

New cave found in Jabal Akhdhar

The Omani Cave Exploration team has documented a cave called 'Khaslat Safi Sahra' in the village of Safi Sahra in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar in the Wilayat of Nizwa. The discovery of cave came with the help of the people residing at Safi Sahra area, where the team faced some difficulties to enter the cave as some rocks that might fall at its entrance. **DETAILS ON P4**



- Cut in fee for issuance and renewal of non-Omani work permits
- Step seeks to support firms committed to Omanisation levels
- HM exhorts private sector to employ more Omani job-seekers
- 25 more food commodities exempted from the Value Added Tax
- Immediate start of development projects needed by citizens

PRIORITY FOR WELFARE OF CITIZENS

H M M E E T T S S H A I K H S O F M U S C A T , S O U T H A L B A T I N A H , M U S A N D A M

MUSCAT: In pursuance of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's attention to citizens and his Royal keenness to have first-hand knowledge about their needs and aspirations, His Majesty the Sultan held a meeting at Al Alam Palace on Sunday with shaikhs of the governorates of Muscat, South Al Batinah and Musandam.

At the outset of the meeting, His

Majesty the Sultan gave thanks and praise to the Almighty Allah for the bounties He bestowed on the Sultanate of Oman and its noble people.

He prayed to the Almighty Allah to bless Oman's comprehensive, sustainable development march, so the people could continue to relish the riches in present and future.

Then, His Majesty the Sultan issued

directives to cut down fees charged against the issuance and renewal of non-Omani manpower work permits in a manner that corresponds to the Government Services Pricing Index.

This applies to government services aimed at boosting the business climate and upgrading the Sultanate of Oman's competitiveness in attracting investments and easing burdens on the private sector.

The move also seeks to support firms committed to Omanisation percentages, as well as small and medium enterprises, to help enhance their contribution to the national economy.

His Majesty the Sultan exhorted the private sector to benefit from the fee reduction to provide more room for the employment of Omani job-seekers.

His Majesty the Sultan also affirmed

the government's keenness to follow-up all that relates to the stability of citizens' livelihood affairs.

In this context, His Majesty gave directives to add 25 more food commodities to the list of food items that are 100 per cent exempt from the Value Added Tax (VAT), thereby taking the total number of such items to 513.

SEE ALSO P2&3



HIS MAJESTY MEETS SHAIKHS OF MUSCAT, SOUTH AL BATINAH AND MUSANDAM



FROM PAGE 1
Then, His Majesty the Sultan gave audience to the shaikhs of the three governorates, who engaged on fruitful briefings about the affairs of their respective wilayats and the services and projects that the

citizens aspire for.
His Majesty the Sultan commanded the immediate start of development projects that are urgently needed by citizens, with other projects to follow suit in future in accordance with the actual needs of those

wilayats, depending on available government solvency.
The meeting was attended by HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan

of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, Dr Hamad bin Said al Aafi, Head of the

Private Office, Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat and Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy Minister of State and Governor of Musandam.
May the Almighty Allah protect His Majesty the Sultan

and assist him with power to pursue the path of bounties. May He eternalise Oman's riches and endow the Sultanate of Oman, its loyal people and residents in the country with further peace and security.

— ONA



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His Majesty the Sultan commanded the immediate start of development projects that are urgently needed by citizens

NEW FEES FOR ISSUANCE, RENEWAL OF
RECRUITMENT PERMITS FOR EXPATS

COMMERCIAL			
	CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2	CATEGORY 3
FEES REDUCED	RO 2001 TO RO 301	RO 601-1001 TO RO 251	RO 301-361 TO RO 201
(In case of abidance to Omanisation rate, the fee will be reduced by 30%)			
	CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2	CATEGORY 3
FEES REDUCED	RO 2001 TO RO 211	RO 601-1001 TO RO 176	RO 301-361 TO RO 141
NON-COMMERCIAL			
DOMESTIC WORKERS		FARMERS AND ANIMAL BREEDERS	
FROM 1 TO 3 WORKERS	FOUR OF MORE WORKERS	FROM 1 TO 3 WORKERS	FOUR OF MORE WORKERS
RO 141 TO RO 101	RO 241 TO RO 141	RO 201 TO RO 141	RO 301 TO RO 241
HOLDERS OF RIYADA CARD			
FROM 1 TO 5 WORKERS		FROM 6 TO 10 WORKERS	
RO 101		RO 151 (provided employing at least one Omani national)	





Omani team documents cave in Safi Sahra

AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR: The Omani Cave Exploration team has documented a cave called “Khaslat Safi Sahra” in the village of Safi Sahra in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar or “Green Mountain” in the Wilayat of Nizwa, Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah.

The stages of discovering the site of the cave came with the help of the people residing at Safi Sahra area, where the team faced some difficulties to enter the cave as some rocks that might fall at its entrance.

The team removed the rocks at its vertical entrance to avoid it

falling off. The team had difficulty entering the cave due to its narrow paths, forcing the team to crawl through these paths.

The period of discovering, documenting and surveying the cave took from 4 to 5 hours. The cave will represent a tourist attraction for the region, thanks to its unique, aesthetic touches. The cave provides an exploratory adventure due to its variety of living organisms, such as spiders, frogs and others in large and varied sizes, in addition to various lime formations as well.

The cave was formed in sediments of limestone dating back to the Cretaceous period. It contains an impressive cluster of diverse cave deposits, as well as distinctive types of creatures that live in caves.

The Omani Cave Exploration team surveyed the cave and its corridors. It also documented the its scientific details. A second edition of the book “A Guide to the Caves of Oman” will be released. It will include the caves documented by the team during the previous period. — ONA

NEW PROGRAMME AT SQU

Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) Council on Sunday approved the establishment of a new programme named “Certificate of Arabic Language and Literature for Non-Native Speakers” at the Department of Arabic Language and Literature in the College of Arts and Social Sciences. This step aims to sharpen the communication skills of the learners in the field of Arabic language and literature. It also seeks to provide them with basic linguistic and literary knowledge, and introduce them to the Arab and Omani culture, so that the graduates can join various jobs that require competence in Arabic. — ONA



Oman Daily Observer launches mobile news app for Android, iOS

MIDHUN RAJ
MUSCAT, MARCH 13

Oman Daily Observer on Sunday launched the first dedicated English news app in the Sultanate of Oman.

The app will be available for downloads on devices running on Android and iOS. The Observer app puts the pulse of the nation in the palm of your hand. The Observer has been the most authoritative voice reporting on the Sultanate of Oman and the region for more than four decades, gaining the ‘most trusted news source in Oman’ tag.

Under the Ministry of Information, as the Sultanate of Oman’s official English-language newspaper, our team of experts, reporters, journalists, photographers and film-makers are dedicated to providing the most accurate and reliable breaking news, updates and analysis from Oman, region and beyond.

Our new app is part of our efforts to redefine the digital



news delivery experience in the Sultanate of Oman. The app lets you explore curated content tailored to your news interests and informs you on the stories that matter to you.

AWARD-WINNING JOURNALISM

Download the Oman Daily Observer app and receive instant access to the Observer’s award-winning journalism including coverage of the latest breaking news, both regionally and globally, Business, Oman, Features, Sports, World, Videos, Podcasts and much more.

KEY FEATURES

1. Quick to load and easy to navigate
2. Breaking news alerts to keep you updated with exclusives, explainers, live coverage and developing stories
3. Free daily e-paper download
4. Quick-access menu to browse articles with ease and speed
5. Share the news across social media platforms without leaving the app

OBSERVER ONLINE

Oman Daily Observer’s online portfolios have registered tremendous growth over the last few years with almost 7.4 million combined average reach per month. As per analytics data from 2021, Oman Observer website received 34.56 million hits with 3.56 million users. Oman Daily Observer also has a very strong presence in Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Download the app here for Android and iOS: Download: <http://onelink.to/vj5bs8>

Guidelines issued for a water taxi licence

VINOD NAIR

@vinot_nair

As part of the long-term plans to revamp the public transport system in line with changing times, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) issued a decision 33/2022 on regulating water taxis based on the Maritime Law.

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, has been working on an improvement plan for the transportation sector, which includes organising the public transport and operations of trucks. Speaking to the Observer, Eng Khamis bin Mohammed al Shamaki, the Under-Secretary for Transport, had said, “There are plans to introduce water taxis in Oman. We are in discussion to identify possible spots to develop the water taxi service in Muscat and Musandam. Once the proposal is ready, a tender will be floated.”

The decision states that water taxis will be used to transport people for an agreed fee, following



approval from the Maritime Authority.

Article (2) states that it is not permissible to practice the activities stipulated in this regulation except after obtaining a licence.

Some of the requirements include that the company must be commercially registered, must have a licence to practice the activity of water taxi by fare, certificate of origin of the marine water taxi unit, proof of ownership, age of the taxi unit shall be not more than 15 years from the date of its construction or reconstruction, except for those with fiberglass, customs release statement if the unit was purchased

from outside the Sultanate of Oman, a comprehensive insurance document of its crew and passengers, licensing of radio communication equipment, a copy of the passport or ID card of the captain.

The maritime authority must decide on the application for a navigation licence within 30 days from the date of its submission.

The concerned party may file a grievance with the Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology within 60 from the expiry date of his notification of the rejection decision.

More food items added to zero VAT list

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

@zainabalnasseri

Saud bin Nasir al Shukaili, Head of the Tax Authority, has issued a decision No 89/2022 to add more food commodities to the appendix of the food items which is subject to Value Added Tax (VAT) at zero rate. The items include barley, corn, flour, beans and some animal feed.

The decision was based on the Value Added Tax Law issued by Royal Decree No 121/2021, and Resolution No 90/2021 specifying food commodities subject to value added tax at the zero rate.

In October 2020, the Sultanate

of Oman issued a value added tax law at a rate of 5% on goods and services, making the country the fourth Gulf country to apply the tax after Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain. The application of the tax became effective as of April 16, 2021, in an attempt to boost government revenues and reduce the deficit of the budget due to the repercussions of Coronavirus and the decline in oil prices.

As part of several initiatives to ease the burdens on citizens and address difficulties, the Sultanate of Oman back then increased the number of goods exempted from value added tax, from 93 to 488, in an attempt to mitigate the

economic repercussions of the pandemic.

The value added tax is a tax paid by the consumer and imposed on the difference between the purchase price from the manufacturer and the selling price to the consumer.

According to the law, the tax does not include healthcare, education, financial services, basic foodstuffs and supplies for people with disabilities.

The Sultanate of Oman expects that government revenues from value added and selective tax will reach RO 535 million in 2022, based on the statement of the Ministry of Finance.

Oman Water & Wastewater Services Company
Member of Nama Group

Diam Haya

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

FOR DEVELOPMENT OF AL SUWAIQ AND AL Khaburah SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANTS VIA A PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP (PPP)

The Oman Water and Waste Water Services Company (OWWSC) was established on 1 June 2021 by Royal Decree (131/2020). The Company was formed by the merger of Diam (the potable water company) and Haya Water (the wastewater company). The Company provides water & wastewater services to the population of Oman excluding the Dhofar Governorate.

Oman Water and Wastewater Service Company (OWWSC) announce their desire to explore the interest of the Private Sector to invest in Design- Build Own Operate and Transfer (BOOT) Sewage Treatment plants for the Al Suwaiq and Al Khaburah which aim each to treat a daily average sewage flow of 2,000 m3/day that convey Via tankers during the initial years (that currently discharges the sewage at Open lagoons) away from Existing STPs and in the latest years the sewage being supplied through sewage networks.

The duration of BOOT will be for 15 years after the Commercial Operation Date (COD).

The Project Objectives are:

- Expand and improve sewage treatment services in Oman through private sector participation, in accordance with Oman 2040 Vision.
- Ensuring that wastewater sector transactions are undertaken on a commercial basis, to increase transparency and economic and business efficiency, thereby achieving economic tariffs for sewage treatment.
- Promoting foreign and local private sector investment and participation in Oman.
- Maximizing the use of Omani products and services, including creating employment and training opportunities for Omani nationals; and
- Promoting and transferring new and proven sewage treatment technology to Oman.

Interested companies (Local or International) with relevant experience are invited to email their Expression of Interest (EOI) along with evidence of experience (Company Profile) **before 02:00 pm on Thursday 24th March 2022 to tender@owwsc.nama.om.**

For any further information or clarification, please email tender@owwsc.nama.om.

ص.ب. ١٤٧ | الرمز البريدي ١٣٣ | الخوير، سلطنة عمان ١٤٤٢

P.O. Box 1047 | PC133, Al Khuwair | Sultanate of Oman | 1442 | www.owwsc.nama.om



Initiative to provide support to orphans

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

Al Khair Waafi in association with the Al Rahma Association for Motherhood and Childhood has announced a major initiative to provide support to the orphans and the less privileged people in the country.

The Sultanate of Oman has nearly 1,600 orphans in various wilayats who need their livelihood and with this project, all their needs including their schooling, during the holy month of Ramadhan and during the two Eid days, will be cared for.

Accordingly, a sustainable project residential and commercial building will be built and the monthly proceeds would be used to serve the programmes directed towards the orphans and provide for their needs on a permanent basis.

"This initiative comes from the belief of Al Rahma Association for Motherhood and Childhood in providing for the needs of deserving categories and the importance of supporting voluntary efforts in our beloved country," Ruqaya al Maani, head of the initiative, said.

The building will come up on the land obtained by the Association under a usufruct contract from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning in Al Mawaleh where the returns from the building will be allocated to finance the programmes designated for orphans registered with Al Rahma Association for Motherhood and Childhood.

"Areej Mohsin has allocated RO 300,000 towards the project and we are aiming to cover the rest of the cost of the initiative and both public and private sectors are welcome to join hands," she added.



The modes of raising funds include monthly sponsorship of RO 30 to RO 50 and Eid and school clothing, besides vouchers being issued against select denominations.

Donations can be made to the initiative by purchasing coupons worth RO 5 and RO 25 which are sold at Muscat Mall, City Centre, Al Araithi Boulevard and Muscat Grand Mall from Thursday, March 10 to Friday March 25.

The coupons may also be purchased by bank transfer to Bank Muscat account (an account designated for the Al Khair Waafi Initiative: 0301018630570028 and sending the receipt to the telephone number: 91713274.

At a press briefing attended by its members Areej bint Mohsin Darwish, Isdihar Darwish, Nawal al Hooti, Maisa al Hooti, Sumayya al Riyami, Huda al Hadhrami, Muneera al Hadhrami and Sana al Khanjary, the GM of Al Rahma Association for Motherhood and Childhood, the team detailed the goals of the initiative.

The initiative's goals include strengthening the idea of volunteering and social solidarity, involvement of community categories in voluntary work, and contributing to the funding of charitable programmes for

the benefit of orphans registered with Al Rahma Association for Motherhood and Childhood.

Al Khair Waafi Initiative was established by a group of Omani women entrepreneurs and Omani women who have experience in social service and a successful business career in order to support charitable work.

The donations towards charity in the first edition in 2018 recorded a total amount of RO 62,466,720, which was allocated to 2, 270 orphans of Al Rahma Association for Motherhood and Childhood while the second edition in 2019 fetched a total amount of RO 131,214,950 to support 3,420 orphans enrolled with three charitable associations, namely, Al Rahma Association for Motherhood and Childhood, Al Bahja Association for Orphans in Salalah and Dar Al Atta' Association.

The current version of social support aims to implement a sustainable project through the donations from active partners from private and public companies and philanthropists, whereas the proceeds of the commercial building after its establishment will be allocated for the provision of the needs of orphans in the Sultanate of Oman.



Oman, France hold strategic dialogue

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman and the French Republic held a strategic dialogue session between the foreign ministries of the two countries.

The session was chaired from the Omani side by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, while the French side was chaired by Anne

Gueguen, Head of the Foreign Ministry's Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Section.

The session reviewed historical relations binding the two countries and means of promoting bilateral cooperation in the areas of economy and investment. It also explored ways of enhancing the cultural and scientific exchange towards

wider horizons.

The two sides also exchanged views on regional and international issues of common concern. They underlined the importance of supporting all efforts that enhance the pillars of peace and stability.

The session was attended by a number of officials from both sides. — ONA

Oman and Qatar discuss cooperation in labour, human development

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour on Sunday held a joint meeting with a Qatari delegation, currently visiting the Sultanate of Oman.

The two sides discussed aspects of cooperation in the fields of joint labour, expertise of human development and matters of common interests between the two countries.

The meeting reviewed employment in the public and private sectors in the Sultanate of Oman, wage subsidy, labour welfare and training, as well as the stages of rate development in employment and nationalisation.



The Qatari delegation was briefed on the Omani experience in the field of jobs nationalisation, training and rehabilitation, in addition to

fields of safety and vocational wellness.

The meeting was attended by undersecretaries and officials from both sides. — ONA

Work on Khazaen market to begin next month

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

@zainabalnasseri

The construction work on the new central vegetable and fruit market project in Khazaen City will kick off in April. The project comes within the framework of plans and efforts to transfer storage and wholesale activities of vegetables and fruits from the central market in Al Mawaleh to Khazaen.

The implementation of the project comes within the main pillars of Oman Vision 2040 in empowering the private sector as a major driver of the economy. The main objective of transferring storage and wholesale trade activities to the new market is to provide integrated logistical solutions for cold and dry central storage for various crops, using modern advanced facilities.

The new market will also serve as a marketing and logistical platform for attracting investors and local, regional and international companies operating in the vegetables and fruits sector. The new central market is one of the main components of the food city hosted by Khazaen Economic City, which contributes to strengthening the food security system of the Sultanate of

Oman in line with the national strategy for food security.

The market will include important facilities and basic services, the most important of which are cold stores, a main sales hall, a customs inspection area, an agricultural quarantine, offices, a station for maintenance, an electric forklift maintenance and charging station and areas for sorting vegetables and fruits.

JOB OPPORTUNITY

A company, based at Salalah in Sultanate of Oman, the largest producers of PET Preforms & Plastic Closures.

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Last Date : Apply within 10 days of this advertisement.
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EA HOSTS WORKSHOP FOR SAUDI EXPERTS



MUSCAT: A workshop presented by experts from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia began at the Environment Authority here on Sunday. The two-day workshop aims at highlighting the environmental visions, strategies and initiatives carried out by the KSA Royal Commission for Governorate of Al Ula and the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture. — ONA



Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non- refundable)
13/2022	Consultancy Services (Design - Supervision and Technical Study) for Social Care Building at Al Rustaq	Consultancy offices registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first degree	Sunday 3-4-2022 02:00 PM	Thursday 21-4-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

- ❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On Monday 14/3/2022.
- ❖ Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.
- ❖ For Inquiry, please contact through the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

" The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry "

www.mosd.gov.om



Chad peace talks start in Qatar

DOHA: Chad's military government and dozens of opposition groups started peace talks on Sunday in Qatar as a first step towards ending a rebellion and holding elections.

The landlocked African nation was thrown into turmoil by the killing of longtime leader Idriss Deby Itno in battle with rebels in the country's north last April. His son, Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno, took over the country after his death, fronting a 15-member military junta and vowing to hold free elections.

Chad's Prime Minister Albert Pahimi Padacke and African Union Commission head Moussa Faki Mahamat told the opening of the conference that both sides would have to make "concessions" for the talks to succeed. But the process risks being protracted and complicated.

Some 44 armed rebel and opposition groups were invited to the Doha meeting — though some were missing at the opening, which had already been delayed from February 27.

Diplomats said these "precursor" talks could take weeks and that a planned "national dialogue" due to start on May 10 may have to be delayed.

Under the younger Deby's plan, the dialogue would be a prelude to agreeing on a new constitution and then holding elections.

Chad has a long history of volatility since gaining independence from France in 1960 and tens of thousands have died in various conflicts.

It has a large and shifting constellation of armed opposition groups. "The situation in Chad is very serious, we have to deliver this," the African Union's Faki said in his address to the government and armed groups.

Padacke said that "peace requires more courage and maturity than war".

"Real courage does not mean brandishing your weapon but to have the courage to lay it down", added the prime minister. He also said success in the talks would help stabilise the whole Sahel region where radical Islamist groups have staged regular attacks.

Libya's Foreign Minister Najla al Mangoush also said that the peace process would be crucial to improving stability and help "fight terrorism" in the Sahel.

As a condition for the Doha talks, Chadian rebels called for a general amnesty and the release of "prisoners of war" and the return of confiscated assets. — AFP



Qatar's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al Muraikhi and Chad's Prime Minister Albert Pahimi Padacke at the start of the Chad Peace Negotiations in Doha. — AFP

Dozen ballistic missiles fired at Iraq's Arbil

ARBIL: A dozen ballistic missiles targeted Iraq's northern city of Arbil, including US facilities, causing damage but no major casualties early on Sunday, security forces in the autonomous Kurdistan region said.

Local authorities said the missiles came from beyond the eastern border, suggesting that the source of the fire was Iran — a country that wields considerable political and economic influence over its neighbour.

"Twelve ballistic missiles" on Sunday targeted the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, Arbil, and the US consulate there, Kurdish security forces said.

"The missiles were fired outside the borders of Iraq and Kurdistan, (coming) more precisely from the east," the Kurdistan counter-terrorism unit said in a statement.

Iraq, including the Kurdistan region, is home to a dwindling number of US troops who led a coalition fighting the IS group. Washington has routinely blamed rocket and drone attacks against its interests in Iraq on pro-Iran groups who demand the departure of the remaining troops.

But cross-border missile fire is rare. Sunday's attack on Arbil comes nearly a week after two officers from Iran's Revolutionary Guards were killed in Syria in a strike attributed to key US ally Israel.

The Revolutionary Guards, vowed revenge for that attack. The interior ministry in Arbil said a "new building" housing the US consulate, which is located in a residential suburb of the city, was hit in Sunday's missile attack.



A view of a damaged building after an overnight attack in Arbil, the capital of the northern Iraqi Kurdish autonomous region. — AFP

It "caused material damages in buildings and houses, but no casualties, except one slightly injured civilian," a ministry statement said.

A correspondent in Arbil heard three explosions before dawn. Washington said there was "no damage or casualties at any US government facility". "We condemn this outrageous attack and display of violence," a State Department spokesperson said.

Local television channel Kurdistan24, whose studios are not far from the US consulate, posted images on social networks of its damaged offices, with collapsed sections of false ceiling and broken glass.

"We condemn this terrorist attack launched against several sectors of Arbil," Masrour Barzani, the prime minister of Iraqi Kurdistan, said in a statement. — AFP

Thailand marks Elephant Day

CHONBURI, Thailand: Nearly 60 elephants enjoyed a huge fruit banquet at a Thai botanical park on Sunday as the Southeast Asian country marked its annual Elephant Day. Elephants are a source of national pride and cultural identity for Thailand and are used for labour, transport, and battlefield triumphs by warriors and kings.

The event is commonly observed in various other parts of the country, but due to the pandemic and economic woes, some have scaled down celebrations this year.

At Nong Nooch Tropical Garden in eastern Chonburi province, elephants were treated to two tonnes of fruits and vegetables laid out on an eight metre wide table.

With the absence of foreign tourists for a long time, the buffet and some visitors brought some joy to the heavyweights.

"Of course, they get bored because they get used to being with people. That's why



Elephants enjoy a 'buffet' of fruit and vegetables during Thailand's National Elephant Day celebration at Nong Nooch Tropical Garden in Pattaya. — Reuters

you see our elephants are very friendly to everyone," said Kampon Tansacha, president of Nong Nooch Tropical Garden.

"People enjoy seeing elephants, give them food, especially bananas that they like and they look all healthy and happy".

Animal rights groups have long been calling for the elephant camps in Thailand to end animal shows and rides, branding the shows as a form of animal abuse. — AFP



الشركة المتحدة للطاقة (ش.م.ع.م.)

UNITED POWER COMPANY (SAOC)

P.O. Box 147, PC 134, Jawharat A'Shatti, Sultanate of Oman
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Invitation to the Extraordinary General Meeting and Annual Ordinary General Meeting

The Board of Directors of United Power Company SAOC (the "Company") is pleased to invite all shareholders to the Extraordinary General Meeting ("EGM") and Annual Ordinary General Meeting ("AGM") to be held at 5:00 pm on Tuesday, 29 March 2022 at the e-portal for convening general meetings which you may access through Muscat Clearing and Depository SAOC ("MCDC") website (www.mcdc.gov.om). Failing quorum of both meetings, a second EGM or AGM shall be convened at 3:00 pm on Monday, 4 April 2022 at the e-portal for convening general meetings which you may access through Muscat Clearing and Depository SAOC ("MCDC") website (www.mcdc.gov.om) to discuss and consider the following agenda:

Frist: Extraordinary General Meeting agenda:

- Using the legal reserve (an amount of OMR 167,000) to cover the Company's losses.

Second: Annual Ordinary General Meeting agenda:

- To consider and approve the Board of Directors' Report for the financial year ended 31 December 2021.
- To consider the Auditors' Report and approve the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2021.
- To consider and note the transactions carried out by the Company with related parties during the financial year ended 31 December 2021 (as in Annexure 1).
- To consider and approve the transactions that will carry out by the Company with related parties for the financial year ending 31 December 2022 (as in Annexure 2).
- To consider and ratify the Board and Committees' sitting fees paid during the preceding year and specify the Board and Committees sitting fees for the coming year (as in Annexure 3).
- To appoint the statutory auditors for the financial year ending 31 December 2022 and approve their remuneration.

According to the Commercial Companies Law Royal Decree No. 18/2019 and the Rules for Convening General Meetings via Electronic Means issued by Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, we would like to call your attention to the following:

- only a corporate person may authorize a natural person to attend and vote on its behalf on decisions/resolutions of the general meeting, through electronic means, provided such natural person must have an investor number at MCDC.
- voting on any item of the agenda shall commence prior to the convention of the general meeting at a maximum of three (3) days and ends on the date of the meeting. If a shareholder's balance is changed either by increase or decrease the voting process shall stand cancelled and must revoke on the date of the meeting.

Please log on to the e-portal at least 30 minutes prior to the EGM & AGM.

For further information please contact
Mr. Salah Al Farsi on phone number: 99219419

No date set for Iran-Saudi dialogue

TEHRAN: Iranian state media reported on Sunday that no date has yet been set for further dialogue between Tehran and Riyadh, after other media reports said talks have been "temporarily suspended".

The two countries have held four rounds of talks in Iraq since April aimed at restoring ties.

"No date has been set so far for a new round of talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia," IRNA news agency reported.

"Some news sources claimed that the talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia were temporarily suspended," IRNA noted, while stressing that "Iran has not yet announced a specific date for the talks." — AFP

GLOBINVEST

The Global Omani Investment Company SAOC

ANNUAL ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

The Board of Directors of The Global Omani Investment company SAOC is pleased to invite the Company's shareholders to attend the company's ordinary Annual General Meetings, to be held at 4:00 pm on Tuesday, 29/03/2022, via the electronic platform to hold general meetings which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (www.mcdc.gov.om) if the quorum of the meeting is not completed, a second annual ordinary general meeting will be held on Sunday 03/04/2022 at the same time and place to discuss the following agenda:

- To consider and approve the Board of Directors' report for the financial year ended December 31, 2021.
- To consider the Auditors' Report and to approve the Financial Statements, Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss Account, for the financial year ended December 31, 2021.
- To consider and approve the proposed cash dividend (7%) to the shareholders, for the financial year ended December 31, 2021.
- To consider and approve the transactions entered into by the Company with related parties during the financial year ended December 31, 2021.
- To consider and approve the transactions the company will enter into with related parties during the financial year ending on December 31, 2022.
- To approve the sitting fees of the Board meetings paid to the Board members for the financial year ended on 31/12/2021, and to determine the sitting fees for the next financial year ending on 31/12/2022.
- To appoint the Auditors for the Company for the financial year ending December 31, 2022, and to determine their fees.

According to the Company's Articles of Association and the controls of holding General Meetings using electronic platform, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- Juristic persons only, have the right to appoint a natural person as a proxy to attend the General Meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCDC.
- Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meeting. If the shareholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be canceled, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the General Meeting.

For further information, please contact Mr. Jamal Ahmed Al-Shanfari on phone: 24489009 GSM: 92839933

Chairman

Auditors

Legal Consultante

Russia steps up its offensive



Police officers detain a woman during a protest against Russian military action in Ukraine, in Manezhnaya Square in central Moscow. – AFP

LVIV: A Russian air strike on a large Ukrainian military facility near the border with Nato member Poland on Sunday killed 35 people and wounded 134, a local Ukrainian official said, as other officials reported intense Russian attacks around the country.

Britain said the incident, just 15 miles from the Polish border, marked a “significant escalation” of the conflict. US President Joe Biden has said Nato would defend every inch of its territory if Russia’s invasion of Ukraine spills over into member states of the Western defence alliance.

Ukraine said foreign military instructors have previously worked at the Yavoriv International Center for Peacekeeping and Security, but a Nato official said there were no personnel from the alliance there. It was not immediately clear whether any non-Nato states might have representatives there. Regional Governor Maksym

* RUSSIAN AIR STRIKE HITS MILITARY BASE NEAR POLISH BORDER

* MOSCOW ALSO TARGETS AIRPORT IN WESTERN UKRAINE

Kozytskyy said Russian planes fired around 30 rockets at the facility, adding that some were intercepted before they hit. At least 35 people were killed and 134 wounded, he said. Reuters was not able to verify his statement.

The 360 sq km facility is one of Ukraine’s biggest and the largest in the western part of the country.

The Kremlin did not immediately reply to a request for comment on the reported missile strike so close to the border with Nato, and a short video briefing by Russia’s defence ministry spokesman on Sunday made no mention of such an attack.

Nineteen ambulances with sirens on were seen by Reuters driving from the direction of the Yaroviv facility after the reported strike and black smoke rose from the area.

“Russia has attacked the International Center for Peacekeeping & Security near Lviv. Foreign instructors work here. Information about the victims is being clarified”, Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov said in an online post.

A Ukrainian defence ministry representative told Reuters the ministry was still trying to establish if any foreign instructors

were at the centre at the time of the attack.

Ukraine, whose aspirations to join Nato are a major irritant to Russian President Vladimir Putin, held most of its drills with countries in the Western defence alliance at the base before the attack. The last major exercises were in September.

In the weeks before Russia attacked on February 24, the Ukrainian military trained there, but according to Ukrainian media, all foreign instructors left the training ground in mid-February, while leaving all the equipment.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, launched by Putin on February 24, has sent more than 2.5 million people fleeing across borders and trapped hundreds of thousands in besieged cities.

“It is terrifying how violent and inhuman it is”, Olga, a refugee from Kyiv, told Reuters after crossing into Romania. — Reuters

Qatar FM to hold talks on N-crisis

DOHA: Qatar’s foreign minister headed on Sunday for Moscow for talks on Russia’s obstruction of a new Iran nuclear deal and on the Ukraine conflict, a source with knowledge of the visit said. Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Thani was to meet Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and other top officials on Monday, said the source. Shaikh Mohammed left just hours after speaking with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Iran’s Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian about Russia’s new demands on the Iran talks, which Moscow has linked to sanctions imposed over its attack on Ukraine.

Ten months of negotiations in Vienna have brought Western countries agonisingly close to renewing a 2015 deal on regulating Iran’s nuclear programme. The United States withdrew from the accord in 2018 and Iran has since rolled back on its commitments.

American journalist killed

LVIV: An American journalist was shot and killed by Russian forces in the town of Irpin in Ukraine’s Kyiv region and another journalist was wounded, Kyiv regional police chief Andriy Nyebytov said on Sunday. Nyebytov initially said the dead journalist worked for the New York Times. However the Times said that the journalist had previously worked for the paper but was not currently working for it. The Times named the journalist as Brent Renaud.

“We are deeply saddened to hear of Brent Renaud’s death. Brent was a talented photographer and film-maker who had contributed to The New York Times over the years,” The Times said in a statement posted on Twitter by its spokesperson.

Pope calls for end to war

ROME: Pope Francis has again issued a heartfelt appeal for an end to the war in Ukraine. “In God’s name, I ask you: Stop this massacre!” Francis said on Sunday, visibly moved, as he addressed 25,000 worshippers in St Peter’s Square in Rome. The head of the Catholic Church said his heart ached and he joined those calling for an end to the fighting.

In the past few days, the Ukrainian city of Mariupol has become a “martyr city in this terrible war.” No strategic considerations could justify “the barbarity, the killing of children, innocents and defenceless civilians”, the Pope said. Weapons must be put to rest quickly “before cities become cemeteries”, he said. Francis thanked the countries and many volunteers who are helping the refugees from Ukraine. — Agencies

‘Guns, not diplomacy, will determine war outcome’

PARIS: Russia entered negotiations with Ukraine only days after attacking the country but experts say the ongoing talks are unlikely to yield progress until one side feels it has momentum on the battlefield.

The latest attempts at finding a negotiated end to the bloodshed saw the Russian and Ukrainian foreign ministers sit down for talks on Thursday in the Turkish resort city of Antalya.

Although there was no breakthrough, Ukrainian President Zelensky said on Saturday there had been a “fundamentally different approach” from the Russians in the latest discussions, while Putin claimed there were “some positive shifts” in the dialogue. Experts say Russia’s approach has so far entailed making ultimatums, insisting that Ukraine agree to de-militarise, renounce its ambitions to join Nato, and recognise Russian territorial claims in eastern Ukraine.

Ukraine rejects these demands and there appears to be little incentive for anyone to compromise until one side builds a dominant military position.

“It’s a kind of deadlock or standstill because Russia



still hopes that Ukraine will accept its demands”, said Oleg Ignatov, a Russia specialist at the International Crisis Group (ICG), a think-tank.

“Both sides consider the military scenario as the main scenario: Ukraine is not losing this war and Russia is not winning this war.”

Natia Seskuria, a Russia expert at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), a British think-tank, said it was hard to imagine a diplomatic solution when the two sides are struggling to agree on humanitarian corridors or even

temporary local ceasefires.

“I think that at this point Russia is trying to achieve its maximalist goals in Ukraine, and if they’re able to force the Ukrainians at the diplomatic table to accept these terms, then of course Russia will get what it wants”, she said. “But if they are unable to do so, then the war will continue”

Michel Duclos, a veteran French ambassador now at the Montaigne Institute, a Paris-based think-tank, agreed that the diplomatic track was of secondary importance at present relative to what happens on the ground. — AFP



تنمية
TANMIA

الشركة العمانية لتنمية الإستثمارات الوطنية
Oman National Investments Development Company

Invitation to attend the Ordinary Annual General Meeting
Oman National Investments Development Company SAOC

إعلان الدعوة إلى إجتماع الجمعية العامة العادية السنوية
الشركة العمانية لتنمية الإستثمارات الوطنية ش.م.ع.م

The Board of Directors of Oman National Investments Development Company SAOC (“**Company**”) is pleased to invite the Company’s shareholders to attend the company’s ordinary Annual General Meetings, to be held at **10:30 on Tuesday, March 29 2022**, via the electronic platform to hold general meetings which can be accessed through the website of the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om) if the quorum of the meeting is not completed, a second annual ordinary general meeting will be held on **Wednesday March 30 2022**, at the same time and place to discuss the following agenda:

- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors on the activities of the Company and the financial status of the Company, for the financial year ended on 31 December 2021.
- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors on the organisation and management of the Company, for the financial year ended on 31 December 2021.
- To consider and approve the auditor’s report, balance sheet and profits and loss statement for the financial year which ended on 31 December 2021.
- To notify the shareholders of the related party transactions entered into by the company in the ordinary course of business during the financial year ended on 31 December 2021.
- To approve the sitting fees paid to the members of the Board of Directors and the committees under the Board of Directors for the financial year ended on 31 December 2021, and to determine the sitting fee for the financial year ending on 31 December 2022. (as per the annexure)
- To consider and approve the proposal of distributing a total sum of (RO.41,800) as remuneration for the Board of Directors of the Company for the year ended 31 December 2021.
- To appoint the external auditor for the financial year ending on 31 December 2022 and to determine their remuneration.

Pursuant to the Company’s Articles of Association, a shareholder can appoint a proxy in writing to attend and vote on the proceedings on his/ her behalf.

If you wish to appoint a proxy, please complete, and submit the attached Proxy Form to the Company’s office. The proxy form shall be signed by an authorized signatory and sealed with the Company’s seal and submitted together with a copy of the commercial registration certificate.

To prevent delay in starting the meeting shareholders are requested to arrive half an hour before the scheduled meeting time.

For further information please contact as follows:
Phone No.: 22300447
E-mail: deena@tanmia.om

١. دراسة تقرير مجلس الإدارة عن نشاط الشركة ومركزها المالي للسنة المالية المنتهية في ٣١ ديسمبر ٢٠٢١م، والموافقة عليه.

٢. دراسة تقرير مجلس الإدارة عن تنظيم وإدارة الشركة خلال السنة المنتهية في ٣١ ديسمبر ٢٠٢١م، والموافقة عليه.

٣. دراسة تقرير مراقب الحسابات، والميزانية العمومية وحساب الأرباح والخسائر للسنة المالية المنتهية في ٣١ ديسمبر ٢٠٢١م، والموافقة عليه.

٤. إحاطة المساهمين بالتعاملات مع الأطراف ذات العلاقة التي قامت بها الشركة في سياق نشاطها الاعتيادي في السنة المالية المنتهية في ٣١ ديسمبر ٢٠٢١م، والموافقة عليها.

٥. التصديق على بدل حضور جلسات مجلس الإدارة واللجان المنبثقة عنه عن السنة المالية المنتهية في ٣١ ديسمبر ٢٠٢١م، وتحديد مقدار البدل للسنة المالية القادمة التي ستنتهي في ٣١ ديسمبر ٢٠٢٢م (حسب المرفق)

٦. دراسة مقترح توزيع مكافآت أعضاء مجلس الإدارة بمبلغ وقدره (٤١,٨٠٠ ر.ع) عن السنة المالية المنتهية في ٣١ ديسمبر ٢٠٢١م، والموافقة عليه.

٧. تعيين مدقق الحسابات الخارجي للسنة المالية القادمة المنتهية في ٣١ ديسمبر ٢٠٢٢م وتحديد أتعابه.

بحق لأي من المساهمين طبقاً للنظام الأساسي للشركة، أن يعين خطياً وكلياً له ونائباً عنه للحضور والتصويت على القرارات المتخذة.

إذا كنت ترغب في تعيين وكيل، يرجى تعبئة استمارة التفويض المرفقة وحضارها لقر الشركة. توقع استمارة التفويض من قبل الشخص المخول بالتوقيع ومختومة بختم الشركة ومرفقة بها شهادة التسجيل في السجل التجاري.

يرجى التكرم بالحضور قبل موعد الإجتماع بنصف ساعة وذلك لتلافي حدوث أي تأخير في بدء الإجتماع.

للمزيد من المعلومات يرجى الاتصال
هاتف رقم، ٢٢٣٠٠٤٤٧
بريد إلكتروني، deena@tanmia.om

المستشار القانوني

مراقب الحسابات

رئيس مجلس الإدارة

From a fixed mindset to a growth mindset



Hyesha Barrett
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The writer is a certified Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner based in Muscat.

Humans thrive on routine but can easily get bored if there isn't any novelty. Most of us crave something new, yet are often afraid to reach out for it. This mainly stems from a fear of failure or a fear of rejection, whereby an attempt has been made in the past and was received with negativity.

In essence, our ego got wounded. We make it mean that we are not validated and what gets hurt is our self-esteem, self-worth, self-value and also our self-confidence.

Trying something new is nerve-racking. It's uncertain. We just don't know the outcome, so we rather shy away from even attempting it. We can easily go to the worse-case scenario: this is the brains protective mechanism of keeping us safe.

However, a bit of stress is good in order to push our minds to grow – just like with our bodies, when the muscles repair from the tearing, the body gets stronger. The same applies to our minds, the more we push ourselves, the more we will learn and expand. Please remember courage isn't the lack of fear, it's feeling the fear and acting in spite of it anyways.

Leaving your comfort zone means a phase of trial and error, during which success will undoubtedly occur. Experiencing success builds our self-efficacy, fueling the belief in our abilities. Failure, is however also inevitable. When we fail - and fail we will - the key is to get up again, persevere and keep on trying. Don't allow too much time to pass before retrying, otherwise the feeling of disappointment, fear and rejection will become too engrained in your body and this feeling will govern your thoughts. It's our uneasy relationship with fear and failure that causes us to freeze.

In our comfort zones, we feel safe, secure and in control. There are a range of routine tasks that we carry out with confidence. We know the processes that need to be followed and we know what to expect. It takes courage to move through the first zone, The Comfort Zone into the second zone, The Fear Zone.

The fear zone brings about insecurities and desire to do well often hinders our ability to push ourselves. We are very much affected by other's opinions; our

IT IS CRUCIAL TO CULTIVATE A STRONG AND HEALTHY MINDSET THAT LAYS STRONG FOUNDATIONS TOWARDS LEARNING

confidence gets shaken and we will easily find excuses to retract.

However, when we are able to push through the fear zone, we then enter the third zone, The Learning Zone. Here, we acquire new skills with gained ability to deal with challenges and problems resourcefully.

It's not as scary anymore and we start getting accustomed to the new change. This is the opportunity for adventure, to be curious and take calculated risks. A productive amount of pressure will have a positive impact, without the onset of struggle nor panic.

Thereafter we enter the fourth and final zone: The Growth Zone. Here, new habits are formed. Our aspirations are no longer a dream to be thought of but a reality to be experienced. Soon, this will become your new comfort zone, expanding your ability to reach

even greater heights.

In reality, the process of moving from The Comfort Zone to The Growth Zone may not be linear. Plateaus often complicate the journey. Sometimes, we even need to retreat to the comfort zone periodically before mustering the strength to leave again. Nevertheless, appreciating the steps can help in understanding uncertainty.

Intentionally leaving your comfort zone goes hand in hand with developing a growth mindset. While the fixed mindset keeps us trapped by fear of failure, the growth mindset expands the possible. It inspires us to learn and take healthy risks, leading to positive outcomes across all domains of life.

A habit of expanding our comfort zone equips us to handle change and ambiguity with more poise, which leads to resilience. To strengthen this muscle and exercise your level of comfort, I recommend doing something every day that is out of the ordinary; something that brings about some fear.

Remember change is scary at first, messy in the middle and

wonderful at the end. Take the analogy of refurbishing a house. At first the house looks beaten down, the middle brings about a lot of dust, disruption and debris then suddenly there is a turning point and the house starts to take shape and looks beautiful.

It is crucial to cultivate a strong and healthy mindset that lays strong foundations towards learning. This includes seeing yourself as inherently adaptable and believing in your ability to endure fears and doubts.

Every person faces this choice, knowingly or not. You can settle for what you know: the seemingly safe, familiar routine. Or, you can become receptive to opportunities for growth, challenge your personal status quo and find out what you're capable of.

When this becomes a habit, the benefits reaped will become exponential. Don't let setbacks, people nor your inner critic beat you down. In turn this will allow you to reach your highest human potential and in time you will notice you have built a life fuelled by your deepest desires. What an inspiration to others you will be.

Mounds of old batteries threaten Gaza health

SAKHER ABOU EL OUN

At a landfill in southern Gaza, mounds of discarded batteries pile up, rusting cells that pose a growing health risk to Palestinians in the enclave. Batteries are an essential power source in Gaza, where public electricity supply is sparse and infrastructure has decayed since an Israeli blockade of the enclave began in 2007, the year Hamas seized control.

"The batteries have been piling up for 15 years," said Ibrahim Baraka, who works at the 2,000 square metre landfill in Khan Yunis, where residents of surrounding houses can peer in to see piles of lead and mercury waste accumulating daily.

Gaza, home to 2.3 million Palestinians, has only one power plant that runs on diesel. Fuel deliveries are unreliable, largely due to the blockade. The plant was also bombed by Israeli fighter jets during a 2006 conflict with Hamas.

Mohammed Masleh, director of resources at Gaza's Environment Ministry, estimated that there are 25,000 tonnes of used batteries in Gaza that need to be recycled. Most are at sites not suited for storing dangerous materials.

Battery collection is also a source of income for the impoverished territory, where unemployment rates hover around 50 per cent.

On a crisp morning, Zakaria Abu Sultan meandered his horse-drawn cart through the streets of Gaza City, shouting his mission through a loudspeaker.

"Anyone with damaged batteries to sell?" he called out. "I've been wandering since dawn to buy damaged batteries. I buy them at best for 50 shekels (\$15), and sell them to the scrap dealer for 70 shekels," he said. Typically, damaged cells are taken to landfills, like the one in Khan Yunis where Baraka works, which dismantle them for materials like plastic that are then sold to factories.

Ahmed Hillis, director of Gaza's National Institute for Environment and Development, said that while he understood there was profit in discarded batteries, the trade was extremely dangerous. "Tonnes of batteries are accumulating in dumps," he said. — AFP

Zelensky responds to Hamlet



Maureen Dowd

The writer is an American columnist for *TNYT* and an author

For actors, it's the most engaging and scary line ever written. "It's the Mona Lisa of literature," said Simon Godwin, director of the Shakespeare Theater Company here. "It's something we're very familiar with, it's hard to bring a new context and make it live again."

So it was amazing when an actor not known for his classic performance spoke at the opening of Hamlet's soliloquy with more dramatic weight than Gielgud, Burton, Olivier or Cumberbatch.

"The question for us now is to be or not to be," Volodymyr Zelensky told the British Parliament in a video call on Tuesday, speaking in Ukrainian. "This is a Shakespearean question," he said. For 13 days, this question could have been asked. But now I can give you a final answer. It's definitely going to be."

As Godwin noted for the sitcom actor, who became Ukraine's wartime president, "He has become, in a way, the greatest actor in the world committed to the deepest truth in the world using a piece of poetry to express this truth in a powerful context."

Shakespeare, who knew that character is revealed when stocks are high, would have approved of it. Zelensky has taken up arms against "a troubled sea."

As Drew Lichtenberg, a resident playwright at the Shakespeare Theater Company, points out, Hamlet's concern about suicide and death has a resonance in the part of the world that now holds the slings and arrows of a mad dictator.

"There is a long tradition in Central European countries, like Poland or Ukraine, to embrace Shakespeare and especially Hamlet as a kind of metaphor for the wider political situation," he said. "Poland and Ukraine have had periods where they did not exist, where their language was deleted and replaced by German or Russian as the official language

UKRAINE IS SHOWING A COLLECTIVE WILL, AN INSPIRING COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE WORKING TOGETHER

and culture of the state. "They know what 'not being' is." What made the handover of the Ukrainian president so powerful was that the world is caught up in the existential questions raised by the humorous prince of Denmark.

Will Zelensky live or die when Russian forces fall? Will Ukraine exist as a sovereign nation? What does this identity crisis mean for America and the West – who will we be when it's over? Will the planet survive?

Zelensky and the Ukrainians chose to stay for something and be. They are united as a democracy in a way that America has not been for a long time, as we have become increasingly divisive over politics, with ardent questions of reality and artifice; with the destructive partisanship of

the masks and Covid; and with the corrosive effect of our culture of greed, selfishness and billionaires. Ukraine is showing a collective will, an inspiring community of people working together.

Their heroic efforts against a devouring tyrant established in the empire commemorate the beginning of America itself. They have also told military experts that in a conventional war, the US will smoke Russia. Its military has been extremely slow and disruptive, even though it has ignited people around the world killing children and fleeing civilians.

President Biden and his generals are facing their existential moment as they try to grasp the incredibly sharp problem of where the line is.

Are the Javelins okay and the MiGs too far away? How can we do everything we can to help Ukraine without inciting the sadistic and independent Vladimir Putin to start World War III and a nuclear fire? Despite the threat, we must stand by Ukraine in what its ambassador to the United States, Oksana Markarova, calls the "1939 moment" of good against evil.

—*The New York Times*



Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky addressing Britain's Parliament by video call last week.

When reading becomes a culture!



Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami
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An author, columnist, creative writer, translator and a communications professional

The love of reading is a blessing that is not given to many people; especially reading books. However, it is common nowadays that reading from different sources is becoming a habit for people of different ages. Reading books, newspapers, magazines, novels or even e-books on mobiles or computers stands as a must-to-do daily task for lot of people. Despite the

addiction to modern technology and social media, they never quit their habit of starting their day with reading.

Are you among those reading enthusiasts who regard reading as daily habit; they never skip a day without reading a few pages at least! Their life is meaningless without the blessing of a book being kept in their cars, bedrooms, offices. Always book lovers never go to bed alone; it is just books that make their day. Probably, they believe in the saying, “Let books be your dining table, and you shall be full of delights. Let them be your mattress, and you shall sleep restful nights”.

That is why the biggest pleasure comes from what we read, not from on what we read. It has been said that there is a great difference between an

READING UNQUESTIONABLY MARKS A VALUABLE HABIT AMONG YOUNGSTERS AND IT SHOULD NOT BE DISCONNECTED FROM CHILDREN'S LIFE AS WELL

eager man who wants to read a book and the tired man who wants a book to read. The real difference lies in our attitude towards reading!

As reading unquestionably marks a valuable habit to youngsters, it should not be disconnected from children's life as well. If we, as adults, missed the chance somehow, reading should be accorded a priority as a daily habit for children.

Reading habit should be started since their early school days, so they get used to it as they grow up. Hence, reading would unconsciously become a habit, which they like, enjoy and long for with no pressure put on them.

Starting the mission of making reading as a habit for children is really difficult, but gradually it will take their way to their heart. We can succeed in this mission if reading is accompanied with some kind of fun. Reading for fun is a good way to encourage kids enjoy it, so it becomes a habit later on. It should first start with easy material like reading comics, short stories and kids' magazines, so they don't get bored with what they read.

Besides, they should not be forced to read for certain period of time. Let kids limit their time and interest of how much time they take or how much they read. They could be also attracted to reading by taking them to book fairs or bookstores every now and then. This possibly marks a good approach to teach students and children the value and significance of reading. Book fairs are actually regarded one of the most significant cultural phenomena happening in the Sultanate of Oman, which should be well invested in.

Getting children to the fair is an efficient dose of encouragement for them; allow them to choose the books and stories they like. Through such experience, teachers and parents alike could urge children to love reading and make it a habit. It is very thrilling to see individuals, parents and groups of school students visiting book fairs. Purchasing books is always good; definitely they will be of real value and good use for the whole family someday sooner or later.

On top of all this, let us think aloud and evaluate ourselves; Are we real readers? Are we reading enough? In other words, how much we care about reading as parents, students or professionals? You see people of different ages in book fairs and at book stores grabbing books, stories, references and other educational material, but do they read all of these? On the other hand, how much we are investing in children to develop good readers?! Overall, is reading becoming a habit in our life; a question we all need to think about!



GIVING FINAL TOUCHES

An artist gives finishing touches to a mural painted on a building at a slum clearance board residential community in Chennai, India, on Sunday. – AFP

The anatomy of the net-zero transition



Mekala Krishnan

The author is a partner at the McKinsey Global Institute

Now that addressing climate change has become a top priority worldwide, economic policymakers and corporate strategists alike are embracing sustainability goals — most notably, “net-zero” greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions. But what will it take to get there? In a new McKinsey Global Institute report, my co-authors and I aim to answer this question.

Using the Network for Greening the Financial System's Net-Zero 2050 scenario, we simulated a relatively orderly transition that would limit the rise in global temperatures to 1.5° Celsius, relative to pre-industrial levels. While this is not a prediction or a projection, our scenario-based analysis provides an understanding of the nature and the magnitude of the changes the net-zero transition would entail, and the scale of the response needed to manage it. We find that achieving this target would involve profound economic and societal shifts — affecting countries, companies, and communities. Ultimately, we found that a successful transition would have six key characteristics.

First, the transition would be universal. Every country and economic sector contributes to GHG emissions, directly or indirectly. Getting to net zero thus means that transformation has to happen everywhere. And, given the interdependence of energy and land-use systems, coordination will be essential. The adoption of electric vehicles (EVs), for example, will lead to significant emissions reductions only if the electricity used to power them comes from low-emissions sources.

Second, a successful net-zero transition would entail significant economic shifts. We estimate that getting to net zero would require \$275 trillion in capital spending on physical assets by 2050 — an average of \$9.2 trillion per year. That is \$3.5 trillion per year more than is currently being invested today. Expected increases

in spending as incomes and populations grow, and transition policies that are already legislated, narrows the gap, but the required rise in annual spending would still be about \$1 trillion.

Meanwhile, some existing spending would need to be reallocated from high- to low-emissions assets. The labour market, too, would undergo a major adjustment: under the NGFS scenario,

REACHING NET-ZERO EMISSIONS BY 2050 — AND THUS LIMITING THE RISE IN GLOBAL TEMPERATURES TO 1.5°C ABOVE PRE-INDUSTRIAL LEVELS — IMPLIES PROFOUND ECONOMIC AND SOCIETAL SHIFTS. ACCORDING TO A NEW REPORT, A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION WOULD HAVE SIX KEY CHARACTERISTICS

about 200 million jobs would be created and 185 million lost by 2050 from a net-zero transition. Worker reskilling and redeployment would thus be crucial.

The third key characteristic of the net-zero transition is that policies — and the associated investments — must be front-loaded. Under the NGFS scenario, spending would increase from 6.8 per cent of GDP today to about 9 per cent of GDP between 2026 and 2030, and then decline. More broadly, action to arrest the buildup of GHGs in the atmosphere and mitigate physical climate risks would need to be taken this decade.

Fourth, the effects of the net-zero transition will be felt unevenly. The sectors

with the highest degree of exposure — because they emit significant quantities of GHGs (for example, coal and gas power) or sell products that do (such as petroleum products) — account for about 20 per cent of global GDP. Sectors with high-emissions supply chains, such as construction, account for a further 10 per cent of GDP.

At the country level, developing economies would have to devote a larger share of GDP than rich countries —almost 11 per cent in India, compared to 4-5 per cent in the European Union and the United States — to support economic development and build low-emissions assets. Deploying this capital could prove challenging for many developing countries. Their economies also tend to be more concentrated in the most exposed sectors, subjecting them to greater economic shifts.

Similarly, within countries, the communities that rely heavily on the most exposed sectors would face the highest costs. In the US, for example, 44 counties rely on coal, oil, and gas, fossil-fuel-based power, and automotive manufacturing for more than 10 per cent of employment. And, of course, lower-income households would struggle more than their wealthier counterparts to cope with any cost increases that are passed through to consumers — though in some cases, such as mobility, upfront capital spending by consumers could yield lower operating costs over time.

The net-zero transition's fifth characteristic is that it is exposed to short-term risks, including worker dislocation and stranded assets. We estimate that, in the power sector, \$2.1 trillion worth of assets could be retired or underutilised between now and 2050. And if the deployment of low-emissions technologies does not keep pace with the decommissioning of high-emission technologies, there could be shortages and price spikes, potentially eroding support for the transition.

At the same time, the net-zero transition holds major opportunities — the sixth key characteristic. For companies, decarbonisation could make existing processes and products more cost-effective, and new markets for low-emissions goods will become increasingly lucrative.

Companies can also gain by supporting the production of these lower-emissions products — for example, by providing mineral inputs (such as lithium for batteries), physical capital (including solar panels), or infrastructure (like EV charging stations). Support and technical services, such as forest management, engineering and design, financing, risk management, and emissions measurement and tracking solutions, would also be needed.

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A woman holds a banner reading “10 per cent of the world's population is responsible for 50% of greenhouse gas emissions” during a “Look up” march, to call on the presidential candidates to take into account the climate emergency, which protesters say is largely absent from the election campaign in Toulouse. – AFP

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Al Musannah, Al Ittihad play out draw in Omantel League

AL QURA, RICARDO POWER AL NAHDA TO WIN OVER SEEB

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MARCH 13

The Musannah and Al Ittihad encounter ended in a 1-1 draw on Sunday in the 16th week of 2021-2022 Omantel League.

At Al Rustaq Sports Complex, Hamood al Saadi netted the opening goal in the match in the 18th minute while the equaliser came in the late ten minutes of the games by Abdulwas al Matri in the 81st minute. The draw meant Al Musannah raised their credit to 24 points while Al Ittihad remained in the danger zone at 12 points.

Earlier on Saturday, Al Nahda snatched a crucial 2-0 win over the league leaders Seeb in the 16th week of the domestic top tier league.

At Al Buraimi Sports Complex, Oudi al Qura and Ricardo powered Al Buraimi based team with vital three points that equalised them with Seeb and Dhofar in the top at 32 points.

The Salalah giants were held to a 2-2 draw against Oman club on Saturday at Salalah Sports Complex. Omar al Malki scored the equaliser goal for Dhofar in the dying minutes.

The Oman club players commenced the match strongly as they scored the opening goal by Kusmos Daoda in the 34th minute.

Aleer Kamag equalised for the hosts ahead of the first half ending in the 44th minute. The last five minutes of the match registered a thrilling competition between both teams as Oman club managed to return back to the lead through Daoda in the 86th minute but Omar al Malki spoiled the visitors dreams with three points as he netted the equaliser in the 90th minute.

With the draw, Dhofar reached 32 points and missed the chance to lead in the top as Seeb were defeated by Al Nahda while Oman Club were positioned in the comfortable zone with 23 points.

Nizwa tasted another defeat as they suffered a 2-0 loss against Muscat club on Saturday at the latter's home in Seeb Stadium. The triumph helped the capital city team to leave the danger zone slightly as they jumped to 15 points. On the other hand, Nizwa were positioned in the relegation zone at 13th place with 11 points.

The northern Batinah derby between Sohar and Saham ended in a 1-1 draw at Sohar Sports Complex. Salim al Maqbali put Sohar ahead in the 15th minute and Faisal al Buraiki equalised for Saham in the 81st minute. The draw put Sohar in the middle of the league table at eighth place with 23 points. Saham are struggling at the bottom of the table with seven points only.

The Oman Club players commenced the match strongly as they scored the opening goal by Kusmos Daoda in the 34th minute

GCC Golf Championship tees off in Abu Dhabi

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, MARCH 13

The GCC Golf Championship is back after the pandemic with good participation.

The 24th edition of the championship has the Men's division of 72 hole tournament with 18 holes being played each day on the prestigious Abu Dhabi Golf Club. The 13th edition of Boys' under-18 division is a 54 hole event and is lined up for Monday through Wednesday.

Six teams are participating in the event. The total number of players is 40, 24 in men's division

and 16 in under-18 division. The UAE General Authority of Sports is hosting the event along with the Emirates Golf Federation at Abu Dhabi Golf Club and the closing ceremony is to be held on Thursday at 5 pm.

Oman are participating with Ghaleb al Busaidy as head of the delegation, Peter Bailey as coach of the national teams comprising Azzan al Ramahi, Badr al Ameri, Muhammad Ambusaidi and Fahd al Kettani. The Youth national team under 18 years have Mohammed al Noamani, Al Mundhir al Hinai and Ayman al Busaidy.



Australia trounce New Zealand to fire World Cup warning

WELLINGTON: Australia recovered from a shaky start to demolish New Zealand by 141 runs in Wellington on Sunday and underscore their status as Women's Cricket World Cup favourites.

New Zealand did well to contain Australia to 269-8 after winning the toss and opting to bowl, only for the six-time champions to bounce back and skittle the host nation for 128 with 19.4 overs to spare.

New Zealand are regarded as a realistic chance to make the final of the one-day showcase, but the lopsided result is a warning to all teams in the tournament that Australia remain the gold standard.

While their top order had a rare off day, Australia's batting depth shone through, highlighted by half-centuries from Ellyse Perry and Tahlia McGrath.

"That's the beauty of our batting line-up, we've got some players who can rescue an innings and build the platform that allows us to play like we did at the back end," captain Meg Lanning said.

New Zealand made an excellent

start with the ball. Alyssa Healy departed for 15 with a mis-timed pull shot as she tried to lift the run rate, followed by Lanning on five.

Australia were reduced to 56-3 when Rachael Haynes was bowled by Lea Tahuhu for 30 in the 16th over and limped to 113-4 before Beth Mooney dragged the ball on to her stumps, also for 30. Perry and McGrath then combined for a crucial 101-run stand.

Ashleigh Gardner contributed a quickfire cameo of 48 runs from 18 balls but Australia's total looked within reach.

Tahuhu was the pick of New Zealand's bowlers with 3-53.

The home side never looked close to achieving the 270-run target as Australia's bowlers set about dismantling their batting line-up.

Teen speedster Darcie Brown had the best figures with 3-22 but the entire attack contributed to a dominant performance.

Amy Satterthwaite offered the only real resistance for New Zealand with 44, but the rest of their batters failed to fire. — AFP



Australia's Ellyse Perry hits a boundary during the 2022 Women's Cricket World Cup match against New Zealand in Wellington. — AFP

Pant heroics help India build lead in pink-ball Test

BANGALORE: Wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant hit a quickfire half-ton as India extended its second innings lead to a mammoth 342 on day two of the pink ball Test on Sunday.

The hosts reached 199 for five at dinner — the second session break in the day-night Test — in a fast-moving match in Bangalore.

Fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah completed a five-wicket haul in the first session to bowl out Sri Lanka for 109 in response to India's first innings total of 252.

Shreyas Iyer, on 18, and Ravindra Jadeja, on 10, were at the crease after India lost half the side, including skipper Rohit Sharma for 46 and Virat Kohli for 13.

The left-handed Pant raised his fifty in 28 balls — a Test record for Indian batsmen — but soon got caught and bowled to left-arm spinner Praveen Jayawickrama, who has taken three wickets so far.

Rohit, who used his sweep and reverse sweep to good effect against the spinners, missed out on his fifty after being caught at long on while attempting a big hit off Dhananjaya de Silva.

He walked back as a huge roar erupted from a crowd welcoming Kohli, a former captain and star player for the local Royal Challengers Bangalore IPL team.

But Kohli — who has not scored an international century since India's first ever day-night Test in November 2019, and made 23 in the first innings — did not last long as he fell lbw to Jayawickrama.

The star batsman's Test average has fallen below 50 for the first time since 2017 and he has gone without a century for 73 international innings.

In the morning, Sri Lanka, who were already struggling after resuming at 86-6, were dismissed inside half an hour during the first session to concede a lead of 143.

Bumrah added two more to his first day's tally of three wickets to bag his eighth five-wicket haul in 29 Tests and first on home soil.

India lead the two-match series 1-0. — AFP



Grand basketball tourney enters second round



MUSCAT: The 5x5 basketball tournament organised by Grand Global Investment at Oman Club entered the second round at the weekend. The tournament was launched under 'Evaluate Yourself' initiative in cooperation with the Filipino community.

Chief organiser Ali al Alawi, CEO of Grand Global Investment, expressed satisfaction over the tournament's progress.

"We will bring out more exciting basketball action for the fans, the community and the sponsors who support and enjoy good basketball competition. We will work in cooperation with the Oman Basketball Association in this regard," Ali said.

On Thursday, In the first match, Lots Cafe beat Jebel Sifah 86-49. Mateo Singko netted 22 points to become the best player of the game. In the second match, Sagpo



edged out Kabayan Cargo 66-63. Ryan Janda scored 19 points to emerge best player.

On Friday, Mediacom prevailed over Excellence 69-64 points. Jason Cortez top-scored with 22 points. Winning Octal beat SNB 69-64 in the next match. Rommel Alarcon

was best player with 30 points. Lastly, Barangay Ginebra defeated LSB comprehensively with a 24-point lead at 98-74. Anthony Espiritu top-scored with 20 points.

On Saturday, Mustafa Sultan Exchange dominated Jebel Allied Logistics to win the first match

105-52. Jobert Maraya of MSE was selected as the best player. Travel Buddies Holidays came good against Al Khoud Warriors 98-93 in the second match. Robert Millena of Travel Buddies Holidays with 22 points became the best player.

OCRF Sword competitions begin

'AL SAMARIYA', 'ASYAD' AND 'MALLION' WIN TOP PRIZES

WALEED AL JAHWARI
BARKA, MARCH 13

The Oman Camel Racing Federation (OCRF) Sword festival 2022 for camel racing was launched on Sunday at the Royal Camel corps track at Al Fulaij in Barka.

The camel owners and breeders from different governorates of Oman will attend the races for four days (March 13 to 16) under the sponsorship of Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

The first day of the festival includes 23 rounds for 'Hagayeg' category, 2 years old, male (Gedan) and female (Bkar) for a distance of 4 km. Out of 23 rounds, the first three main rounds are with prizes of SUV cars and daggers for the winners, the next five rounds have a car for the first place, the remaining 15 rounds with cash prizes for the winners. In all 23 rounds, the top ten will get cash prizes.

The opening round witness strong competition, where 'Al Samariya' owned by Amer bin Saed al Wahaibi won the dagger and SUV car.

The second round was also won by Saed al Wahaibi through



'Asyad'. 'Mallion' owned by Luiahi al Jahafi claimed top spot in the third round. In the fourth round, 'Alfatena' owned by Mohammed al Judaili took the honours. The fifth round was won by Saed al Wahaibi through 'Shodah'. The sixth round was won by 'Majazef' owned by Zaher al Wahaibi.

In the seventh round, 'Herasa', owned by Humaid al Amri grabbed the top prize. The eighth round was claimed by 'Salhoid' for Saed al Harthy. 'Alshayba' for Mohammed al Masoodi won the ninth round and 'Mallayn' owned by Abdullah al Wahaibi claimed the 10th round honours.

In the 11th round, 'Meshel' for Abdulaziz al Wahaibi finished first.

'Alwasmea' for Hamed al Wahibi won the 12th round, 'Alnayfa' for Matar al Junaibi claimed the 13th round, while 'Munawer' for Saad al Ewasi topped the 14th round.

'Samaha' for Salim al Rushaidi won the honours in the 15th round, while 'Nader' for Shotayet al Wahaibi claimed the 16th round. 'Paroot' won the 17th round for Hamoud al Ghafi. 'Muteba' for Abdullah al Amri claimed the 18th round, while 'Alanood' for Abdullah al Amri finished on top in 19th round. 'Murdef' for Ali al Balushi was the winner of 20th round.

'Murdyah' owned by Jaber al Wahaibi came first in the 21st round, 'Alshahenya' of Masood al



Saadi won the 22nd round, while the last round was claimed by 'Lafee' for Humoud al Wahaibi.

Amer bin Said bin Mubarak al Wahaibi, who grabbed two main round titles in the festival through 'Samariya' and 'Asyad' thanked God for a great race.

"We had focused to win the opening round titles in this festival. We had good preparation for two months for today's races and we thank God for achieving our target," Amer told the Observer.

Amer bin Salim bin Saed al Zari, one of the participant for Monday's rounds with human riders, said: "We thank the government for supporting these races, which are our sources for income also. We are

ready to participate tomorrow in two rounds for 2 km and we wish to win the dagger in both rounds."

"We owned a unique type of camel and one of them won the Land Cruiser in the Al Bashayer Festival last week," he added.

The competitions will continue for the second day on Monday for 'Lagaya' category, 3 years old for 5 km in 15 rounds -- three of them with dagger and car prizes for the winner, the next three rounds with car for the first place, and the remaining nine rounds with cash prizes.

In addition, the races will complete for human riders for 2 km with daggers plus cash for the top winners.



Zakaria al Amri

Al Amri targets podium in Kuwait rally



MUSCAT: Oman rally driver Zakaria al Amri along with his navigator Mohammed al Amri is eyeing a podium finish in Group N of the Kuwait International Rally, the third round of Middle East Rally Championship (Merc).

The Kuwait rally will be held from March 17 to 20.

Al Amri is currently in the second position of group N ranking on his Subaru Impreza (N14) in the championship after finishing Qatar International rally second behind Kuwaiti driver Meshari al Thefairi.

Al Thefairi changed to R5 in Kuwait International Rally on Skoda Fabia, Al Amri has the chance to climb up to lead the group if he finish the rally on top.

The Kuwait rally will resume after three years of stoppage due to Covid-19 pandemic and 2019 late cancellation. It will consist 10 special stages, two of them in desert area.

Young Omani driver Abdullah al Rawahi is in the second place overall in Merc standings behind Qatari superstar Nasser al Attiyah. Al Rawahi will hope to continue his excellent performance to be on podium in Kuwait.

Al Amri, who is supported by Oman United Insurance, Oman United Insurance workshop and Al Fayha real estate development, said he is working with his team to be ready for the rally.

The Kuwait rally is known for its desert and sandy stages.

"I am happy to be a part of Kuwait International Rally, thanks to the supporters and my team to make this participation happen. I'm really looking forward to this race, it is my first time in Kuwait and I hope for good performance with my car and look to end the rally on the podium," the Omani driver said.

"I will do my best to attend all the races of Merc championship if I get enough support. And as you know automobile sport is very expensive and without the sponsorship you cannot do anything," Al Amri added.

Training programme launched to promote physical activity

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, MAR 13

The activities and workshops training programme to promote physical activity 'Ambassadors Sports', was organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth represented by the Department of Physical Activity, from March 13 to 14 at Al Amal Sports Club on Sunday.

The launch of this program came in order to raise awareness among society recognises the importance of physical activity, and its significant positive impact on the health of the individual in the long run and to achieve several goals including the adoption of the concerned authorities in the various areas in Oman.

The programme will deal with the culture of physical activity and its concepts and marketing among members of the community and the strengthening of knowledge and skills development about the concepts of the programme to promote physical activity and how each sector contributes in increasing the number of practitioners of physical activity.



In the Omani society, enabling the target group for training to know the identification of components that must be worked on and planning for their implementation in accordance with the multi-sectoral national plan to promote physical activity, and the training programme will conclude on Monday at 1:30.

The programme targets three candidates from all over Oman working in related sectors such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Sports, Culture and Youth and the Ministry of Health, as it has become necessary to train and qualify a number of candidates in each part of Oman to deliver the correct information, guide and motivate members of society in

order to raise Awareness, which contributes to increasing the practitioners of physical activity in the Oman.

The list of participants in the programme includes: Talal al Mutairi, Abdullah al Hajri, Sultan al Harassi, Fahd al Yaqoubi, Manar al Maamari, Mahmoud al Majrafi, Fayez al Haramashdi, Mutasim al Wahaibi, Mazen al Amri, Ali al Khanbashi, Aida al Muslimi, Abdullah al Kindi, Issa al Awfi and Marwan al Yaqoubi Lubaneh al Amriya, Abdullah al Rashidi, Omar al Yaqoubi, Hisham al Alawi, Hamad al Jufaili, Khawla al Shabiba, Aida al Rahbiah, Ahlam al Hinai and Ahlam al Khamisiya.

The first day of the training



programme included a workshop on physical activity, including its definition, concepts and recommendations.

The workshop was presented by Dr Amal al Siyabiya, Head of the Community and Sector Partnership Department in the Department of Community Initiatives at the Ministry of Health.

The workshop focused on presenting facts from the World Health Organisation about physical activity and the most important diseases associated with the absence of physical activity.

Practicing physical activity, as cardiovascular diseases are behind most deaths from

noncommunicable diseases, as they cause 17.5 million deaths annually, followed by cancers, 8.2 million deaths, then respiratory diseases 4 million deaths, and diabetes 1.4 million deaths.

The workshop also included the most important skills that the participants in the programme will be able to deliver the correct information to members of the community.

After the programme, it is expected that the participants will be able to practice the skills of communicating concepts and effective training in the programme to promote physical activity and to act as ambassadors of sport for all in the governorates to which they belong, where their job is to deliver and deliver workshops and lectures.

Educational awareness about physical activity and how to promote it in society in order to improve and raise the level of awareness and create a general awareness of the importance of physical activity, as there will be a technical committee that will follow up on the outcomes of the training programme.

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Australia’s Fortescue seeks nod to invest in integrated green energy project in Oman

VALUE PROPOSITION: Founder & CEO Dr Andrew Forrest meets Omani Energy Minister, pledges commitment to funding support, offtake, marketing, localization and training, and electrolyser manufacturing

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Further strengthening the Sultanate of Oman’s credentials as an emerging international destination for green energy investments, Australian-based global green energy and metals giant Fortescue has offered to set up a potentially world-scale green hydrogen project to support the nation’s decarbonisation, as well as export, ambitions.

But distinguishing Fortescue’s proposal from the raft of green hydrogen projects garnered by Oman over the past two years is a commitment by the Australian conglomerate to provide an integrated green energy solution encompassing, among other things, the initial funding, technology, equipment for the upstream solar and wind farms, and the required electrolyzers, generators and batteries as well.

And perhaps crucially for the Sultanate of Oman, the developer has also pledged to invest in local manufacturing capacity, primarily of the electrolyzers, drive localization and job creation, and broadly support the nation’s aspirations to evolve into an end-to-end green energy hub.

On Sunday, Fortescue Founder and Chairman Dr Andrew Forrest met with Dr Mohammed bin Hamad al Rumhy, Oman’s Minister of Energy and Minerals, to outline the group’s vision for the Sultanate of Oman, as well as its support for global carbon mitigation efforts.

The meeting was the highlight of a two-day visit that focused



basically on the “greening of Oman, greening of the world, and Oman’s contribution to greening of the world”, said Dr Forrest.

Speaking exclusively to the Observer, Dr Forrest credited the strength of the nation’s political leadership, and not so much its much-vaunted solar and wind resources, for Fortescue’s choice of Oman as its proposed Middle East destination for its regional green energy investment.

“We are choosing countries now not so much on the basis of their wind, solar hydro, gravity, geothermal or other green energy (resources), but we are choosing countries where we can find leadership with the ability to make decisions in the best interest

of their citizens and capture what will be a finite but massive market for green energy,” he said. “Oman has a fossil fuel export business, but it could have a much larger green hydrogen, green ammonia, green energy, and green electricity business.”

While declining to disclose details about the size of the green energy project envisioned in the Sultanate of Oman, Dr Forrest said the proposed venture would be “very substantial” in capacity.

He further noted that, unlike other green energy ventures already announced in recent years which typically involve several years of feasibility studies in addition to financing commitments, the Fortescue

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DR ANDREW FORREST
Founder & CEO,
Fortescue Metals Group

project has all of the requisite resources, including initial funding, ready to be deployed once a green-light is issued by the Omani authorities.

“We came with proposals to start work immediately,” said Dr

Forrest. “We have all the initial funding we need to get going straightaway. We can start as soon as we have a framework agreement.”

Fortescue Future Industries (FFI), a wholly owned subsidiary of Dr Forrest’s Fortescue Group, is currently establishing a global portfolio of renewable green hydrogen and green ammonia projects with a target to supply 15 million tonnes per year of renewable green hydrogen by 2030, rising to 50 million tonnes per year in the decade thereafter.

Welcoming the opportunity to meet with Dr Al Rumhy, the Australian businessman said: “It gave me confidence that selecting Oman as one of the countries of the world which has good leadership — it can make decisions and move ahead — was the right decision. We do believe that having great leadership and a Monarch who can make decisions quickly for his country and has a benevolent heart for his country, that’s a very good system to work quickly within.”

Fortescue’s proposed green energy venture, Dr Forrest said, will not only meet Oman’s zero-carbon energy requirements, but also create ample amounts for export. More importantly, it will open up domestic manufacturing opportunities designed not only to support Fortescue’s project requirements but also to cater to international export markets. In particular, the production of high-tech electrolyzers is envisioned as part of the company’s localisation commitments.

Additionally, the Sultanate of Oman will stand to benefit from the company’s Vocational Training and Employment scheme, which has been successfully implemented in Australia, to prepare young Omanis for jobs across the green hydrogen industry, he stated.

A formal proposal outlining Fortescue’s vision for the Sultanate of Oman will be submitted to the Omani government in the coming days, the CEO added.

ISRTC 2022 to spotlight UN SDG objectives



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 13

The maiden edition of the International Sustainability Resources and Technology Conference (ISRTC) 2022 opens on March 14, 2022 under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, as well as the Ministry of Energy and Minerals. The venue is the splendid Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC).

In a welcome note, Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, said: “In its first edition, the ISRTC is a collaboration between the International Solid Waste Association (ISWA), a renowned global organisation, and The Platform of Transformative Technologies (P4TT), a global think-do tank, identifying and promoting technological breakthrough solutions (moonshots) in support of the Sustainable Development Goals, and UN ESCWA, one of five regional commissions under the jurisdiction of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, dedicated to promote economic and social development of Western Asia through regional and subregional cooperation and integration, UN ESCWA supports the Arab Member States to roadmap their STI strategies for achieving SDGs.”

ISRTC aims to connect local and global stakeholders across academia, industry and public sector to foster constructive debate and enhance cross-collaboration.

Investments in Samayil Industrial City to rise to RO 120m

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 13

Samayil Industrial City, which is part of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), signed an agreement with Fatfat and Yaghi Construction for the establishment of a metal workshop on a 11,225 sqm area the cluster.

It is the sixth industrial

investment firmed up so far this year in the industrial park.

A total of 27 investment applications were received last year, related to industrial, service and commercial projects. Of these applications, 19 projects were localised in the industrial city and are expected to provide 300 new job opportunities.

In 2021, the investment



A TOTAL OF 27 INVESTMENT APPLICATIONS WERE RECEIVED LAST YEAR, RELATED TO INDUSTRIAL, SERVICE AND COMMERCIAL PROJECTS. OF THESE APPLICATIONS, 19 PROJECTS WERE LOCALISED IN THE INDUSTRIAL CITY AND ARE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE 300 NEW JOB OPPORTUNITIES

volume in Samayil Industrial City increased from RO 85 million to RO 115 million, and is expected to touch RO 120 million upon the completion of the new projects this year. Moreover, some existing projects are planning to expand capacity. Omani investors account for 75 per cent of the total investments in Samayil Industrial City.

Lulu inaugurates ‘Ramadan Souq,’ announces Shop and Win promotion

MUSCAT: Ramadhan is fast approaching, and people everywhere are making preparations to welcome the blessed month. Lulu has also rounded up a list of essentials, activities and offers to ring in the season of blessings and to help its customers prepare for a happy and blissful Ramadhan.

The retail giant has also launched “Ramadan Souq” as part of its Ramadhan preparations. The formal inauguration of Ramadan Souq was done by Shaikh Mohamed bin Humaid al Ghabshi, Wali of Al Amerat, on Thursday, in a grand event at the Lulu Hypermarket in the Nujum Mall, Al Amerat. Yahya al Ghadani, Assistant Director General, Al Amerat Municipality and senior officials of Lulu Group attended the event.

Ramadan Souq, at Lulu is a traditional Omani style market, which will have special offerings from dates, honey and other grocery items to household and decoration products, home appliances and furnishings with a wide range of curtains and carpets. All other essentials needed for Ramadhan are available at the Souq.

This year, Lulu has organised a Shop & Win promotion, alongside other multiple offers



and discounts, to give away cash prizes worth RO 100,000 to its customers.

This first-of-its-kind promotion, which will run from March 10 to May 7, 2022, will give 281 customers the opportunity to win amazing cash prizes.

There will be a grand prize of RO 10,000 in cash, as well as weekly cash prizes of RO 5,000, RO 750, RO 500, RO 200, and RO 100, with multiple winners each week.

In addition to Ramadan Souq, Lulu has special offers and discounts on a wide array of products, including groceries, frozen foods, fresh food, hot food & bakery, cleaning & accessories, home furnishings & decor, garments as well as household and home appliances – both in-store and online, for shoppers to take their pick.

Special Ramadhan kits containing groceries, such as rice, milk powder, sugar, oil and other essentials, will also be available at less than the regular market price. Ramadhan is also a time of giving and sharing, for which there are discounts on perfumes, watches, sweet boxes, and assorted gift baskets that serve as easy gifting options for customers keen on making their loved ones feel special.

All Lulu stores will be stocked up with everything that shoppers need under one roof, making it the most affordable one-stop destination for customers. The hypermarket chain also offers a user-friendly online shopping experience where customers can purchase all their Ramadhan essentials right from home.

Speaking about the promotion, Ananth A V, Director of LuLu Hypermarkets Oman & India, stated “Ramadhan is a very special time for our customers, and we are glad to offer them special deals on a wide range of products during the holy month.

We are making all necessary

arrangements to ensure that our customers have a convenient and safe shopping experience. We have also introduced a dedicated Ramadhan section Ramadan Souq to offer customers everything that they need for Ramadhan. We have stocked up on all essential food/ grocery products and ensured that the prices of these are not affected. We wish all our shoppers a blessed Ramadhan.”

Shabeer K A, Regional Director – Oman, said “This year’s Ramadhan promotion is quite different as we have launched a first-of-its kind shop & win promotion to appreciate and thank our customers for their continued support, and as a promise to serve them better in future. The intention behind organising such a promotion is to reward more customers who shop at Lulu.

I am sure the enthusiasm and excitement will continue to build up during the two months of the promotional period,” he added. Lulu stores are designed and tailored to offer customers a complete shopping experience. The deals and promotions rolled out every season are in line with the group’s commitment to constantly devise new strategies to cater to the everyday needs of its customers worldwide.

Enjoy exclusive offers with BankDhofar’s ‘My Offers’ app



MUSCAT: BankDhofar continues to provide its customers with a unique experience through exclusive privileges and offers. The bank has recently introduced its exclusive offers App “My Offers” for BankDhofar debit and credit cardholders.

Elaborating on that, Yousuf Ahmed al Balushi (pictured), Head of Payment Hub at BankDhofar said: “At BankDhofar, we always strive to offer the best banking experience for our customers. We have constantly been providing our cardholders with exclusive offers and benefits, and today we are glad to reveal the App which will enable them to benefit from competitive deals on various categories at the tip of their fingers. I encourage our customers to download the App and enjoy the offers.”

The App is available on “Google Play” for Android devices and on the “Apple store” for Apple devices. BankDhofar debit and credit cardholders may avail discounts and exclusive offers over +2,000 outlets, in Oman and UAE, including shopping, dining, wellness, lifestyle, entertainment, and many more. Customers may avail for buy one get one offers and enjoy discount of up to 50%.

In addition to My Offers App, BankDhofar offers a wide array of exclusive privileges for BankDhofar credit card users, through the comprehensive Rewards Loyalty Programme.

Select NBO branches open 8 am-8 pm



MUSCAT: Continuing to find ways to meet the needs of its customers’ busy lives, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has extended the opening hours of its CBD and Al Khoudh branches. Between Sunday and Thursday, the branches will now be open from 8am until 8pm, with staff able to provide a range of services including account management, card issuance, and inquiries, as well as remittance services through its e-channels.

Tariq Atiq, Chief Retail and Digital Banking Officer at NBO, said, “Although our digital channels are equipped to manage a variety of tasks, many people still prefer to conduct their banking face-to-face. That is why we decided to extend our hours of service at two of our most frequently visited branches.

By doing so we are making banking more accessible for our customers, all while providing them with the best banking experience possible.”

NBO provides a full suite of innovative and high-quality banking solutions through 60 branches across the country, as well as a wide network of 199 ATM and deposit machines. Having built a rich history of innovative banking services that keep pace with the needs of its customers, it continues to modernise and evolve, in readiness for the future.

Enjoy exciting drives in the Toyota Yaris

MUSCAT: The Toyota Yaris, one of the most popular sedans, is exciting and rewarding to own and enjoy. Equipped with impressive power, fuel-efficiency, features and more, the Yaris a great choice for those looking for a mid-size sedan.

Delivering a dynamic driving experience, the Yaris sedan and Yaris hatchback is equipped with 1.5L engine. The 1.5-Litre four-cylinder engine can churn out a maximum output of 106 hp and 14.3 kg-m of torque and is mated to the CVT transmission to offer a smooth shifting experience with



excellent fuel efficiency. Cutting-edge design defines the exterior of the Yaris, with its dynamic angles as well

as sleek headlamps and clearance lamps. The front of the Yaris has a horizontal grille for a wider yet more aerodynamic appearance, while rear combination taillights adorn the rear of the car with a unique look.

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/toyotaomanofficial/. For any further details & to ascertain availability of stocks, please visit your nearest Toyota showroom.

Bank Muscat’s Digital Banking Solutions help enhance efficiencies and transform businesses

MUSCAT: In line with its customer-centric vision of “serving you better, everyday”, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, continues to launch innovative digital banking solutions and services that are transforming banking for its institutional and corporate banking clients.

Over the past few years, the bank has launched a number of digital banking solutions that are able to meet the varied and complex needs of government institutions, large organisations as well as small businesses. Bank’s Corporate Internet Banking, Business to Business (B2B) Connect solution, Direct Debit solution, Virtual Accounts, Sweeps solution, Remote Deposit Capture (RDC), Point of Sales and Payment Gateway are being increasingly leveraged by the

bank’s customers to rapidly transform businesses and enhance efficiencies.

These solutions optimise cash flow, provides complete control and visibility of funds thus making working capital management more predictable.

Speaking about the bank’s cutting-edge digital solutions, Wafa bint Ibrahim al Ajmi, (pictured) Assistant General Manager, Transaction & Government Banking, said: “At Bank Muscat, we succeeded in building a solid technological infrastructure and have created a digital culture that have embedded in all of our operations, products, and services. We are committed to empowering our customers with innovative digital solutions to bring efficiency in their business and achieve scale.

The bank’s digital strategy aims to offer the latest financial



solutions in line with global financial trends to its large number of customers. It is our sustained effort to enhance our value proposition to customers by investing in digital and digitising the entire customer journey, thus improving both value and customer convenience.

We are very happy to note that our Corporate Customers are quickly adopting the bank’s state-of-the-art digital banking

solutions to speed up transactions, optimise the efficiency of their employees, minimise data-entry related risks in payment processes, improve overall security and maintain business continuity. We encourage all our Corporate Customers to use the digital solutions Bank Muscat offers, and enjoy an effort-saving and convenient banking experience.”

As part of our digital journey, the bank has crossed an important milestone with the launch of its next-generation ‘Integrated Transaction Banking Platform’ platform, which offers a comprehensive suite of advanced digital solutions including payments, account services, collections and receivables, liquidity and trade solutions.

The platform delivers a seamless user experience with easy-to-use-interface.

The platform provides full

visibility and control over fund positions across geographies in multiple currencies through account services dashboard.

The collections and receivables solutions provide benefit of flexibility and predictability in collections of funds through Direct Debit and Virtual Accounts resulting in bringing agility in finance and treasury functions.

The liquidity management through Sweeps helps in automating the management of funds efficiently through sweeps mechanism leading to finding a right balance of liquidity for efficient utilisation of funds. Easy reconciliation is supported through straight reconciliation tools available in the platform.

This digital transformation will ease business operations, bring insights, and provides complete control on visibility and management of funds.

Russia seeks Indian investment in its oil and gas sector



Pump jacks are seen at the Ashalchinskoye oil field owned by Russia's oil producer Tatneft near Almeteyevsk, in the Republic of Tatarstan, Russia. – Reuters

NEW DELHI: Russia urged India to deepen its investments in the sanction-hit country's oil and gas sector, and is keen on expanding the sales networks of Russian companies in Asia's third-largest economy. Russia's economy faces its deepest crisis since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, as the West imposes severe sanctions over Moscow's attack on Ukraine.

Some western allies have encouraged India to condemn Russia's actions in Ukraine, after New Delhi abstained from voting against Moscow, a long-standing arms supplier, at the United Nations.

"Russia's oil and petroleum product exports to India have approached \$1 billion, and there are clear opportunities to increase this figure", said Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, according to a statement shared by Russia's Embassy in India late on Friday.

"We are interested in further attracting Indian investment to the Russian oil and gas sector and expanding Russian companies' sales networks in India", Novak told Indian Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri.

The United States this week banned Russian oil imports and Britain said it will phase them out by year-end, decisions expected to further disrupt the global energy market, where Russia is the second-largest exporter of crude.

Indian state-run companies hold stakes in Russian oil and gas fields, while Russian entities including Rosneft own a majority stake in Indian refiner Nayara Energy. Russia expects both countries to continue cooperation on civilian nuclear power, including building new units at a nuclear power plant in the south Indian town of Kudankulam, Novak said.

— Reuters

Construction of Duqm Material Market 40 per cent complete

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 13

The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) is making headway in the construction of a first-of-its-kind materials market, equipped also with workshops, showrooms for retail and wholesale businesses and warehouse facilities.

The Duqm Material Market – the first project of the Sino-Omani Industrial Park in Duqm SEZ - is jointly developed as a strategic partnership between Oman Wanfang, developer and operator of the China-Oman Industrial Park in Duqm, Al Thabat Holding Company, an investment company active in infrastructure activities, and Oman Company for the Development of Special Economic Zone at Duqm (Tatweer).

The first phase of the project is now about 40 per cent complete. In an interview with Duqm Economist magazine, Liu Minghua, CEO of Duqm Material Market Company, said the project



will enable local and international companies to market their products.

"This project is intended to bring a new concept of malls different than other Chinese malls in the Sultanate of Oman. This project aims to bring Chinese commodities and manufacturing capacity to the Sultanate of Oman. Its focus will be mainly on

wholesale demands for local and international markets in terms of exporting products", Phase 1 of the project is being developed on 30,000 sq metres of land out of the total 80,000 sq metres allocated for the complex. Depending upon demand growth opportunities, two more phases are planned as well.

The CEO noted that the project

will target local and regional markets as well as North-East African countries.

As a building materials market, steel is the major range of products that will be traded. It will also feature textiles, which enjoys great demand in Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia. Light chemical products targeted at Somalia will be showcased as well.

Russia says nearly half its gold and currency reserves are frozen, counts on ties with China



A reflection of a yearly chart of US dollars and Russian roubles are seen on rouble notes in this illustration. – Reuters

LONDON: Russia said on Sunday that it was counting on China to help it withstand the blow to its economy from Western sanctions, which it said had frozen nearly half of its gold and foreign currency reserves.

"We have part of our gold and foreign exchange reserves in the Chinese currency, in yuan. And

we see what pressure is being exerted by Western countries on China in order to limit mutual trade with China. Of course, there is pressure to limit access to those reserves", Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said.

"But I think that our partnership with China will still allow us to maintain

the cooperation that we have achieved, and not only maintain, but also increase it in an environment where Western markets are closing."

Western countries have imposed unprecedented sanctions on Russia's corporate and financial system since it invaded Ukraine on February 24

in what it calls a special military operation.

Siluanov's comments in a TV interview marked the clearest statement yet from Moscow that it will seek help from China to cushion the impact.

The two countries have tightened cooperation in recent times as both have come under strong Western pressure over human rights and a raft of other issues. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping met in Beijing on February 4 and announced a strategic partnership they said was aimed at countering the influence of the United States, describing it as a friendship with no limits.

The sanctions on Russian reserves have become one of the most painful measures for the Russian economy.

Siluanov said Russia would be able to withstand sanctions thanks to abundant reserves and was even considering offering Eurobonds to foreign investors once the market volatility subsides. — Reuters

Key conference on Corrosion Prevention to take place in August

Corrosion Conference 2022 Oman Edition

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 13

Innovative Concepts and Al Nimr International Exhibition Organisers LLC have joined hands to organise a key conference and exhibition centring on the lifecycle management of assets. 'Corrosion Conference 2022' – focusing on the theme, 'Corrosion Prevention & Control' – will be held during August 29-31, 2022 at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC). Raya Services is the Associate Partner.

The conference technical programme will feature plenary lectures by distinguished international experts. Various disciplines of corrosion prevention and control will be covered in the different sessions of the technical programme, which will also include pre-conference workshop sessions on different aspects of corrosion control.

The exhibition, running concurrently with the conference, will showcase the latest developments in products, solutions and methodologies in the corrosion industry.

Salim bin Omar al Hashmi, Chairman, Al Nimr Exhibitions, commented: "We are pleased to have entered into a strategic association with Innovative Concepts. This association will mark our presence in the space of Oil & Gas exhibitions that was missing in our portfolio. We are excited to move forward and create a difference in event organising for the Oman market.

Mohit Kapoor, Founder & Director, Innovative Concepts, said: "We are delighted to have entered into association with Al Nimr. As we continue to leverage our strong track record of operations in India and the Middle East, this association will pave the way for other future opportunities in Oman which comes perfectly in line to the company's long-term vision of becoming a stronger global player. We look forward to jointly bring value based events to Oman."

S African airline Comair's fleet grounded indefinitely



An aircraft from South African low cost airline Kulula takes off from Cape Town International airport, in this file photo. – Reuters

CAPE TOWN: South Africa's civil aviation regulator grounded Comair's planes indefinitely on Sunday, saying the airline had not adequately addressed safety issues, in a move that also affects passengers of low-cost airline Kulula and British Airways.

A spokesperson for the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) said it had extended a 24-hour precautionary suspension of Comair's operator certificate indefinitely.

The suspension was meant to end on Sunday, but Comair has not adequately addressed all the necessary safety issues, the SACAA said.

"This morning we communicated to them (Comair) that their air operator certificate is now indefinitely suspended until they close all of the findings", SACAA spokesperson Phindiwe Gwebu said effectively grounding the company's fleet of Boeing aircraft.

Comair said it was unable to confirm when it would start flying again, after working through the night to provide documentation to South African Civil Aviation Authority following a review of certain policies, systems and procedures.

"This is a huge blow to our customers, employees and the flying public as it effectively takes 40% of the capacity out of the market", Glenn Orsmond, Comair Chief Executive said in a

statement.

"The implications for the aviation sector and the country are considerable should the suspension continue for any length of time", he added.

Issuing the precautionary notice on Saturday, the regulator said in the past month Comair had experienced safety problems ranging from "engine failures, engine malfunction and landing gear malfunctions", among others. — Reuters

Russian shoppers
weaken case for
companies to stay

W eaker Russian spending power makes it less compelling for companies to stay. Consumer goods giants Procter & Gamble, Unilever and Nestlé are among those cutting back in the country while others including McDonald's halt operations altogether. They clear the way for local rivals and Asian competitors to pick up market share, but the effects from sanctions weaken the financial logic.

The exodus has been swift. Apple, which can't send the American chips used in its phones and laptops to Russia because of US restrictions, suspended all sales. Nike and IKEA closed stores. Yoghurt maker Danone suspended investments in the country while Unilever also said it would stop importing and exporting to and from Russia.

It's a tougher call for others. No company wants to write off investments or surrender sales, but sanctions were not designed to restrict necessities. That should put less pressure on sellers of food, clothes and the like.

There are broader considerations, however. Even if cheese and coats aren't targeted, their producers have complicated multinational operations. Concerns about getting paid and sourcing imported ingredients will weigh on decisions. Even those merely suspending their Russian business are likely to generate lower sales over time.

Homegrown operators including retailer Magnit will benefit. Likewise, Chinese companies such as Li Ning and Anta Sports Products should be able to take revenue from departing rivals Adidas and Nike. Some outsiders will have their own balancing act: courting Russians while not alienating Western consumers. Uniqlo, the apparel maker owned by Japan's Fast Retailing, on Thursday reversed its original plan to keep selling in Russia.

The risks of staying may not be worth it. Discretionary spending is bound to fall in Russia. Despite the country's large and youthful population, its consumers already have lost 34% of their purchasing power against the yuan since the Ukraine invasion, even with central bank intervention and capital controls.

Things will only get worse as the economy slows. Russia's economy is expected by JPMorgan analysts to contract 35% in the second quarter and 7% for 2022. The 3.1% rebound in real Russian disposable incomes last year is destined to fall again. Under the circumstances, a bigger piece of a smaller pie may be hard to stomach.

— Reuters

No company
wants to write off
investments or
surrender sales, but
sanctions were not
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necessities



BOOMING
BUSINESS

A Bombardier Global 7500 business jet is pictured during a presentation of the brand new aircraft from the global business aviation company at Geneva airport. Airlines may find themselves swept up in unprecedented turbulence, with air travel shunned over climate concerns, plagued by pandemic shutdowns and soaring oil prices, but for private jet operators, business is booming. — AFP

Making Japan productive again



KOICHI HAMADA

The author, Professor Emeritus at Yale University, was a special adviser to former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe

IF JAPANESE COMPANIES AFTER THE PANDEMIC OVERWHELMINGLY OPT TO RESUME THE TRADITIONAL WORK ROUTINE, BOTH PEOPLE AND THE ECONOMY WILL SUFFER. AFTER ALL, IN JAPAN, WE HAVE A WORD FOR “DEATH BY OVERWORK”: KAROSHI

W hen I was teaching at the University of Tokyo in the 1970s, my daily commute lasted three and a half hours. But, one day, it threatened to last twice as long: With labour strikes having shut down public transport, my only option was a much longer route using private trains and subways.

Rather than spend nearly seven hours travelling to and from campus for a faculty meeting, I decided to work from home that day. To my surprise, the decision was met with censure from the dean of the faculty and disapproval from my colleagues.

Perhaps I should have anticipated that response. Japan's work culture is not only notoriously rigid, but also highly social.

At the kaisha (company), people gather and work together – usually for their entire careers. The question is whether the Covid-19 pandemic was the disruption Japan needed to break unproductive habits and inject new dynamism into working life.

The pandemic has undoubtedly transformed work elsewhere, with remote work and Zoom meetings becoming the new normal.

But in a place like the United States, the prevailing working style was already more oriented towards productivity than rigid rules. In fact, part of the reason I assumed that skipping that seven-hour commute would be acceptable was that I had attended an American graduate school.

Years later, when I taught at Yale, a colleague – say, an administrative assistant

– could go on vacation without causing any disruption. They would simply make clear preparations and communicate any relevant information before their departure.

With today's technologies, we do not even need to be on the same continent as our colleagues to work productively with them. And, while some US organisations, such as Goldman Sachs and Netflix, are committed to getting workers back to the office as soon as possible, many others are going fully remote (Slack, Deloitte) or introducing more flexible hybrid employment structures (Google, JP Morgan).

If Japanese companies after the pandemic overwhelmingly opt to resume the traditional work routine – with its long hours, strict schedules, exhausting commutes on packed trains and minimal vacations – both people and the economy will suffer. After all, in Japan, we have a word for “death by overwork”: Karoshi.

This is not the kind of work culture that nurtures the innovative thinking needed to drive progress in the modern economy. But centuries-old traditions are not easy to change, and structural reform tends to progress very slowly in Japan. Fortunately, women leaders, particularly at the municipal level, have been offering reason for hope that Japan can make progress towards building a work culture fit for the 21st century.

Consider Yuriko Koike, the Governor of Tokyo, who previously served in several high-level government posts, including defence minister and national security

adviser. Having studied at the American University in Cairo and worked as an interpreter and journalist, Koike has been exposed to different working cultures. So, when she was serving in Prime Minister Jun'ichiro Koizumi's cabinet, Koike urged her colleagues to depart from tradition by embracing “business casual” attire.

That women have led the way in implementing such productivity-enhancing reforms might partly reflect the fact that, as female politicians, they are already used to breaking convention.

Moreover, they are probably more cognizant of the added challenges facing working women in Japan.

In a country where women bear far more responsibility for childcare and elder care than men do, greater flexibility can be the difference between employment and dropping out of the labour market. With Japan's labour force shrinking rapidly, every increment of support for women's participation has far-reaching economic implications.

For the sake of both economic productivity and human well-being, Japan must continue to update its approach to work, including by embracing more flexible post-pandemic working schemes, accelerating digitalisation, and implementing the Hokkaido government's “flex-time” system more broadly, beginning in Tokyo. Such changes might appear small, but they would help to place Japan on a path towards a more productive and dynamic future.

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Putting out the fire: Fed set to hike rates to tame inflation



HEATHER SCOTT

The author, Deputy Chief Economics Editor at AFP, oversees English-language coverage of the US economy and financial markets, and international economic relations for a global audience

S urging prices for fuel, food and housing have sent US inflation to the highest in four decades, and the Russian attack on Ukraine has made the situation worse, so the Federal Reserve is preparing to take action this week.

But the central bank's efforts to put out the inflation fires will be complicated by the prospect of the war and wide-ranging sanctions imposed on Russia will disrupt trade flows and undermine the US economic recovery.

The policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee holds its two-day policy meeting this week, with an announcement set for Wednesday when it is poised to begin raising the benchmark lending rate that was cut to zero at

the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020.

That would be the first in a series of rate hikes, but amid the rising uncertainty, some economists think policymakers may move less aggressively than previously expected as they weigh the competing forces on the economy.

“The Fed is being tugged in two different directions by the massive increase in energy prices that's taken place over the last few weeks”, David Wilcox, a former senior adviser to three successive Fed chairs, said.

While higher inflation justifies the tightening moves, “the reduction in purchasing power that households are experiencing ... would call for a more accommodative stance of

policy, a more cautious approach”, said Wilcox, now with the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

Markets are pricing in about six rate hikes this year, but Grant Thornton Chief Economist Diane Swonk expects seven, while Wells Fargo raised their forecast from five to six – which would still leave the policy rate below two per cent.

Prior to Russia's attack on Ukraine, some economists said the first move in the tightening cycle could be a half point increase to send a strong signal to markets that the central bank was committed to keeping inflation from raging out of control.

But Fed Chair Jerome Powell last week declared his intention to

call for a quarter-point increase – a stunningly direct comment from a central bank chief, who typically keeps their plans close to the vest.

Wilcox said he was “thunderstruck” by the statement which tamped down speculation of a more aggressive move. While Wilcox remains cautiously optimistic that inflation will come down, he stressed that the Fed will have to be “absolutely clear” that it will act as forcefully as necessary should price pressures accelerate.

And in the short-term, economists warn that things will get worse before they get better.

“The disruptions we are seeing are adding fuel to a well kindled inflation fire that goes well beyond the energy sector and could touch much more of our daily lives”,

Swonk said.

“The timing couldn't be worse for the Federal Reserve, which is already chasing inflation for the first time since the 1980s”, Supply chain snarls caused shortages of key products as the global economy was returning to normal from the pandemic, and while the increases initially were driven by cars and housing, energy prices have spiked as well, especially in the past month.

The annual consumer price index in February hit 7.9 per cent.

“Just about everything that makes up inflation is going bonkers to the upside”, Adam Sarhan of 50 Park Investment said, adding he fears it's the kind of rapid increase that can lead to a recession.

— AFP

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Observer

HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

US HEADS CHARGE SUPPORT FOR PEACE IN YEMEN

NEW YORK - Justice Secretary William Barr said on Thursday that the United States will continue to support the Saudi-led coalition against the Houthis in Yemen, despite reports that the coalition is planning to withdraw from the conflict.

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

features

Take advantage of the gifts of Oman's desert

By Samuel Kutty

A country blessed with a dazzling array of natural and cultural acmes, the Sultanate of Oman is known for its rugged coastlines and vast deserts. The country's natural resources are a huge draw for visitors within and coming from outside the country.

Its natural beauty is visible in its mountains, oases, plains and its seas.

"For many visitors, a trip to the Sultanate of Oman is incomplete until they've experienced the country's vast desert landscape", exclaims a report by Lonely Planet.

One of the most sought after travel magazines in the world, Lonely Planet has published its annual Best in Travel 2022 list of the world's hottest destinations. The travel guide has put the Sultanate of Oman at seventh position among the top ten countries to visit in 2022.

Specifically, says the global trip adviser, "If your interest lies more in the desert than beaches, take Highway 23 from Sur and leave the coast behind to drive inland towards Sharqiya Sands".

With undulating ochre dunes stretching as far as the eye can see, Sharqiya Sands also known as Ramlat al Wahiba, a sun-baked desert that stretches some 12,500 sq km across the country, is named

after the Wahiba tribe, a Bedouin society that dates back many millennia.

The desert landscape of the Wahiba Sands is renowned within Oman for its remoteness and is home to some of the most spectacular dunes in the entire country.

These dunes are still populated by the numerous tribes that have called this desert home for many generations. Further along the edges of the desert, the coastal region is dotted with small settlements, where many fishermen make a living farming the abundant marine life present in the Arabian Sea.

While the trip ultimately takes the visitor to the desert, the drive there is quite beautiful, with views of the rugged Hajar Mountains and interesting stops along the way.

Stop at Al Saleel National Park, a nature reserve of acacia forests, parched plateaus and rocky wadis where you can spot Arabian gazelles, red foxes and wolves.

Next, take the 30 km road to Wadi Bani Khalid, where freshwater springs feed palm plantations surrounding small villages. Join picnicking families, explore a cave, swim in a series of blue-green pools or hike along the canyon.

Also known as the Empty Quarter, Sharqiya Sands, where rippled orange-red dunes, some as high as 100 metres serve as an astonishing introduction to Rub Al Khali, this desert continues into the

neighbouring United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Saudi Arabia, and it's the largest sand desert in the world.

"To truly witness the serenity of the desert, spend a night at one of the many desert camps in the area. Beyond sand boarding and camel rides, you'll experience Bedouin traditions around a bonfire, taste local cuisine and sleep under the stars", inspires the Australian trip adviser.

There are a handful of permanent camps, where rustic cabins are tucked between the gentle slopes of a few dunes, and guests gather for post-dinner stories around carpets laid around a fire.

At the same time, it warns, "you can drive in the desert at Sharqiya Sands only if you have a 4WD. If you're driving a 2WD or aren't confident about driving in the desert, ask your desert camp operator to pick you up from the nearby towns of Bidiya or Al Wasil".

Lonely Planet's annual Best in Travel lists are based first on input from a vast web of contributors around the world and then whittled down by a panel of travel experts to ten countries, ten regions and ten cities.

Chosen for topicality and unique experiences, Lonely Planet's annual Best in Travel lists are based first on input from a vast web of contributors around the world and then whittled down by a panel of travel experts to ten countries, ten regions and ten cities.



READ



ALL OF YOU EVERY SINGLE ONE

BY BEATRICE HITCHMAN

An epic novel about family, freedom and how true love might survive impossible odds. Set in the looming threat of the First World War, Hitchman's intelligent, engrossing novel follows the intertwining lives of three women in the intellectual hothouse of Vienna in 1911.

ENTERTAINMENT

Bob Dylan to release new book in November

NOBEL LAUREATE and folk-rock legend Bob Dylan will release a new book on songwriting in November, his publisher Simon and Schuster said Tuesday.

"The Philosophy of Modern Song" -- slated for publication on November 8 -- is the first book of new writing Dylan has put out in nearly two decades, since "Chronicles, Volume One" came out in 2004.

The beloved American poet and music artist began writing his latest book in 2010, and it's comprised of more than 60 essays, musing on artists such as Hank Williams and Nina Simone, along with the craft of songwriting, his publisher said.

"The publication of Bob Dylan's kaleidoscopically brilliant work will be an international celebration of songs by one of the greatest artists of our



time," said Jonathan Karp, head of Simon and Schuster, in a statement.

"The Philosophy of Modern

Song' could only have been written by Bob Dylan. His voice is unique, and his work conveys his deep appreciation and

understanding of songs, the people who bring those songs to life, and what songs mean to all of us."

Rumors of a "Chronicles, Volume Two" have swirled for years but fans will now have "Philosophy" to tide them over until -- or if -- that edition comes into public existence.

Dylan, who burst onto the folk scene in New York in the early 1960s, has sold more than 125 million records around the world.

The 80-year-old has maintained a rigorous touring schedule, and is currently on a global jaunt set to continue into 2024.

In 2020 he released his 39th studio album, "Rough and Rowdy Ways," to critical acclaim.

He notably won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2016 "for having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition." — **AFP**



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AROUND THE WORLD

CELEBRATION

Lanterns light the way as Basel carnival comes back



REVELLERS IN FANCY costumes lit up the freezing streets of Basel in the early hours of Monday as Switzerland's biggest carnival returned for the first time since 2019.

The three-day event, which is one of the best-known carnivals in Europe, was cancelled in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

But tens of thousands of people were out in the streets of Switzerland's third-biggest city before dawn to see the "Morgestraich" lantern-lit procession get things back with a bang.

At 4:00 am the city lights were turned off and the drum majors yelled "Morgestraich, vorwärts marsch!", giving the forward march order to set off, in the local Basel dialect of German.

The streets were transformed into a river of painted lanterns, colourful masks and creative costumes flowing through the northern city to the sound of pipes and drums.

The world's biggest Protestant carnival, which features on Unesco's intangible cultural heritage list, starts at 4:00 am on the first Monday after Ash Wednesday and lasts for 72 hours.

The annual event is dubbed "the three most beautiful days" in the city, which borders Germany and France and straddles the River Rhine.

The reasons why the carnival takes place a week later in Basel than in other cities in Switzerland and Germany have been lost over the centuries.

It is not known how far the Basel carnival dates back. A devastating earthquake in 1356 destroyed the city's archives, and the earliest document referring to the carnival dates from 1376.

There were fewer large lanterns this year than would normally be seen, as the green light for the 2022 carnival came late, meaning that not all the parading groups had time to get ready.

Some presented the lanterns they had prepared for the cancelled 2020 edition.

Though Switzerland has lifted almost all of its Covid-19 restrictions, the virus has not gone away.

The carnival's traditional big parades on Monday afternoon and Wednesday afternoon have nonetheless been cancelled this year.

2020 marked the first time in around a century that the carnival had been called off — the last time was due to the Spanish flu pandemic. — AFP

CULTURE

Comely camel pouts its way to record beauty prize in Qatar



THE LIPS POUTED to perfection, the neck was long and poised, and the judges were sure that no Botox was involved as they awarded Qatar's largest cash prize for a camel beauty contest in front of an enthusiastic crowd.

Hundreds of spectators, who poured into the isolated desert venue in Land Cruisers and Jeeps, threw up their scarves in celebration as the animal, named Mangiah Ghufra, was declared winner of the one million riyal (\$275,000) top prize at the first Qatar Camel Festival late on Tuesday.

The animal paced nervously in the paddock as his owner Fahed Farj Algufrani collected the cheque and told how it had taken "years" to prepare the prize-winning beast.

Previous festivals were more local but now Qatar has allowed in camels

from across the region, drawing breeders from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates with millions of dollars in prizes at stake.

Organisers were on alert after a recent festival in Saudi Arabia, where 43 camels were disqualified after it was found they were given drug enhancements to make their lips droopier and their humps more shapely, according to official media.

"Work was done to combat tampering, which is the use of Botox and fillers and other things," said Hamad Jaber Al Athba, the chief festival organiser.

"We had a professional veterinary staff and advanced equipment and we worked to combat tampering and limit the spread of cosmetic materials," he said. The camels are put through X-rays and other monitoring.

"Corruption was fought seriously at the Qatar Camel Festival."

To pick the winners, the judges look at "the size and beauty" of the head, the length of the neck and the position of the camel's hump. "These are the most important points," said Al Athba.

For black camels the size of its head can be a deal-breaker, but for white camels, the consistency of the colour counts.

Authorities in Qatar and its neighbours are seeking to give traditional practices a higher profile as they compete with mega events such as football's World Cup and Formula One grands prix.

Al Athba said the festival had been a success, drawing Qatar's growing urban population as well as its desert-dwelling Bedouin.

— AFP

A LOOK AT THE ACADEME



Dr. Zainab Al-Ajmi
zeinbf@moe.om

Students' Satisfaction in E- Learning Environment

LEARNING SATISFACTION is a significant aspect of promoting successful educational processes. Basically, satisfaction on the part of the students plays an important role when teachers, their course programs, and the general quality of educational programmes are evaluated. Students' satisfaction is an important indicator of educational quality. Consequently, educational institutions with online learning have come to realise the importance of students' satisfaction in the e-learning environment.

E-learning includes all forms of electronic-based education, such as app-based learning, online training, web-based education programmes, hybrid learning and blended learning are the popular terms used in online teaching, where educators teach remote and in-person students at the same time, using tools like any e-learning platforms hardware and software, as a mediator to accomplish the teaching. Ordinarily, if students conducting e-learning programs are satisfied, they will continue using their motivation to achieve learning goals.

In addition, the factors of the effectively learning environment assumed to play a role in determining students' satisfaction, for instance: feeling safe, communication, interaction and psychosocial support in the classroom. These are the conditions for learning, which are the elements of a school climate that students experience personally, as they contribute to students' educational achievement and success, and strong presence of positive students, teachers, and their peers and minimal involvement in unhealthy behaviours.

Unlike conventional face-to-face learning in the classroom, conducted with the guidance of a

teacher, online learning focuses on the Internet and the development of information technology, tools, learning systems through online and multimedia interactions. Although online learning can be convenient by allowing time flexibility, independence of learning and eliminating geographical barriers, there are disadvantages including reducing social interaction, high costs, tutorial requirements and ease of access to technology (Suryani& Sugianingrat, 2021).

According to (Sun et al., 2007) studies' results of students' satisfaction with learning indicate factors affecting e-learning quality include the speed and reliability of Internet services and the quality of device hardware (microphone, earphone and electronic whiteboards) and the quality of the programmes used. Similarly (Chua& Montalbo, 2014) stated that software tools with user-friendly characteristics, short steps in operation and easy-to-operational software, will encourage students to engage positively in e-learning. The findings further show other factors for instance enjoyment, ease to use by the students, providing content that exactly fits their needs, providing sufficiently, being simple and understandable.

To conclude, as studies have proven e-learning environment in comparison to traditional classroom greatly affects the students' satisfaction. In order to achieve great learning outcomes, curriculum planners and e-learning programmes organisers should always take into consideration student satisfaction. Therefore, the need for a periodic evaluation is beneficial to assess and identify student satisfaction in the e-learning environment.



'Twenty Lessons in April:' Leading the Sultanate of Oman and Omanis to greater heights

THE DOYEN OF self-improvement, Richard Templar, advocates making good decisions as being the key to a good life, and Muscat-based Human Resources Manager, now author, Said bin Nasser al Hosni follows a very much similar path in his recently released "Twenty Lessons

not only a month but influences the whole of my life. Each topic is drawn from something in my personality and has inspired me to challenge today's normal." He went on to explain that so much of what is in the twenty lessons is a reflection on his own life and experiences, which have

the youthful, vibrant, yet remarkably conservative generations.

"There were trials," he said of his journey as an author, "but this time I have made it successfully. To be an author is an amazing feeling and it wasn't an easy journey, but it was certainly interesting. As an author I have learned a lot, and I could know myself more and more, for as I mentioned in my book, "writing is one of the great ways to uncover and unearth deep emotions you have kept all these years within you". He also spoke of wanting to empower people to see beyond negative experiences, and to "treat themselves properly when faced with challenges in their life, and to flip bad situations to the positive side, in their best interests."

Launching at the Muscat Book Fair of 2022, Al Hosni confessed to surprise at the level of enthusiasm and positive response from readers. "Of course, it is what you want, but my expectations were tempered by the challenges

we have all faced under the pandemic. The sweetest response though came from my youngest daughter, who made my day when asked for a book to give her English Teacher as I could see in her eyes how proud she was of her Dad."

His future writing and publishing plans include "To write book about Human Resources Management, which is my deepest passion, knowing how it so greatly affects all society, and to have a continuing series of books on the lessons of life, and work." As if to offer validation of his work too, the month of April is traditionally known as the month of rebirth, regrowth, and renewal, and its name is derived from the Latin 'aperire,' which means to open.

Al Hosni's parting advice could reasonably be seen then, as to be open to "treasuring those around you, for their values, and the value they add to your life, as they will lead you to greater heights."



in April.'

Al Hosni challenges many of the more passive characteristics of the Sultanate of Oman's people in presenting bite-sized life and work philosophies, that draw positive responses from the culture and traditions, the faith, and the psyche, of everyday Omanis. Most, happy in their everyday lives, meandering between home and work, family, and friends, rarely think of possibilities beyond the horizons of each day, and that is where Al Hosni comes in. He pushes, prods, and offers his first twenty lessons to shape ones-self towards being the best version of themselves.

The allusion to April in the book's title refers to the month of the author's birth, which he shares with Leonardo da Vinci and William Shakespeare, of which he says, "I believe that where I am today is all linked to my childhood, therefore April for me is

taken him from the tiny hamlet of Ghail Al Shibool, in Suhar, to prominence in his profession, and now, as an author.

His charming, smart wife, and three 'cute' daughters, and his responsible position are just what you see on the surface, but Al Hosni also gives generously of his time to the society and community, and particularly, the young people, being passionate about his workshops for students, jobseekers, and employees. There he utilises his own skills of observation, communication, reason, and problem-solving, to stimulate the fearlessness of his own experiences, within

