, and a 46.3 per cent increase within European guests.

Oman airports witness impressive growth in passenger traffic

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JULY 18

In a remarkable display of progress, Oman's airports experienced substantial growth in passenger traffic and flight volume until the end of May 2023. In a preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), 5,223,992 passengers (arrival, departure and transit) used the airports in Oman until end-May 2023 with 40,151 flights.

The statistics unveiled a promising future for the aviation industry in the Sultanate of Oman, with Muscat International Airport leading the way. Muscat

International Airport, the country's busiest airport, reported a staggering 79.5% increase in passenger traffic, serving a remarkable 4,718,497 passengers compared to the same period last year with 2,628,203 passengers.

The airport also witnessed a notable 65.5% surge in flight volume, with 36,315 flights recorded until end-May 2023 compared to 21,930 flights until end-May 2022. This exceptional growth can be attributed to the airport's strategic location as a transit hub and the growing demand for air travel in the region.

Salalah Airport, known for its captivating natural beauty,

also experienced significant growth. The airport reported a commendable 32.7% increase in passenger traffic, catering to 470,950 passengers until end-May 2023 compared to 354,789 passengers of the same period last year.

Additionally, flight volume at Salalah Airport witnessed a 26.4% rise, totalling 3,468 flights compared to 2,743 flights until end-May last year. The surge in passenger numbers can be attributed to the region's popularity among tourists and business travellers, who are

drawn to its picturesque landscapes and economic opportunities.

However, Suhar Airport faced a notable decline in passenger traffic and flight volume. The airport recorded a 80.7% decrease in passenger traffic, serving only 6,999 passengers until end-May 2023 compared to 36,264 passengers during the same period last year. Flight volume at Suhar Airport also decreased by 66.9%, with a total of 110 flights during the specified period, compared to 332 flights last year.

Meanwhile, Duqm Airport, located near the Special Economic Zone, exhibited modest growth. The airport recorded a 4.9% increase in passenger traffic,

serving 27,546 passengers until end-May 2023 compared to 26,263 passengers until end-May last year.

However, flight volume experienced a marginal 7.9% decrease, with a total of 258 flights, compared to 280 flights last year. Duqm Airport's potential lies in its proximity to the Special Economic Zone, which attracts business travellers and cargo operations. The slight dip in flight volume suggests a need to explore strategies to further leverage the airport's advantageous location.

The surge in passenger traffic and flight volume across Oman's airports presents exciting opportunities for businesses in the aviation sector.

Experience the best of JAC Oman’s impressive lineup

MUSCAT: JAC Oman is known for its impressive lineup of vehicles that combine performance, style, and affordability. Whether you need a compact SUV or a sedan, JAC Oman has the perfect option for you. Let’s explore JAC Oman’s standout models - the JAC JS4, JAC S3, JAC J7, and JAC T8 - and why they are the best choices for your driving needs.

The JAC JS4 is a compact SUV that packs a punch in terms of both power and functionality. This stylish and versatile vehicle is equipped with a 1.5L turbo engine that delivers an impressive 147 horsepower, ensuring a smooth and exhilarating driving experience.

If you are looking for a compact SUV that combines luxury and affordability, look no further than



the JAC S3. This sleek and stylish vehicle features a 1.6L engine that delivers both power and fuel

efficiency, making it an ideal choice for daily commuting or weekend getaways.

JAC J7 combines sophistication and style, with a striking design and luxurious features sure to turn

heads on the road. Its bold design and chiselled features make it an absolute head-turner.

For those in need of a reliable and versatile pickup truck, the JAC T8 is the perfect choice. This rugged and capable vehicle is designed to handle tough terrains and heavy loads without compromising on comfort or style.

The JAC T8 is powered by a 2.0L turbo engine that delivers impressive performance and fuel efficiency. Whether you are hauling equipment or embarking on an off-road adventure, the T8’s robust build and powerful engine ensure that you can tackle any challenge with ease.

Choose JAC Oman for an Unforgettable Driving Experience. When it comes to selecting a vehicle that offers performance,

style, and affordability, JAC Oman is the brand to trust.

The JAC JS4, JAC S3, JAC J7, and JAC T8 are just four examples of the impressive lineup that JAC Oman has to offer.

Whether you need a compact SUV, a stylish sedan, or a versatile pickup truck, JAC Oman has the perfect vehicle to meet your needs.

Experience the best of JAC Oman’s impressive lineup and elevate your driving experience to new heights. With JAC Oman, you can drive with the utmost assurance and an extraordinary manufacturer’s warranty.

Enjoy 6-year/200,000 kms (whichever is earlier) warranty for passenger cars and a remarkable 5-year/250,000 kms (whichever is earlier) warranty for our light trucks.

Grand Millennium Muscat launches family getaway offer



MUSCAT: Looking for an unforgettable family getaway this summer? Grand Millennium Muscat presents the perfect opportunity to indulge in spacious interconnecting family rooms, ensuring comfort and convenience for the entire family.

With our exclusive offer, you can reserve your interconnecting family rooms starting from RO 60, available on both room only and bed & breakfast basis. As a valued guest, you’ll also enjoy a 20 per cent discount on extra food and beverage purchases, allowing you to savor delicious meals with savings.

For a truly rejuvenating experience, take advantage of a 20 per cent discount on selected treatments at Zanta Spa. Pamper yourself and unwind while our

expert therapists work their magic.

The offer is valid for Classic King + Twin Room, Club King + Twin Room, and Executive Suite + Twin Room, ensuring a wide range of options to suit your preferences.

But that’s not all! For MyMillennium members, we have additional benefits in store. Enjoy interconnecting family rooms starting from RO 60, along with early check-in from 10.00am.

To make your reservations and secure your dream family vacation at Grand Millennium Muscat, please contact our reservations team at +968 223 02330 or +968 223 42222. You can also email us at reservations.gmm@millenniumhotels.com.

Bank Muscat celebrates achievements of Sayyarati partners in Salalah

MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to strengthening its relations with partners and to further popularise the benefits of Sayyarati Auto Loans, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, organised a special event in Salalah for vehicle dealers based in the governorate.

The special networking event was attended by senior officials from Bank Muscat as well as representatives from car dealerships and showrooms from Dhofar Governorate.

Taya Eid Bait Sabeea, Deputy General Manager – Interior Regions, Bank Muscat, said: “We are pleased to organise this special event in Salalah to further strengthen our relationship with different companies operating in the all-important automobile sector including, dealerships, showrooms and other companies dealing with automotive services based in the Governorate.

These events are an opportunity for us all to share different updates and ideas to help us develop the sector further. Celebrating the achievements today is part of this long-standing journey together, aspiring to achieve the best for our customers and strengthen this valued partnership with you.”



Radhiya bint Hassan al Lawatiyah, Head of Sales, Bank Muscat, said: “We are excited to once again meet our partners from this important sector. I take this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation for all the cooperation and partnership over the past many years, which have resulted in us being able to provide the best services, facilities and benefits to all our valued customers.

As we all know, the automotive sector is one of the most important sectors in the Sultanate of Oman, which has been witnessing a good growth. We have been working really hard to strengthen our partnerships with everyone in

the sector and are proud of the achievements made over the past few years.

We would like to extend our appreciation to the strong efforts and cooperation between all our partners and the continuous trust of our customers. The results of the recent past are a strong testament to this.”

In 2003, the bank launched its Sayyarati Auto Loans to help customers own their dream cars through an easy and accessible financing option. Sayyarati auto finance enhances banking convenience for customers as it offers various benefits, competitive rates and simplified procedures.

NBO holds global economic outlook event for customers



MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to creating value for its customers, National Bank of Oman’s (NBO) recently held Global Economic Outlook event for its corporate clientele at the bank’s headquarters.

As part of NBO’s comprehensive Corporate Banking proposition, aimed at ensuring customers’ long-term financial well-being, this unique experience included a panel discussion led by Giridhar Varadachari, General Manager and Chief Financial and Operating Officer at NBO, and featured Anatoliy Shal, a macroeconomics expert from JP Morgan. Shal shared valuable insights on the economic outlook and its regional impact during this interactive event.

Mohammed Yahya al Jabri, Assistant General Manager and Head of Global Transaction Banking at NBO, said, “Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the global economic landscape is important for businesses to achieve long-term financial success. At NBO, we are committed to equipping our corporate customers with valuable insights on global macroeconomics trends, enabling them to make well-informed decisions.”

“In the face of recent interest rate hikes, customers are encountering new challenges. However, NBO’s cash and liquidity management solutions provide instruments for managing corporates cash flows, helping to manage foreign exchange risk and improve overall liquidity management by facilitating easier access to funds. This helps businesses gain better insights into their liquidity position and optimise their financial and cash management strategies,” Al Jabri added.

Toyota Urban Cruiser now with RO 116 monthly EMI

MUSCAT: Own the stylish and exciting Toyota Urban Cruiser now with Equated Monthly Instalments (EMI) of RO 116 for a period of 8 years. Apart from this, the Urban Cruiser is available with Festival of Joy benefits. The benefits include service from 3 Years/45,000 kms (whichever is earlier) and insurance 1 year. The campaign is valid until August 16, 2023.

(Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms & Conditions apply. Customers can visit any Saud Bahwan Automotive showroom for exact details.)

Boasting a sleek, crossover SUV-like design, the five-seater Urban Cruiser exudes style and sophistication and features a spacious and roomy cabin with



ample space for both passengers and their luggage. The vehicle owes much of its smooth acceleration and dynamic on-road performance to the new Neo Drive Powertrain, which is the first of its kind in the Toyota line-up.

It features a 1.5-litre, 4-cylinder gasoline engine and Integrated

Starter Generator (ISG) that functions as both an electrified generator and motor. Combined with a compact Lithium-Ion battery, the powertrain delivers 102 hp and 135 Nm of torque, with an average fuel consumption of 19.8 km/l and is paired with six-speed automatic transmission

that offers enhanced performance during low-speed and stop-start conditions.

The Urban Cruiser’s exterior is characterised by a unique crystal acrylic upper grille with premium chrome garnish. The resulting modern, advanced appearance is further enhanced by a wide lateral bar that flows from each DRL and crosses through the Toyota emblem.

A wide, trapezoidal lower grille embodies the vehicle’s toughness, while the side view reveals a distinctive character line runs from the front to the rear, expressing length and presence that is complemented by 17-inch alloy wheels. At the back, the garnish connects the two combination lamps to create an advanced impression.

The new Urban Cruiser’s

spacious cabin is designed for greater comfort and convenience. The vehicle’s head-up display, 4.2-inch colour Thin Film Transistor (TFT) multi-information display, along with a tilt and telescopic steering wheel equipped with audio system and vehicle operation controls, all make for a seamless driving experience no matter where the road takes you.

Pictures and colours shown may differ from actual specifications. For the latest press releases, test drive requests and more, please visit www.toyotaoman.com, www.youtube.com/toyotaoman, www.facebook.com/toyotaoman, and instagram.com/toyotaomanoofficial/. For any further details & to ascertain availability of stocks, please visit your nearest Saud Bahwan Automotive Showroom.



Oman well-placed to become synthetic LNG producer: Shell

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JULY 18

Energy major Shell sees the Sultanate of Oman to be ideally positioned to emerge as a producer and exporter of Synthetic LNG – a carbon-neutral alternative to natural gas with the same properties of fossil LNG.

According to a top official of the energy giant's Oman subsidiary, the presence of well-established gas networks, liquefaction terminal and export infrastructure, coupled with a strong and expansive global customer base, bodes well for the growth of a Synthetic LNG industry in the country.

"Several countries and important parts of the global gas customer base are looking at synthetic LNG as a possible way to decarbonise power and industrial sectors as it avoids the sometimes prohibitive costs of repurposing production facilities, receiving terminals or pipelines, and all those infrastructures are already present in Oman," said Walid



Shell has conducted a few pilots around the world to develop this technology, and now we hope that we will be able to build the first plant in Oman.

WALID HADI

Senior Vice-President and Country Chair of Oman Shell

Hadi, Senior Vice-President and Country Chair of Oman Shell.

"We expect the highest demand to materialise from Europe and the Far East and eventually, as technology evolves and costs of production decrease, it could

soon become part of the world's mainstream energy mix," Hadi stated in an interview featured in The Energy Year, a UK-based energy news portal.

Earlier this year, Shell signed an agreement with Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals to explore opportunities for the production of Liquefied Synthetic Gas (LSG) for the first time in Oman. LSG is produced when renewable hydrogen is combined with captured carbon dioxide to produce natural gas which is then liquefied.

This low-carbon gas can be directly introduced to existing gas networks and infrastructure, including the liquefied natural gas stations of the Oman LNG Company, all the way to the end user.

"This agreement represents a big step ahead because we believe that hydrogen produced in the country can be very competitive and that LSG could prove to be a commercially viable 'plug and play' low-carbon fuel. In reality,

I believe we will need to develop multiple use cases and export vectors to be able to develop low-carbon hydrogen at scale and LSG could emerge as one of those leading export vectors," said Hadi in the interview.

The Sultanate of Oman, he said, has been picked by Shell to become the first country in the world for the energy giant's plans set up a commercial scale LSG project.

Shell has conducted a few pilots around the world to develop this technology, and now we hope that we will be able to build the first plant in Oman," he stated.

But given the steep cost of producing Synthetic LNG versus extraction of natural gas for fossil LNG, more guidelines and market signals would be imperative if this low-carbon alternative is to become commercial viable, Hadi stressed. He nevertheless expressed confidence that Oman is "moving in the right direction and that the necessary mechanisms will be implemented by 2030".

OPAZ services garner 86% satisfaction rate from beneficiaries

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 18

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) has reported a customer satisfaction rate of 86% for the services provided until end-June.

The assessment included an evaluation of several services provided in the areas supervised by OPAZ, such as the electronic land selection service, the central commitment system (Eltizam), environmental permits, receipt of signs, investor relations management system, unified electronic survey drawing service, central inspection system, electronic registration of small and medium enterprises, and one-stop services for investors.

The report of OPAZ Call Centre (toll free 1919) indicated that from the beginning of 2023 to the end of June, more than 647 incoming calls were received and handled. These included 37 international calls,



347 investment-related requests, and 259 inquiries regarding investment opportunities.

The Call Centre regularly publishes reports on communications, proposals, and the satisfaction levels of beneficiaries with the services provided through the centre.

Notably, the OPAZ Call Centre is equipped with modern technical systems and operates interactively to record transactions, requests, and transfer them to the competent authorities in the regions supervised by OPAZ.

The centre communicates with callers without any delay as it has systems in place to manage reports and proposals.

OOMCO plans to add 14 new service stations in Saudi Arabia

MUSCAT: As part of its commitment to its regional expansion strategy, Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) plans to add 14 one-stop-shop service stations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Through this expansion, OOMCO will be operating a total of 26 service stations in the Kingdom by Q4 2023.

As it continues to grow, OOMCO's service stations are rapidly becoming a destination of choice for premium fuel, food, beverages, and other convenient items and quality automotive services.

The announcement came on the sidelines of a signing ceremony for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) and Tamiyoz for Fuel, a leading investment and development company for fuel stations in Saudi Arabia, which will further expand OOMCO's footprint in the Kingdom.

The MOU was signed by Tarik bin Mohammed al Junaidi, Chief Executive Officer of OOMCO and Yousef bin Masoud al Saadi, Chief Executive Officer of Tamiyoz for Fuel.

Jaber bin Mansour al Wahaibi, General Manager of International Retail, Business Development, Strategic Planning, & Marketing & Digital at Oman Oil Marketing Company, stated "Our unique selling proposition lies in large part in growing 'beyond the pump' and pursuing a customer-centric approach that applies to all our retail operations. Our successful business model is a source of competitive advantage that is transferable across the region and KSA, which



is among the key growth markets for us."

He added, "OOMCO aims to operate 26 stations across Saudi Arabia by the end of 2023. We partnered with Tamiyoz, a reputed Saudi-Arabia-based real estate investment and development company, to further facilitate this growth. This is in line with our aim to become one of the top five fuel marketers in the Gulf Cooperation Council by 2027."

Yousef bin Masoud al Saadi, Chief Executive Officer of Tamiyoz for Fuel, said, "Saudi Arabia's fast-growing population and a vibrant economy mean that there is a growing need for us to build and develop more service stations across the Kingdom. We are pleased to work with Oman Oil Marketing Company as we are all committed to delivering high-quality products and customer service through these sites, which will also create more employment opportunities for local suppliers."

Round 2 of hydrogen blocks to be awarded in Q1 2024: Hydrom

FROM PAGE 13

Hydrom decided to participate in sponsoring this event with the purpose of informing major companies operating in this field about Oman's visionary plans for the green hydrogen economy and the joint infrastructure being developed to support these projects, which will open doors for various industries to transition towards green production methods.

Our primary goal for participating was to encourage international companies to engage with us and take advantage of the excellent opportunities currently offered by the Sultanate of Oman through the second round of public auction, which will also offer numerous plots of land in the Dhofar Governorate.

Our participation in this event was highly successful, as several companies expressed a keen interest in learning more about these investment opportunities."

He added, "We are moving

in the right direction to put the Sultanate of Oman on the list of the world's leading green hydrogen producers, thus making it an attractive destination for foreign industrial investments seeking to transition to clean energy.

We are confident in our ability to attract leading companies in this sector as partners as we work together to create a more sustainable future for Oman's energy industry."

He concluded, "I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and Energy Development Oman for the unlimited support they have provided Hydrom as it strives to achieve its goals and make its initiatives a success."

On June 21, Hydrom made an announcement regarding the launch of the second round of the public auction in the first phase. In this round, prospective companies interested in participating will have the

opportunity to submit their accreditation documents before September.

Once approved, these companies will receive the necessary offer documents to prepare and submit their investment proposals between September 2023 and January 2024.

The evaluation of the proposals and the subsequent signing of development agreements are anticipated to be completed by the end of the first quarter of 2024.

Eng Abdulaziz al Shidhani said, "We are pleased to participate in this prestigious global event, which has provided us with the chance to engage in several discussions and attend presentations by leading companies involved in the green hydrogen sector. It was an invaluable opportunity to exchange experiences and knowledge with pioneers in the hydrogen industry from around the world."

Oman well placed to become global renewables hub: OQ

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 18

Oman's plans for diversifying its energy sources through decarbonisation over the coming years were explored by Talal al Awfi, Group CEO of OQ, and other members of the company's integrated leadership team, in wide-ranging interviews they gave recently to Oxford Business Group's online broadcasting channel, Global Platform.

In his contribution, Al Awfi noted that Oman was well placed to capitalise on its natural resources and carve a niche as a global hub for renewable energy production.

"We have certain areas of Oman

that are blessed with significant solar and wind potential, and we want to capitalise on this to produce energy and use that energy to produce things such as green hydrogen," he told OBG.

The video examines the role earmarked for alternative energy production in supporting broader efforts under way to diversify Oman's economy and create new employment opportunities, in line with key goals laid out in Vision 2040, Oman's long-term economic development framework.

Members of OQ's integrated team gave valuable insight into what Oman's future energy mix is expected to look like, with hydrocarbons set to drive the shift



towards clean and green energy sources in the transition phase.

The development of the downstream segment was also explored, with representatives highlighting the planned

expansion of green industries in Oman, alongside alternative energy production, supported by revenue from oil and gas.

Other topical issues touched on included the added weight

being given to environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles in energy production. "ESG standards have always been an important subject within the energy sector, especially as it relates to the environment," Al Awfi told OBG.

Other OQ interviewees noted both the steps that organisations are taking to develop their ESG strategies and the recognition that these and achievements made are gaining, leading to beneficial borrowing opportunities and other incentives.

Marc-André de Blois, OBG's Director of PR and Video Content, said that the interviews with OQ's Group CEO and integrated

leadership team provided a fascinating snapshot of the preparations under way in Oman to transition to a new era of energy production.

"Oman's plans to use revenues from hydrocarbons to develop alternative energy sources are gaining pace, with its natural resources and advantages standing it in good stead for large-scale renewable production," he said.

"Our video offers a welcome overview of the strategies being implemented in the Sultanate of Oman to provide a secure and sustainable energy mix in the coming years, with an eye, longer term, on meeting agreed 2050 net-zero targets."

Slowdown on hiring by asset managers for ESG staff



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

A raging battle between asset managers for ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) talent that has gone on over the last three years is abating, with recruiters pointing to a worsening economic scenario

and a backlash in America as reasons for a slowdown in hiring. Associate director for investments, front office and ESG hires at Bruin Financial, Sophia Deen, said recruitment activity has cooled following a frenzied period. “ESG hiring has slowed down this year,” said Deen, citing a rush to secure talent between 2019 and 2022 as asset managers hurried to build out their ESG teams on the back of rising investor demand. “In recent months, there has been mixed media on ESG, with more claims against greenwashing and ESG fund performance, which may have created a pause for internal recruitment,” said Deen. ESG funds were among some of the best-selling products at the height of the pandemic. Sustainable funds gathered net

inflows of \$527bn across Europe and almost \$70bn in the US during 2021, according to Morningstar. However, the bumper inflows have since subsided. Between January and the end of May, ESG funds in Europe gathered \$49bn while in the US funds have posted net out flows of almost \$9bn. Founder and sustainable investment search head at Farrell Associates, said ESG hiring was “explosive” in 2021. “It was two years’ worth of hiring done in one year and in a very hot sector.” Looking at this year, the picture is very different, he said: “Alotoffirmshavesloweddown.” He added: “I’m pretty bearish about the whole thing and I’m an optimist person. It is a really bad market. But I’m fully convinced that as soon as the economy improves, this will take off again.”

While recruiters are less optimistic about the current ESG jobs market, others see the hiring slowdown as an inevitability after a rush to recruit talent in previous years. “We’ve seen some slowdown in the market in terms of ESG mandates,” said Kelly Biggar, head of practice at Fram Search. “We suspect that this is due to firms significantly investing in their ESG capability in the last couple of years and perhaps feeling they are fully staffed.” She added: “Looking more broadly, there does seem to be some pushback on ESG, as investors and corporates balance short-term challenges with long-term ones. But we still feel there will be a tailwind for ESG-focused careers over time.” Founder of executive search firm TWS, Tom Strelczak, said

hires were still being made but that firms were taking “revisionist approach to ESG”. He added: “A few years ago, everyone was focused on active ownership, engagement and stewardship. A lot of the people hired into these functions were incredibly knowledgeable and came from government institutions or non-profits. They were experts on those topics, but they did not have the investment knowledge,” he said. Strelczak said hires taking place now, particularly in the US have been more investment-led. These include roles such as climate analysts with Chartered Financial Analysts qualifications. “It’s less the ESG risk-management people who have come from a corporate governance background, more the people

with backgrounds in investment and research who have pivoted to ESG,” said Strelczak. Deen said that despite the slowdown in ESG hiring, investment professionals still find ESG roles attractive — some chasing junior and mid-level roles are even willing to take a pay cut. Heads of ESG could command total pay packages of between £300,000 and £500,000 during the hiring boom, said Deen. Even in today’s market, a head of responsible investment at an asset manager could take home as much as £300,000 as a minimum. “Candidates at the junior and mid-level range appear open to taking a small cut in compensation to secure an ESG role, as there aren’t many advertised on the market at present, encouraging them to sacrifice pay to secure the opportunity,” said Deen.”

Feared corporate debt woes start to hit home

BY CHIARA ELISEI AND DHARA RANASINGHE

The spectre of rising corporate debt defaults exacerbating a global economic slowdown has for months been largely brushed aside by resilient credit markets. Now, long-feared corporate debt woes are starting to hit home, while more companies are being downgraded to a junk credit rating - facing higher borrowing costs as a result. Retailer Casino, with 6.4 billion euros (\$7.19 billion) of net debt, is in court-backed talks with creditors; Britain’s Thames Water is in the headlines with its 14 billion pound (\$18.32 billion) debt pile. Swedish landlord SBB, downgraded to junk in May, is at the epicentre of a property crash that threatens to engulf Sweden’s economy. Yet the cost of insuring exposure to a basket of European junk-rated corporates last week briefly hit its lowest in just over a year, suggesting investors remain unperturbed by rising default risks. “You have a lot of complacency in the market, if you think that statistics show that we have had already as many defaults globally in the first five months of 2023 as in the whole 2022,” said Julius Baer’s head of fixed income research Markus Allenspach. “But there are still inflows into high yields (bonds),” he said. S&P Global expects default rates for US and European sub-investment grade companies to rise to 4.25% and 3.6% respectively by March 2024, from 2.5% and 2.8% this March.

Hopes the world economy will avoid a sharp downturn and that aggressive rate hikes will soon end explain the upbeat sentiment. But analysts note the impact of rate rises has yet to be fully felt. For some, this means corporate bond yields should command a higher premium. The current spread on the ICE BofA global high yield bond index is at 435 basis points (bps), down from 622 bps a year ago. “Corporate credit spreads are still extremely tight and are not reflecting the risks that are out there,” said Guy Miller, chief market strategist at Zurich Insurance Group. Miller said 122 US public and private companies with liabilities over \$50 million have already filed for bankruptcy protection so far this year, implying a run rate that will cause bankruptcies to exceed 200 by year-end - comparable to that seen during the global financial crisis and Covid-19. While some firms took advantage of the low rates era to extend the maturity of their debt, buying themselves some time, refinancing will be costly for those with looming debt maturities. “On aggregate, things don’t look dreadful. But it’s not the aggregate you worry about, it’s the marginal players coming through that now are having to pay massively more to borrow,” Miller said. ABN AMRO said the average maturity of European high yield corporate bonds reached a record low of almost four years in May, versus an average of just over six years between 2005-2007, when the European Central Bank also jacked up rates. That means firms have less time than previously to refinance debt, so the pain of higher rates will be felt sooner. — Reuters

Is the United States economy headed for a soft landing?



JEFFREY FRANKEL
The writer is Professor of Capital Formation and Growth at Harvard University.

A skydiver leaps out of an airplane and discovers that his parachute will not open. On his way down, he encounters a hang glider who asks him how he is doing. The free-falling man shouts back, “Okay, so far!” For many, the US economy these days bears a striking resemblance to the parachutist. Ever since March 2022, when the Federal Reserve began to hike interest rates and shrink its balance sheet, the consensus among economists has been that the United States is headed toward a hard landing. Many economists have been confidently forecasting a recession for over a year, with some even asserting that the economy has already started to contract. The inverted yield curve in bond markets suggests that the financial sector has also been bracing for a recession. In fact, the term “recession” has appeared more prominently in news media over the past year than is typically the case during an actual downturn. This view has clearly resonated with the general public, with a May 2022 poll finding that 55% of Americans believed that the US was already in a recession, compared to 21% who disagreed. But all these predictions have been far off the mark. The US economy did not enter a recession in 2022, nor is it necessarily headed for one in 2023 or 2024. Similarly, the global economy has avoided a contraction. To be sure, aggressive monetary tightening is often followed by a slump. But that does not mean that a hard landing is inevitable. After all, if the Fed were to pull off a soft



US President Joe Biden delivers remarks after touring the General Motors EV assembly plant in Detroit, in this file photo. — Reuters

landing, would it not resemble our current situation? Perhaps our metaphorical parachute has already deployed, and what we are witnessing is the US economy’s gradual, controlled descent. What constitutes a “soft landing” remains open. As several critics have argued, the Fed is unlikely to achieve its goal of bringing down inflation to 2% by 2024 without causing a sharp increase in unemployment and drop in GDP. But a soft landing might best be defined as a gradual slowdown of output growth and employment to levels below their potential and natural rates, accompanied by a decline in inflation. To qualify as soft, this economic slowdown must not develop into anything more severe than a very mild recession. But inflation need not reach 2% immediately. While US employment and output have indeed slowed in 2022, this is relative to 2021, when the economy recovered rapidly from the previous year’s recession. Despite the monetary tightening, GDP growth has averaged 1.8% over the past four quarters. Surprisingly, recent data indicate that the US labour market has remained exceptionally strong. Over the first half of this year, job growth averaged 278,000 per month. This, too, is often labelled a “slowdown,” and it is – but only

when compared to 2022. Given that the average monthly increase in employment since 2001 has been 87,000 and that total monthly population growth is roughly 100,000, the current rate of job growth is rapid by any relevant standard. Moreover, the unemployment rate remained steady at 3.6% in June, nearly matching the low levels of the late 1960s. The current job market is anything but recessionary. There is also good news on the inflation front. The June Consumer Price Index (CPI), released last week, showed a 12-month inflation rate of 3%. This represents a significant decline from June 2022, when the inflation rate peaked at 9.1%. Falling rental costs suggest that CPI inflation will likely continue to decline in the coming months. To be sure, some of the decline in headline inflation since 2022 can be attributed to volatile food and energy prices, which were also among the main drivers of the preceding inflationary surge. But even when food and energy are excluded, 12-month core CPI inflation was 4.8% in June, down from 6.3% in October 2022. Personal consumption expenditures inflation — the Fed’s preferred measure — was at 3.8% in May, down from its June 2022 peak of 7%.

A severe recession might have enabled the Fed to achieve its stated goal of bringing down inflation to 2% this year. But if avoiding the social costs of a serious contraction means stabilising inflation at 3-4%, with 2% as a longer-term goal, that seems like a worthwhile trade-off. Such an outcome should be considered a soft landing. Of course, there is a sense in which a recession is inevitable. Every economic expansion must end at some point. But, contrary to popular belief, there was no reason to declare a slump in 2022, nor is there reason to predict one this year or even in 2024. The probability of a recession is roughly 15% in any given year. Even though the chances of a recession are much higher now, owing to the Fed’s rapid interest-rate hikes, I would still put the likelihood of one happening in the next 12 months at less than 50%. Like the proverbial skydiver, the US economy jumped out of a plane more than a year ago. It is currently being buoyed by an unusually powerful updraft, preventing a rapid descent. Despite the confidence with which many predict a recession, the parachute might still deploy as planned, allowing the economy to achieve a soft landing after all. © Project Syndicate, 2023

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Creating cinematic pieces that engage and leave lasting impression

BY SIHAM ALSAIDI

He has worked with some of the biggest brands in Oman to create corporate and creative videos showcasing the best the country has to offer. In his career so far, he has also collaborated with an international firm to create a film that eventually earned Kuwait a Guinness World Record and his vision is to inspire the new generation of Omanis to look at film-making not just as a viable career option but to inspire and preserve culture and heritage.

In the world of content creation, Shabib bin Saeed al Hadi is definitely one of the most prolific Omani creators. His love for movies started at a very young age and by the time he found his footing in the sports industry, he also managed to establish himself as the go-to producer and director for short films.

Shabib's journey was not an easy one. And truth be told, it was also expensive but his creativity is not just contained within film production, it also expands into his film-making equipment.

When he realised that he wanted a career in film and content production, Shabib was determined to acquire some of the best equipment available. He understood that to capture the best shots, he has to invest in his profession, and with initiative and innovation, he customised many of his gears so that he was able to save more than OMR 2000 for equipment alone.

While he started his career filming sports events, his interest eventually grew expanding not just to creative photography but also to short film production.

The quality of his films managed to capture the attention of some of the biggest brands in Oman but his first one was the collaborative two-year contract with Rotana where he became a creative photographer creating content for the brand's social media channels.

That contract would eventually lead to other collaborations and his portfolio now



includes the Human Rights Organization, PDO, OQ, and HSBC Bank, Majid al Futtaim, and many others.

Asked what he thinks has made him different than other creators, Shabib shared that other than the creativity side, he said he always aims for memorable shots and angles and ones that are not often seen or overused in Oman.

Over time, he secured a contract with Kuwait to collaborate for their campaign of installing the world's largest flag on Jabal Shams and Al Hadarat Al Sabaa.



focuses on religious, historical, and nature-related themes. While he tried to be diverse, at the heart of what he does is the well-being of children, both physically and mentally.

Through his lens, he strives to bring smiles to their faces and empower them with self-confidence.

One of his most memorable films is the story of a 10-year-old boy with a disability who became an unexpected hero when he showcased the boy's courage in living with his disability. Shabib said that he

will never forget how the film created an impact in the community and through the film, how the boy manage to realise his impact on the community around him despite his challenge.

This encounter transformed not only the child's life but also touched the hearts of many who witnessed his extraordinary journey.

Shabib said that as a film-maker, he likes working independently – from writing the narrative to directing to editing.

He shared that there is definitely a need for better educational resources and academies that foster film-making skills in the country.

Shabib strives to create cinematic pieces that engage and leave a lasting impression. He emphasised the beauty of film-making as an art form, aiming to deliver powerful scenes and messages. For him, Oman is a very charming place for a lot of foreign film-makers and content creators too and he will never forget the time he bridged the gap between foreign filmmakers and the locals in Nizwa souq helping the team get the shots they need.

"It was an amazing piece of work when I put the spotlight on these travellers trying to document the daily life of people from the souq," he said.

When asked what his next move will be, Shabib shared: "I look forward to creating historical films that will introduce the younger generation to the rich heritage of the country the same way that Hollywood and the West put the spotlight in their own heritage."

He ended that if there's one thing he is confident about, it is that he will make his dreams a reality and that his determination and passion are what sets him apart from the rest.

AUCTION

Princess Diana's 'black sheep' jumper to be auctioned

A JUMPER WORN by Britain's late Princess Diana and depicting a black sheep is headed for auction later this summer with a price estimate of up to \$80,000.

Designed by knitwear label Warm & Wonderful, the sweater, which will headline Sotheby's Fashion Icons Aug. 31-Sept. 14 online sale, was rediscovered in an attic earlier this year by one of the brand's founders.

Diana first wore the red jumper, which depicts a lone black sheep among rows of white sheep, to watch then Prince Charles play in a polo game in June 1981, a month before they were married, sparking speculation over its potential significance.

After it was damaged on the wrist, her private secretary Oliver Everett wrote to Warm & Wonderful co-founder Joanna Osborne asking if it could be repaired and the jumper



er was sent back. A few months later, Diana received a replacement, which she was photographed wearing in 1983.

Osborne found the original in a box in her attic in March.

"If you're Princess Diana, certainly you have access to lots of pieces of apparel you could choose to wear," Cynthia Houlton, global head of fashion at Sotheby's, said at a press preview in London on Monday.

"And the fact that she wanted a replacement and then again two years later wore ... the replacement sweater, I think speaks really volumes from her how much this sweater meant to her."

The jumper, which is being sold with Everett's two letters to Osborne, has a price estimate of \$50,000-\$80,000.

Earlier this year, Sotheby's sold a purple, velvet, strapless evening gown worn by Diana, designed by couturier Victor Edelstein for his autumn 1989 collection, for just over \$600,000, five times its pre-auction estimate.

The jumper and letters are on display at Sotheby's London until Wednesday. They will go on show in New York in September. — Reuters

MUSIC

Taylor Swift sets women's record for most number one albums

TAYLOR SWIFT NOW has more number one albums than any other female artist in history following the recent release of "Speak Now (Taylor's Version)," Billboard said on Monday.

The record debuted at the top of the Billboard charts, becoming the pop queen's 12th number one album and surpassing Barbra Streisand for the most among women.

For male performers, Jay-Z and the Beatles both have over a dozen number one albums, though Billboard notes it has changed its album ranking system over the decades to include anthologies.

Swift, 33, has also become the first living artist in nearly 60 years to have four albums in the top 10 at the same time, the organisation



added.

They include "Midnights," "Lover" and "Folklore."

Billboard said Swift had also become the first living artist to have 11 albums in the top 200 simultaneously.

Swift's record-breaking feats come as she performs many of her best hits on the fan-frenzied "Eras" tour.

The 106-date stadium concert series kicked off in March and is within striking distance of becoming

the first billion-dollar tour.

"Speak Now" was originally released in 2010. Swift has vowed to re-record her first six albums so she can control their rights -- a process she was contractually allowed to begin in November 2020.

She has also re-recorded "Fearless" and "Red."

Last October, Swift became the first artist ever to simultaneously nab all 10 spots on the top US song chart after the release of her tenth studio album "Midnights." — AFP

EXHIBITION

London exhibition spotlights migrant business owners

FROM THE CO-FOUNDER of retail giant Marks & Spencer to the owners of a family-run Chinese takeaway, a new exhibition is showcasing migrant entrepreneurs and the role they played in moulding Britain.

They have "shaped all aspects of our lives, from the clothes we wear, to the food we eat, to the apps on our phone, the furniture in our homes," Matthew Plowright, the Migration Museum's director of communications and engagement, said.

At the museum based inside a south London shopping centre, visitors can wander through areas dedicated to various types of migrant-owned businesses found on a typical British high

street, from restaurants to corner shops.

first coffeehouse chain Costa Coffee, which was founded by brothers Sergio and Bruno Costa, who arrived from Italy in the 1950s.

IMMIGRATION DEBATE

But the exhibition also retraces the journeys of dozens of migrants who may not be known by name but are among those who came to the UK to seek refuge from oppressive regimes, escape poverty or simply to study and launch a business.

Among them are Gary and Jin Hui, who emigrated from Hong Kong in the mid-1980s and set up a Chinese takeaway restaurant in South Wales.

Their daughter Angela, 31, rec-

"help us to contextualise and think about contemporary debates around migration in a slightly different way", Plowright said.

Business owner Nomshado Michelle Baca arrived in Britain as a young girl, travelling from Zimbabwe with her mother in 1996.

After attending business school and working in fashion for several years, Baca launched her own business called "A Complexion Company", creating wellness and beauty products tailored for black women.

Baca said that many of the points made in the debate surrounding immigration — a live political issue in the UK — are "very short-sighted".

think about immigration in the news and in politics, it is in these very impersonal debates about numbers or facts and figures," Plowright said.

The exhibition aims to "bring to life the personal stories, the stories behind the headlines", he added.

One in seven British businesses have been either founded or co-founded by an immigrant, according to a study by the UK's Centre for Entrepreneurs.

Three of the country's six wealthiest people were not born in Britain, according to this year's Sunday Times Rich List, which was topped by Indian-born billionaire Gopi Hinduja and family.

Plowright said "it's probably no



street, from restaurants to corner shops.

The "Taking Care of Business" exhibition runs until late September and explores the origins of many British companies that were founded by immigrants and have since become household names.

One example is the retailer Marks & Spencer, which was co-founded by Michael Marks who was born into a Polish Jewish family that immigrated to Britain in 1882.

Another comes from Britain's

reated their family-run restaurant for the exhibition, bringing back memories of the many hours she and her brothers spent helping their parents, who didn't speak English, at work.

"British history is so complex, through colonialism, and I think a lot of people don't understand it" when it comes to immigration, she said.

Migrants from the Caribbean, Jews fleeing persecution in Europe, students from India and from former colonies in Africa: understanding their stories can

"The UK has always been one of the greater trading places in the world and now, to forget about it is not just harmful to individuals who are immigrants, but it is also harmful to Britain," Baca said.

Immigration has long been the subject of heated debate in the UK and the ruling Conservative party has pledged to curb migration, which hit record numbers last year, after Britain voted in 2016 to leave the European Union.

NOT A COINCIDENCE

"Often when people talk and

coincidence that migrants are disproportionately more likely to found their own business".

"When you arrive, often you don't have access to the networks, the connections... and so often you have to do it alone," he said.

But the exhibition is not just about celebrating success stories.

It is also about "embracing the complexity and highlighting the discrimination and the challenges and the difficulties many of these business owners and people continue to face today," Plowright added.— AFP

LIFESTYLE



Senegal's lone developer fights to revive photography with film

FROM A CONCRETE JETTY on Dakar's sun-baked coastline, Senegalese photographer Amy Saar clicked the shutter of her vintage Pentax camera, capturing the light of the horizon on colour film purchased from the country's only developer.

"Dakar looks great with certain coloured films, because they really bring out the warm, vibrant colours," Saar said, loading a fresh roll into the camera. "Film can be really great in Africa, because in general it's sunny (and) very colourful."

Saar is part of a growing resurgence of analogue photography enthusiasts in Senegal, nurtured by Le Sel studio in the capital's Ouakam neighbourhood.

Founded two years ago in owner Kevin Aubert's apartment, Senegal's only studio of its kind aims to rekindle the country's love for the craft through film sales and workshops.

After decades of dwindling interest, the global market for film cameras and equipment is expected to grow nearly 4 per cent through 2029,



according to a study published by Precision Reports in May.

Limited access to film and dark-room spaces have hindered African photographers' ability to participate in film's global resurgence, despite the craft having played a significant role in the region's post-colonial artistic history.

Le Sel's mission is not just to develop film, Aubert said, but to educate photographers about the origins of the medium, and show that understanding the analogue process can enhance their digital expertise.

"When they see the image they shot themselves appearing for the first time, it is always a treat," Aubert said as he led a workshop. "It teaches us a lot about the image, the way to look at it, and the way to manage it."

Aubert hopes to expand Le Sel into a larger space to house more workshops, exhibits, and even an in-house gallery. In the meantime, local photographers like Eva Diallo are already showing works developed there at some of Dakar's most prestigious art houses.

"The film process is much more conscious than digital or iPhone photos," Diallo said during her solo exhibition at Dakar's Gallerie Cecile Fakhoury. "It's important to be aware during the time it takes, from the moment you take the image ... and the moment you have it on paper." — Reuters