

COMMERCIAL REGISTRATION FEE CUT FOR FOREIGN INVESTORS

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM TO MEET OMAN VISION 2040 GOALS

GROOM CITIZENS TO POSSESS SKILLS AND CAPABILITIES

HM COMMENDS THE STATUS OF TEACHERS AND THEIR ROLE

PRIORITY FOR VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

NEED TO COMPLETE SPORTS STRATEGY TO RAISE EFFICIENCY



FACILITIES FOR INVESTORS IN SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

NATIONAL POLICY TO REDUCE IMPORTS, BOOST EXPORTS

GOVERNORATES TOLD TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR POTENTIAL

HM REVIEWS REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

EXEMPT COMPANIES FROM PROVIDING TEMPORARY INSURANCE

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq chaired a meeting of the Council of Ministers at the Cabinet's building in Muscat on Sunday.

At the outset of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan gave thanks and praise to Allah the Almighty for the riches which He has bestowed on Oman, its loyal people and all those residing on its land. His Majesty the Sultan prayed to the Almighty to perpetuate these bountiful gifts, stability and peace on

this benign land and all countries of the world. He pleaded to the Almighty to bless the efforts of all diligent people and grant them good luck and success.

Then, His Majesty reviewed local and international conditions.

As part of His Majesty's constant care and follow-up of the educational system - its development and upgrading to meet the goals of Oman Vision 2040, and its aspirations to efficiently groom generations of citizens and prepare

them to possess skills and command capabilities in various fields, His Majesty the Sultan gave directives to the Council of Ministers to go ahead with the application of the system of "Vocational and Technical Education", which aims to enable students of Grades 11 and 12 to choose educational tracks within a range of professional and technical fields, including engineering and industrial specialisations.

The Council of Ministers approved

that plan within the framework of the study presented by the Ministry of Education, which included new educational tracks and curricula designed to keep pace with the requirements of sustainable development and future skills. This is in addition to restructuring the educational system's configuration, so that the "Vocational and Technical Education System" would begin to be implemented, and the study plan applied, with effect from the next

academic year 2023/2024.

His Majesty the Sultan commended the status of teachers and their active role in the upbringing of generations of Omani citizens, instilling in them sublime values and virtues, the Council of Ministers approved the allocation of 'Omani Teacher's Day' - which falls on February 24 every year - as an official holiday for all teachers and occupants of relevant supporting jobs in public and private schools.

Total FDI hits RO 25 billion in 2021

MUSCAT: The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at current prices in 2021 stood at to about RO 33,909.8 million, up by 16.2 per cent compared to 29,187.2 million in 2020 said the bulletin "Foreign Investment Statistics in the Sultanate of Oman" issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The bulletin indicated that the percentage of foreign investment flows of GDP amounted to 12.6 per cent in 2021 compared to 0.7 per cent in 2020. The total foreign investment in the Sultanate of Oman hit RO 25,045.2 million in 2021 compared to RO 20,781.7 million in 2020 up by 20.5 per cent.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) constituted the largest share of total foreign investments by 70.9 per cent, and other foreign investments accounted for 23.9 per cent, while foreign



portfolio investments accounted for 5.2 per cent.

The NCSI bulletin added that the total FDI in 2021 stood at RO 17,762.6 million, while foreign portfolio investments amounted to RO 1,290.2 million. Other foreign investments stood at about RO 5,985.4 million. Foreign investment in financial derivatives fell to reach RO 7 million.

The bulletin said that the

volume of financial flows in 2021 stood at RO 4,263.5 million, indicating that the oil and gas sector had financial flows of RO 3,124.1 million, followed by the financial intermediation sector with an amount of RO 418.1 million, then the transport, storage and communications sector with RO 300.4 million, and the manufacturing sector with RO 112.1 million. — ONA

Honourable Lady patronises over passing out of female police

Her Highness the Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, presided over a celebration of the Royal Oman Police (ROP), marking the passing out of a new batch of female police. The graduation ceremony was held at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences in the Wilayat of Nizwa in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah on Sunday.

DETAILS ON P4





HM presides over Council of Ministers meeting



FROM PAGE1

PRIORITY PROJECTS

Within the context of conclusions reached by the Council about the “Investment Laboratory in The Sports Sector” - its proposed initiatives and investment projects, His Majesty issued directives to study related priority projects and to provide necessary facilities for investors, being partners in sports development. His Majesty the Sultan underscored the significance of developing the sports sector and upgrading it. He also stressed the need to complete the sports strategy being prepared to raise the

efficiency of young people and explore their skills, with effect from the early educational stages.

As part of its keenness on all that would contribute to consolidating the national economy, the Council of Ministers laid emphasis on enhancing the local content of Omani industries, as well as the preparation of a national policy to reduce imports and increase exports. The Council also stressed the allocation of a percentage of development spending to projects that contribute to achieving in-country value (ICV) for the national economy, besides generating employment opportunities for citizens.

WINNING PROJECTS

His Majesty the Sultan valued the efforts undertaken by the governorates to enhance economic activities through the establishment of various projects, festivals and other events. In this context, he underlined the need for the governorates to demonstrate their potentials and to compete with each other to present the best proposal for development projects that can be implemented in one of their respective wilayats, so that those projects can be evaluated in accordance with specific regulations, determinants and conditions to be announced later. The step provides for funding the top three winning

projects.

In complementation of the efforts made by the government to enhance the role of the private sector in developing the national economy, encouraging the establishment of businesses, attracting more investments and increasing competitiveness in government tenders by providing an opportunity for a larger number of companies, the Council of Ministers decided to cut down commercial registration fee for foreign investors and equate them with Omani investors, according to specific regulations to be determined by the authorities concerned.

On the other hand, the Council approved

exempting companies contesting tenders from providing temporary insurance (the bidding guarantee submitted as a condition for entering the tender).

Then, His Majesty the Sultan spoke about regional and international affairs and Oman’s bilateral relations with a number of Arab and friendly countries with the objective of meeting the common interests and aspirations of nations.

At the conclusion of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan touched on a number of aspects of concern to the country and the citizens. His Majesty wished all further success towards the realisation of Oman’s progress and prosperity. — ONA





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INITIATIVES TO ENHANCE EDUCATION, ECONOMY AND INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES



EMPLOYMENT:

FUNDS FOR PROJECTS CONTRIBUTING TO ICV
The Council stressed the allocation of a percentage of development spending to projects that contribute to achieving in-country value (ICV) for the national economy, besides generating employment opportunities for citizens.



DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS:

TOP THREE WINNING PROJECT PROPOSALS TO RECEIVE FUNDING
The governorates urged to compete with each other to present the best proposal for development projects that can be implemented in one of their respective wilayats, with the top three winning projects to be funded



INVESTMENTS:

REGISTRATION FEES REDUCED FOR FOREIGN INVESTORS
The Council of Ministers decided to reduce commercial registration fees for foreign investors and equate them with Omani investors, according to specific regulations to be determined by the authorities concerned.



INSURANCE:

TEMPORARY INSURANCE REQUIREMENT WAIVED
Companies contesting tenders were approved for exemption from providing temporary insurance (the bidding guarantee submitted as a condition for entering the tender)

ECONOMY:



REDUCE IMPORTS AND INCREASE EXPORTS
The Council of Ministers emphasised enhancing the local content of Omani industries, as well as the preparation of a national policy to reduce imports and increase exports.

EDUCATION:



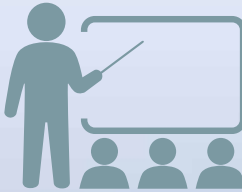
INTRODUCE VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL SYSTEM
The Council of Ministers approved the application of the system of "Vocational and Technical Education" to enable students to choose educational tracks within professional and technical fields, with effect from the next academic year 2023/2024

SPORTS:



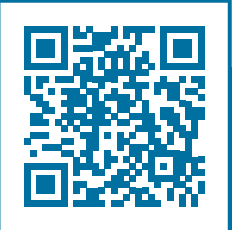
NECESSARY FACILITIES FOR INVESTORS
His Majesty issued directives to study related priority projects and to provide the necessary facilities for investors in the sports sector, being partners in sports development.

TEACHER'S DAY:



HOLIDAY FOR OMANI TEACHER'S DAY
The Council of Ministers approved the allocation of "Omani Teacher's Day" as an official holiday for all teachers and occupants of relevant supporting jobs in public and private schools





Honourable Lady presides over graduation ceremony of female police cadets



NIZWA: Her Highness The Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman presided over a celebration of the Royal Oman Police (ROP), marking the passing out of a new batch of female police.

The graduation ceremony was held at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences in the Wilayat of Nizwa in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah on Sunday.

Upon the arrival of HH The Honourable Lady, the columns of the graduate officers gave

salute to the chief guest. Then, the commandant of the graduates' column stepped forward, requesting HH The Honourable Lady to give the signal to start the military parade.

Passing in front of the Royal Dais, the column performed the military salute to HH The Honourable Lady. Then, top graduates came forward to receive the awards from HH The Honourable Lady.

Then, the column of the passing out batch chanted the ROP Anthem "Humaat Al Haqq" and performed

the oath of allegiance, proclaiming thrice Long Live His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander. Then, the female graduates gave salute to HH The Honourable Lady signalling the conclusion of the parade.

The ceremony was attended by their highnesses female members of the Royal family, female members of the State Council, female officials, senior ROP officers, educational, health and social female cadres in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah.

— ONA





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His Majesty greets Dominican President

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Luis Abinader of the Dominican Republic on his country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his best wishes to President Abinader and the Dominican people. — ONA

Possible weather disruption from upper trough

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Oman Met Office's weather forecast has predicted that the Sultanate of Oman's atmosphere might be affected by a short wave from the upper trough, starting on Monday evening until Thursday. "From February 27 to March 2, there could be an impact on the weather conditions due to the upper air trough. It might cause cloud advection over the northern governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. There are also chances

From February 27 to March 2, there could be an impact on the weather conditions due to the upper air trough

for isolated rains, as well as convective clouds over Al Hajar Mountains that could generate thunderstorms which could also result in downdraft wind," explained the weather forecaster at the Directorate General of Oman Meteorology. The temperature is not expected to

go down as the trough is not deep and is currently only in one layer. Otherwise, the general weather forecast from Oman Met Office states mainly clear skies with high clouds advection over the northern governorates with late night to early morning low-level clouds or fog patches over parts of South Al Sharqiya, Al Wusta, Al Dhahirah and Dhofar governorates and parts of the coastal areas of Oman Sea. Expected winds along the coastal areas of the Oman Sea are expected to be northeasterly to easterly to northeasterly,

light to moderate. While over the rest of the governorates, the wind will be southerly to southeasterly, light to moderate and occasionally fresh over the desert or open areas. Sea conditions are expected to be slight to moderate along the coastal areas of the Arabian Sea with a maximum wave height of 1.5 metres and slight along the rest of the coasts with a maximum wave height of 1.25 metres. Caution alert is for dust rising over desert and open areas and possible reduction in horizontal visibility during fog.

CAA takes action to mitigate aircraft noise pollution

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 26

MUSCAT: Residents who live near airports may find aircraft noise disturbing, but the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is taking steps to address the issue. As the regulatory and legislative authority of civil aviation affairs in Oman, the CAA has implemented a number of measures to mitigate the noise pollution caused by airplane movements. According to the CAA, operational procedures for densely populated areas near Muscat International Airport have been adopted since the opening of the new airport in 2018. These procedures are designed to ensure that the civil aviation sector in

Oman is up to date with the latest technologies and developments that promote a safe, efficient, and effective aviation environment. To reduce noise pollution in the area, the CAA has implemented the following measures: The landing direction of airplanes will be changed from southern Al Mawaleh to the sea adjoining Azaiba area during the period from 9 pm to 5 am. However, during fierce weather conditions that necessitate flight safety, landing will take the old runway towards southern Al Mawaleh. The revamp of the southern runway of Muscat International Airport will contribute to shifting air traffic to other tracks that help alleviate aircraft noise.

Super carriage aircraft will only be allowed to land at Muscat International Airport if national interest requires it. All airplanes are mandated to follow the low noise procedures issued by the authority on October 11, 2018, which include take-off and landing procedures aimed at achieving minimum noise over sensitive and populated areas. Pilots are not allowed to use the thrust reverse technique while landing, which significantly reduces noise created by airplanes. A specific site has been allocated to operate engine testing within a period not exceeding 5 minutes or with higher power than those used in normal operating and moving conditions at the Muscat International Airport.

Grand opening of Arab Open University on March 1

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 26

The Arab Open University – Oman will celebrate the grand opening of its new campus in the Wilayat of Al Seeb in Maabala, on March 1. Representatives of the Open University, UK, will also participate in the event. The AOU's new campus opening will be held under the auspices of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, in the presence of Prince Abdulaziz bin Talal al Saud, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Arab Open University. The new campus has been built as per the latest architectural design standards and is characterised by Omani Islamic style of architectural design. The facade is decorated with Mashrabiyyas representing Islamic architecture. The Arab Open University is a non-profit educational institution



owned by Arab Gulf Programme for Development (AGFUND), is based in Riyadh. Its activities are funded by the Gulf Cooperation Council. The Ministry of Social Development represents Sultanate of Oman in as a member of the programme. The AOU headquarters is located in Kuwait with eight branches, including the Sultanate of Oman. The Arab Open University in the Sultanate of Oman offers programmes in Education, Law, Computer Sciences, and Business Studies. It attracts groups of

diploma, bachelor, and master's students confirming the university's ability to implement its various programmes by the principles of local and international academic and institutional accreditation. The AOU-Oman holds local institutional accreditation from Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA), and international institutional accreditation from university's strategic partner the Open University in United Kingdom.



الشركة الوطنية العمانية للاستثمار والهندسة (ش.م.ع.ع)
Oman National Engineering & Investment Co. (S.A.O.G)

COMPANY REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the Executive Management of the Company, I am pleased to welcome you and present the main lineaments of the Company's performance during the fiscal year 2022 along with the audited financial statements.

THE COMPANY'S PERFORMANCE & FUTURE VISION:

While the impact of Covid-19 pandemic faded away, the local markets started to freshen up, thanks to the increased oil price, and the government started to float new tenders, some of it has been awarded to the company. Moreover, some clients continue to delay payment of outstanding, compelling the company to look for bank loans to finance its operations, losing the opportunity to add such finance costs to its annual profit. The company is adopting all necessary legal measures to recover its due outstanding.

During the year, the BOD in coordination with an expert entity has organized two sessions to draft the company five years strategy. The strategy is based on diversification and innovation in order to shift the company activities to an advanced stage that copes with the latest developments, including focusing on BOO and other PPP model projects. In addition to restructure the Organisation in order to add more flexibility to the operations and increase the competition and expansion capabilities.

The electronic payment sector considered being the backbone of billing division. The bill & pay mobile application operation touched monthly transactions up about 580K by the year-end. Multi-tasking Kiosks, which are assembled and programmed by ONEIC, are now everywhere in Oman. About 50 new kiosks were added during the year and the number of operating kiosks in Oman was 220 kiosks by the end of the year providing various services including printing of Mulkiya, insurance, telecommunication, and other services. New services are expected to be added during 2023. As disclosed earlier, ONEIC has obtained PSP license initial approval from CBO to launch its electronic wallet during this year, which shall improve the company's presence in the financial sector and improve the company operations and revenue.

On the other hand, with respect to engineering sector ONEIC continues to implement its approved strategy focusing on the field of BOO projects based on its successful implementation of recent BOO projects, which are now contributing to the company's revenue and profit, in line with its diversification strategy, the company also expected to be awarded major BOO projects in Oil & Gas sector.

It is worth mentioning that the total contracts in hand by the end of 2022 amounted to about RO (110) million. ONEIC is now strategically focusing on selective contracts, as the market is facing a liquidity crunch and many clients are not good paymasters.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE:

The company was able to deliver reasonable results in 2022. Despite many challenges, the company has managed the profit after tax of OMR (2.1) M.

DONATIONS & CSR ACTIVITIES:

The company used to initiate a plan every year to pay out the amount approved by AGM. The plan took into consideration diversification and the distribution of the geographical locations of the social activities. The 15K was paid out as per the approved plan considering the diversification of charity activities and covering all the Sultanate governorates.

DIVIDEND:

The Board of Directors is pleased to recommend to the AGM to distribute dividends to the shareholders as bonus shares equal to 5% of the capital (5 Baisa to each share) AND BONUS SHARES EQUAL TO 7.14% of the capital (1 share to each 14 shares) to increase the paid-up capital to (15) million Omani Rials.

During the past five years, the company disbursed dividends as follows:

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Dividend %	20	10	14.0909	8.33	12.6932
Cash %	10	10	5	-	5
Bonus Shares %	10	-	9.0909	8.33	7.6923

INTERNAL CONTROL SYSTEMS:

The Board of Directors (BOD) is continuously reviewing and developing the internal control systems and procedures to ensure the orderly and efficient conduct of the business. The BOD's effort in this area is supported by the direct supervision of the Audit Committee over the Internal and External Auditors. Currently, the company has a full-fledged Internal Audit Unit with qualified staff to assist the Audit Committee and Executive Management in strengthening the internal controls and mitigating potential risks. The Audit process covers the entire controlling systems of the company including IT, administrative and financial systems.

Note:

- Details of Accounts are available with MSM
- The complete Accounts will be sent by mail to any Shareholder who requests them, in either Arabic or English, as requested, within 7 days of receipt of the request.

O.N.E.I.C. P.O. Box - 1393 P.C. 112, Ruwi Muscat, Sultanate of Oman Tel: 24396201, Fax 24396499, Email: oneic@oneic.com.om



www.oneic.com.om



Tender NumberT-05-2023

Tender Announcement

"Mwasalat" invites professional firms for the following tender:

Tender NameSupply of Brude Marine Evacuation System Chutes for 3 Vessels

Project SummarySupply of Marine Evacuation System Chutes, type Brude MES Chute Transfer unit for the HSC Vessels to replace the current Chutes

Tender FeeNIL

Grade & SpecialtyQualified & Specialized Companies in the Field with approval of manufacture & IACS

Start date for tender document distributionMON, 27th February 2023

Last date for tender document distributionMON, 6th March 2023

Last date for submissionSUN, 19th March 2023

The Tender documents may be shared by email during official working hours between 9:00A.M - 2:00 P.M.
Tenderers are requested to share commercial registration (CR) & business card through email tenders@mwasalat.om and tender number as the subject of email. Tender Document shall be shared by email
The submission Date / Time shall be on or before the deadline specified in the above table.
Participants should submit their offers in the tender box located in the head- quarter National Ferries Company L.L.C (MWASALAT) at Ghala, Muscat (Jabal Shams Building 5th floor), Any proposal submitted after the given Date & Time shall be rejected.

"Mwasalat" Head Quarter, Ghala Tel: +968 1551 P.O.Box: 911, Al Khuwail, PC: 133, Sultanate of Oman

For more information please send to: tenders@mwasalat.om



معرض مسقط
الدولي للكتاب - ٢٠٢٣
Muscat International
BOOK FAIR - 2023
محافظة جنوب الباطنة (ضيق الشرف)
٢٢ فبراير - ٤ مارس 22nd February - 4th March

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PLAY AND LEARN THROUGH DIVERSE ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMMES

CHILDREN CAN EXPERIENCE A WORLD OF ARTISTIC, CULTURAL, AND SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES

MIBF IS THE PERFECT PLACE TO EXPLORE OMAN'S RICH HERITAGE AND CONNECT WITH ITS UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT

WITH A WIDE RANGE OF ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING READING AND WRITING, SCIENCE EXPERIMENTS, WORKSHOPS, AND INTERACTIVE SHOWS, THERE'S SOMETHING FOR EVERY CHILD TO ENJOY

CHILDREN'S PAVILION IS THE PERFECT PLACE TO ENCOURAGE AND HIGHLIGHT YOUR CHILD'S TALENT

FROM ROBOTICS AND INNOVATIONS TO CHEMICAL REACTIONS AND 3D PRINTERS, THERE ARE PLENTY OF FASCINATING ACTIVITIES TO ENGAGE AND INSPIRE CHILDREN



**BALQEES HAMOOD
AL ARAIMI**

THERE are many activities for children and families at the 27th edition of the Muscat International Book Fair. Children's pavilion, which comprises theatre section, reading, writing and art corner, science corner and the Children's Museum, is the biggest crowd puller at the Book Fair.

Saud bin Bader al Bahri, General Supervisor of the Children's Pavilion, said: "We have made some modifications and developed the Children's Pavilion this year to keep pace with the various other activities that are carried out in the fair to make the venue comfortable and enjoyable for children and families."

"We have witnessed a large turnout of the general public and schools since the beginning of the exhibition, and the turnout is still increasing with every passing day," he added.

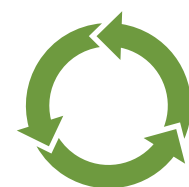
In the theatre corner, many plays dealing with children and reading activities

are carried out. It also has educational workshops, entertainment and scientific activities, in addition to many audio-visual activities for children of different age groups. The idea is to let them enjoy, encourage, extend care, and highlight their talent.

The Science Corner hosts many scientific activities such as robotics, innovations, chemical reactions, 3D printers, and many other interesting scientific activities for children.

Atika bin Abi Sufra School in Al Musannah, is participating in the Science Corner with Green Schools Programme. Rima bint Khusaib bin Hamdan of the school says, "The school is environment friendly and is keen on applying sustainability in all scientific and applied aspects that promote sustainability. The programme includes various activities, including afforestation and renewable energy, waste management, recycling of used papers and clothes, waste classification and recycling of environmental raw materials."

Dr Wafaa bint Salem al Shamsiyah, from



**ATIKA BIN ABI SUFRA SCHOOL,
AL MUSANNAH**

HAS ALWAYS BEEN KEEN ON APPLYING SUSTAINABILITY IN ALL ITS ACTIVITIES. WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE PRESERVATION OF OUR ENVIRONMENT AND TO ENCOURAGE OUR STUDENTS TO BE RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS

**RIMA BINT KHUSAIB
BIN HAMDAN**
School representative

the Organising Committee of the Children's Corner, said: "The Children's Corner at the Muscat International Book Fair attracted several institutions, including official and private ones, in this session. The focus is there to create diversity in the activities and programmes that the child longs to know. The Omani heritage inspires some activities to enhance the identity and consolidate the connection with the Omani environment and its various characteristics for the child."

**CULTURAL AND
SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES**

The Children's Museum at the Muscat International Book Fair has a variety of artistic, cultural and scientific activities, as well as interactive shows in the theatre in science and a session with the story. The supervisor of the Children's Museum, Salwa al Rashdia, said it was the second year for the Museum to participate in the MIBF. She said activities organised by the Children's Museum are interactive. It evoked a good response from the visitors of all age groups.



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In brief

■ NEW DELHI



INDIAN OPPOSITION POLITICIAN ARRESTED IN GRAFT PROBE

Indian federal investigators arrested a leading politician from an up-and-coming opposition party on corruption allegations, his organisation said.

The Aam Aadmi party (AAP) is seeking to establish itself as the main opposition to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and has already won control of Punjab state and the capital Delhi.

Manish Sisodia, Delhi's deputy chief minister and seen as party leader Arvind Kejriwal's right hand man, was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) after almost eight hours of questioning.

— AFP

■ ATHENS



ALMOST 100 FOREST FIRES ERUPT DURING WINTER WEEKEND

Firefighters responded to 96 forest and bushland fires in Greece over the weekend, even though there are officially still three weeks left of winter.

The worst blaze erupted on the north side of the Peloponnese peninsula, at the tip of the mainland, where aircraft were used to contain the flames, state broadcaster ERT reported on Sunday. So far, no people have been harmed.

Meteorologists cited unusual weather conditions as the cause: In large parts of Greece it has rained very little this winter.

Greece and other countries in southern Europe have seen particularly devastating fire seasons in recent years. — dpa

■ NAIROBI



JILL BIDEN SAYS HORN OF AFRICA NEEDS MORE DROUGHT RELIEF

US First Lady Jill Biden visited drought-affected communities in Kenya and appealed for wealthy nations to give more as the Horn of Africa suffers its driest conditions in decades.

Biden concluded her two-nation tour of Africa by calling for a greater spotlight on the record-breaking drought which threatens 22 million people in Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia with starvation.

"We cannot be the only ones. We have to have other countries join us in this global effort to help these people of the region," said Biden at a relief point in Kajiado, a bone-dry county south of Nairobi. — AFP

Nigeria tallies votes in tight presidential election

LAGOS: The day after the scheduled presidential election in Nigeria both late voting and counting continued.

The electoral authority INEC said the first pooled results from the 36 states were expected on Sunday.

At the same time, voting continued in several states after polling stations were delayed or unable to open on the actual election day on Saturday due to the security situation as well as logistical problems. Voters queued late into the night.

A record number of over 87 million of the approximately 220 million residents were registered to vote and had collected their eligibility cards.

In addition to the president of Africa's largest economy, more than 400 seats in two houses of parliament are also being re-elected. The vote was accompanied by isolated attacks and raids on polling stations in different parts of the country.

President Muhammadu Buhari is stepping down after two terms in office.

The election is in part seen as a reckoning with his ruling APC, as both the security situation and the economic situation have deteriorated during Buhari's eight years in office.

For the first time since Nigeria's



Mounted police are seen outside the Independent National Electoral Commission Collation Centre in Kano, Nigeria. — AFP

return to democracy in 1999, a third party stands a good chance alongside the candidates of the two dominant parties.

The most promising of the 18 candidates for the office are Bola Tinubu from the ruling APC and Atiku Abubakar from the opposition party PDP. Peter Obi of the small Labour Party is also popular, especially in urban areas

and among the youth. Meanwhile, Nigerians waited anxiously for first results on Sunday after a tight presidential election among three front runners that has energised Africa's most populous nation, where many long for change.

The voting was carried out mostly peacefully, despite some ransacked polling stations and long delays. Voters stayed up

late at night in many locations to observe the count and "protect" the ballots.

Nearly 90 million were eligible to vote on Saturday for a successor to President Muhammadu Buhari, with many Nigerians hoping a new leader will do a better job tackling insecurity, economic malaise and growing poverty.

— dpa/AFP

Palestinians, Israel to deepen ties to avert violence

AMMAN: Israeli and Palestinian officials pledged after rare talks in Jordan on Sunday to prevent more violence, which has surged this year.

After "thorough and frank discussions" that included officials from Egypt as well as the United States, the Palestinian and Israeli sides "reaffirmed the need to commit to de-escalation on the ground and to prevent further violence," a joint statement said.

Earlier, Jordan hosted a meeting between top Israeli and Palestinian officials on Sunday to try to halt surging violence, an official said, as Washington and its Arab allies seek to defuse tensions that have led to concern of a wider escalation.

The discussions are part of stepped-up Jordanian diplomacy with Washington and Egypt to address violence, as anxiety mounts of escalation in the run-up to Ramadan that begins in late March. — Reuters

Migrant shipwreck in southern Italy kills 60

ROME: Sixty people died, including some children, when a wooden sailing boat carrying migrants crashed against rocks on the southern Italian coast early on Sunday, authorities said.

The vessel had set sail from Türkiye several days ago with migrants from Afghanistan, Iran and several other countries, and crashed in stormy weather near Steccato di Cutro, a seaside resort on the eastern coast of Calabria.

The provisional death toll stood at 60, Manuela Curra, a provincial government official, said.

Eighty-one people survived, with 20 hospitalised including one person in intensive care, she said.

One survivor was arrested on migrant trafficking charges, the Guardia di Finanza customs police said.

Cutro's mayor, Antonio Ceraso, said women and children were among the dead. Exact numbers for how many children had died were not yet available.

His voice cracking up, Ceraso told the SkyTG24 news channel that he had seen "a spectacle that you would never want to see in your life ... a gruesome sight ... that stays with you for all your life".

Wreckage from the wooden gulet, a Turkish sailing boat, was strewn across a large stretch of coast.

Curra said the vessel left Izmir in eastern Türkiye three or four days ago, adding that survivors had said some 140 to 150 were on board. The survivors were mostly



Rescuers arrive at the beach where bodies believed to be of refugees were found after a shipwreck, in Cutro, the eastern coast of Italy's Calabria region. — Reuters

Italian Prime Minister Meloni expresses 'deep sorrow' for the deaths, blaming human traffickers and vows to block migrant sea departures

from Afghanistan, as well as a few from Pakistan and a couple from Somalia, she said, adding that identifying the nationalities of the dead was harder.

"Many of these migrants came from Afghanistan and Iran, fleeing conditions of great hardship", Italian President Sergio Mattarella said.

Initial reports from ANSA and other Italian news agencies, spoke of 27 bodies washed up on the beach and more found in the water.

Ignazio Mangione, an Italian Red Cross official, told SkyTG24 that very few of the children believed to have been on the boat survived.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni expressed "deep sorrow" for the deaths. Blaming human traffickers, she vowed to block migrant sea departures to prevent such disasters.

Her right-wing administration has taken a hard line on migration since taking office in October, mostly by restricting the activities of migrant rescue charities with tough new laws that won final parliamentary approval on Thursday.

Meloni accuses charities of encouraging migrants to make the dangerous sea journey to Italy, acting as so-called "pull factors".

Charities reject this, saying migrants set off regardless of whether rescue boats are in the vicinity. — Reuters

Thank you schooling messengers

Teachers are the ones because of whom we are today! They are the ones who first inspired people to have dreams and dream who they would to be in future. Their most common question to students was “What would you like to be in the future?” This was the spark of inspiration, which paved way for most of the students and in fact, it provoked their emotions and changed the way students look at life instead!

As Oprah Winfrey said: “For everyone of us who succeeds, it is because there is somebody there to show us the way. The light doesn’t always necessarily have to be from your family; for me it was teachers and schools.”

Some were not even aware of the word “Dream”, but teachers taught us the charm and the spirit behind it. To some people, teachers were the first who enlightened them about the future and what ambitions they want to dream of!

Teachers are always the first who believe in their students; it is teachers who pave their paths. Without their support and guidance, most of the students could have lost their way.

During the early days of school, teachers instill hope and confidence in students and make them dream for the future. With their sincere interest to bring the brighter future even closer, little kids are longing to live their dreams ahead of time. All dreams have started since teachers believed in their students and stimulated them to plan their dreams and future.

Every student dreams to become someone different; a doctor, a policeman, a pilot, an engineer, a teacher, and other professions. This is how one’s dream started, but it even becomes bigger over time. Teachers just flame the dreaming flares, though some have not had what they dreamed of. However, they get the spark, which all started by a teacher’s inspiration; thanks to teachers for giving them the spirit!



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

TEACHERS SPARE NO EFFORT TO TEACH EACH EVERYONE OF US WHO ARE TODAY SERVING THE NATION IN DIFFERENT SPHERES

Thus, it is teachers who contribute in shaping students’ personalities and future.

According to a Turkish saying, a good teacher is like a candle, it consumes itself to light the way for others. Regardless how positive and negative the attitude of a teacher is, he/she could definitely make a difference in one’s life. Students kick off their journey in life with their teachers since the early years of childhood. For some kids, the journey starts at the age of five or earlier, perhaps at the kindergarten, while others start with grade one at the age of six.

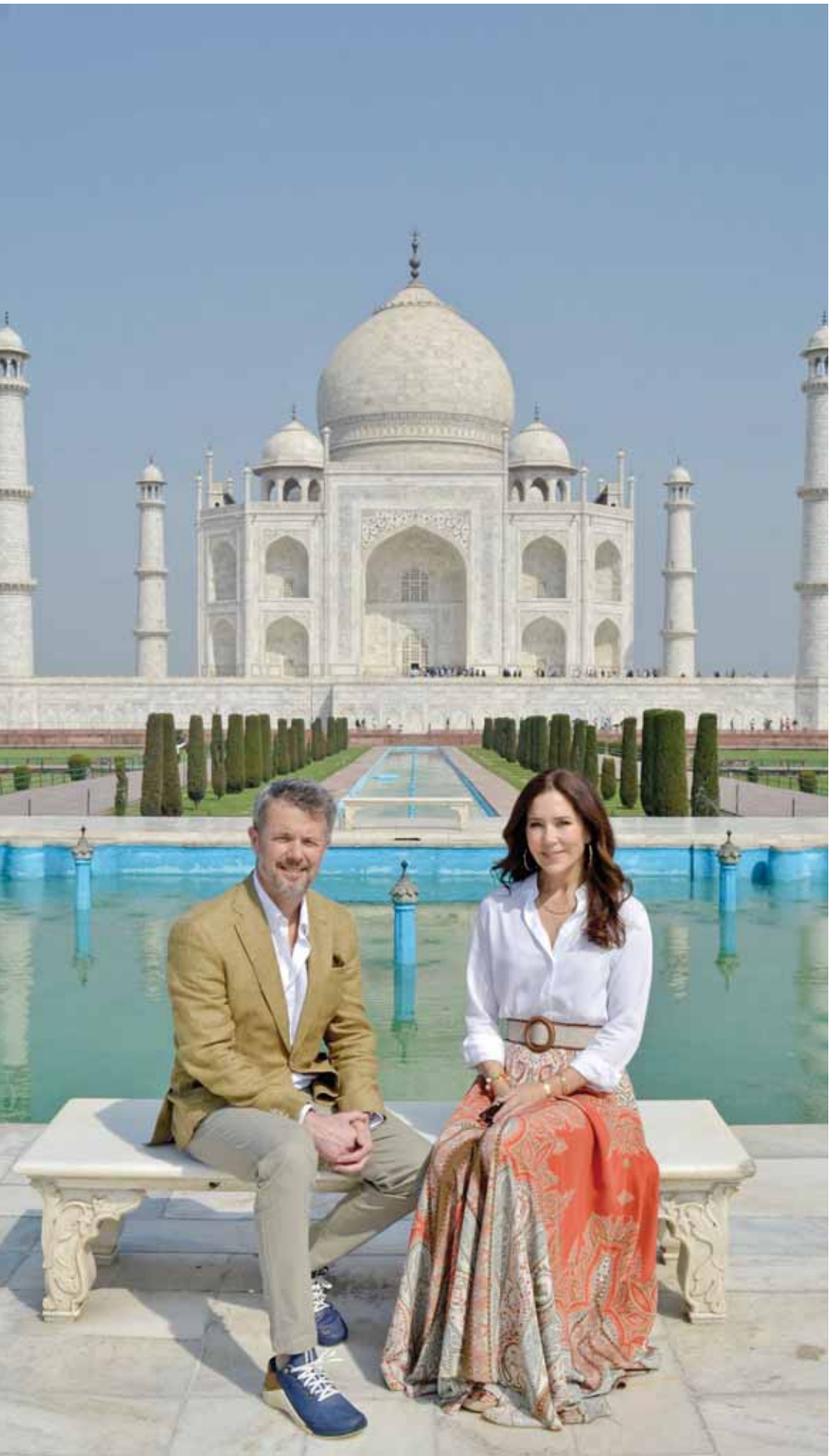
Teachers spare no effort to teach each everyone of us who are today serving the nation in different spheres. That is all because of teachers; they made good citizens handling various positions starting from leaders and decision-makers, ministers, businessmen to other ordinary employees. As the nation observes Omani Teacher’s Day, it is time for all of us to express our gratitude, appreciation and sincere thanks to all teachers for their efforts, dedication and sacrifices.

To all teachers, you cannot see the fruits of a day’s work. It is invisible and remains so for ages. This is how it works; the outcomes are not always tangible. However, teaching is a profession that teaches all other professions. All successful people have been schooled by teachers either at schools, colleges or universities. Teachers had started students’ mission of acquiring knowledge from all the experiences that students have come across throughout their years of study. Every teacher takes a hand, opens a mind and touches a heart.

Dear teachers, you have always left no stone unturned to feed students with knowledge and enlighten them with experiences. You are more than just teachers, but fathers, brothers and friends. Likewise, female teachers are mothers, sisters and friends for the girls. As today, schools are celebrating the Teacher’s Day,

Thank You Teachers!

ONE FOR AN ALBUM!



Denmark’s Crown Prince Frederik (left) and Crown Princess Mary pose for pictures in front of the Taj Mahal in Agra, India, on Sunday. – AFP

High time for a high-seas treaty

Our planet’s tightly woven, interconnected natural systems are vital to life and livelihoods. Yet with each passing season, we are witnessing the crushing realities of the climate crisis and biodiversity loss. In its 2023 Global Risks Report, the World Economic Forum warns that six of the top ten risks in the coming decade will stem directly from the loss and degradation of nature. In the face of extreme storms and floods, devastating droughts and wildfires, ocean dead zones, and food scarcity, demands for systemic change have reached a crescendo. Unless we embark on a new course, our crises will only deepen.

Despite the challenge of reaching global agreements in such a fractured world, we have cause for optimism. In late 2022, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) achieved a breakthrough after languishing in relative obscurity for many years. At the COP15 summit in Montreal in December, countries completed four years of negotiations and approved the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), the most significant intergovernmental agreement on biodiversity in over a decade.

Under the GBF, governments have committed to protect 30 per cent of the world’s land, freshwater,



Jennifer Morris

The writer is CEO of The Nature Conservancy

AS WITH MANY COMMON RESOURCES, THE HIGH SEAS ARE NOT YET PROTECTED BY A TRULY COMPREHENSIVE, AGREED-UPON FRAMEWORK GOVERNING CONSERVATION AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES BEYOND NATIONAL JURISDICTIONS

and ocean by 2030; improve the sustainability of agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, and forestry; and restore 30 per cent of degraded ecosystems. The framework establishes multiple pathways for scaling up solutions within and across borders. It includes down payments, financial commitments, and an implementation plan, and it is already spurring action by corporations, governments, and civil society.

But critical work remains to be done. On February 20, UN member states gathered in New York to finalise a key piece of the ocean-governance puzzle: a new treaty to conserve and sustainably manage marine biodiversity in the high seas. The high seas cover two-thirds of all ocean and almost half the planet, and are home to up to ten million species — many of them still unidentified. But much of this biodiversity remains out of sight and thus out of mind. As a result, life in this vast expanse is constantly threatened by weak regulation of activities such as shipping and fishing, and by poor enforcement of existing laws.

The high seas belong both to everyone and to no one. As with many common resources, there is no comprehensive, agreed-upon framework governing conservation and the sustainable

use of the ocean outside of national jurisdictions. But since the same large petrels, leatherback turtles, sharks, and whales that we seek to protect on and off our shores spend much of their lives in the high seas, there is an obvious need for more robust global strategies to protect, manage, and monitor these areas.

Marine life does not recognise legal jurisdictions. For the conservation of migratory species and transboundary ecosystems to be effective, we urgently need a global high-seas treaty, which in turn will contribute to the implementation of the CBD’s ambitious new framework. Without it, the CBD will have much less chance of success. That is because, currently, there are no global powers to establish marine protected areas in the high seas.



Marine life does not recognise legal jurisdictions.

Even though the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea obligates states to assess the impact of activities in their waters, there is no global mechanism for assessing activities in the high seas. Instead, there is a patchwork of assessment mechanisms for different bodies that regulate parts of the high seas, but no minimum standards that ensure quality or consistency.

So, what needs to happen at the summit in New York? For a new high-seas treaty to make a difference, it must achieve multiple objectives. The first is to provide countries with the legal powers to establish and manage a representative network of marine protected areas in the high seas, as this is essential to protecting at least 30 per cent of the ocean by 2030.

Moreover, we must dramatically strengthen governance of human activities that affect the high seas, by establishing robust, modern environmental assessment and management standards. And we need to ensure sufficient financial, scientific, and technical support for states that require it.

We will also need a mechanism for sharing the benefits of marine genetic resources fairly and equitably, as well as a voting procedure when all good-faith efforts to reach consensus have been exhausted. Otherwise, one or two countries will be able to block progress even on issues that are supported by the overwhelming majority.

Only through a strong high-seas treaty and bolder action within existing treaty bodies (especially fisheries-management agreements) can we protect the health of the ocean. We must adapt quickly to new activities like deep-sea mining, as well as to increased shipping collisions with large animals and rising waste, noise, and artificial-light pollution. This requires managing the whole ocean in a more comprehensive fashion. With ocean health declining, maintaining the status quo is not a viable option.

sport

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DEFENDING CHAMPIONS PUMP IN THREE GOALS

Seeb thrash Al Suwaiq to enter final

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, FEB 26

Defending champions Seeb capitalised on the opportunity of Al Suwaiq losing a player early in the match to pump in three goals and march into the final of the HM's Cup on Sunday.

At the Al Rustaq complex, Seeb opened the account through mercurial forward Abdulaziz al Maqbali towards the end of the first-half.

Ahmed al Busaidi made it 2-0 in the 62nd minute while Mohsin al Ghassani confirmed the Seeb triumph in the 71st minute. Seeb will take on Al Nahda in the final at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher on March 9.

Al Nahda beat Al Rustaq in the first semifinal 1-0 on Saturday.

The first-leg matches of both the semifinals ended in goalless draws. In the 24th minute, Ismail Kuwako got his second yellow of the match for an 'unsporting' foul on Seeb forward Abdulaziz al Maqbali.

Referee Ahmed al Kaf flashed a red card as Al Suwaiq lost one player on the ground.

Ten minutes later, Seeb got a free kick on the left flank but could not utilise it effectively.

Seeb attacked more vigorously in the coming minutes with Salah al Yahyai unleashing a firm shot which went over.

Seeb missed a golden chance in the 39th minute when a dangerous cross from Salah al Yahyai was shot out by Mohammed al Habsi.

Essam al Subhi, who tried to break through to the Seeb penalty box, was well contained by the Seeb defence in the

first-half. Abdulaziz al Maqbali showed there is still vigour in him when the veteran forward sliced a header past a diving Al Suwaiq goalkeeper Fayeze al Rushaidi in the additional time of the first-half.

Like in many occasions it was yet another brilliant work of assist from Salah al Yahyai on the left flank, which led to the goal for Seeb.

SECOND RED

Al Suwaiq came close to score an equaliser in the opening minutes of the second-half. Abdullah al Habashi's free-kick just outside the box was brilliantly parried away by Seeb goalkeeper Ahmed al Rawahi to avoid the danger.

Seeb captain Eid al Farsi got a yellow card for arguing to the referee over the free kick.

Juma Al Habsi came in for Mohammad Ramadan next.

After an Al Suwaiq attack, which threatened the Seeb defence, Seeb organised a quick counter to increase the lead.

Midfielder Ahmed al Busaidi was accurate from the left side of the Al Suwaiq penalty box to place the ball past Fayeze al Rushaidi as Seeb went 2-0 up in the 62nd minute.

Al Suwaiq lost their second player on the ground when Saud al Habsi was shown a red card by referee Ahmed al Kaf for bringing down Abdulaziz al Maqbali close to the penalty box in the 70th minute.

Mohsin al Ghassani's firm free kick from outside the box found the Al Suwaiq net for the third time in the 71st minute.

Al Suwaiq could only defend themselves against further goals in the remaining time as Seeb completed the proceedings with a 3-0 score to cruise into the final.

44Cup Oman returns to Muscat for season curtain raiser

MUSCAT: Oman Sail will host nine of the world's best crews as this year's 44Cup kicks off at Al Mouj Muscat Marina from March 1-5, 2023. The 44Cup Oman marks the start of a five-event season taking place over the next seven months. This will be the 16th season of racing between the high-performance owner-driver one design monohulls and will once again bring together the worlds of sailing and business.

Oman's own team, Oman Sail, is taking part in the first leg of 44Cup this year, following a successful debut at last season's 44Cup Oman finale. The crew will be skippered by Musab al Hadi, one of Oman's most accomplished sailors, with Hussain al Jabri serving as tactician and Nasser al Mashari as main trimmer. Waleed al Kindi, Haitham al Wahaibi, Akram al Wahaibi, Raad al Hadi, Yassir al Rahbi, Abdulrahman al Maashari,

Ali al Balushi, Ahmed al Hasani and Ibtisam al Salmi, the first female Omani sailor to race in the 44Cup, all add valuable experience to the team. They will be supported on shore by Sulaiman al Manji and Piri Nagy.

They will be joined by eight teams from six countries and principalities across Europe, including last season's winners Charisma representing Monaco, runners-up Ceeref powered by Hrastnik 1860 from Slovenia, and third placed Team Nika also from Monaco. Joining them will be Aleph Racing of France, Sweden's Artemis Racing, Black Star Racing Team from Switzerland, and Peninsula Racing and Team Aqua from Great Britain.

The 44Cup allows amateur owner drivers to race against some of the world's best sailors in some of the most beautiful and diverse sailing venues around the



world, and the 44Cup Oman will be a unique platform for Omani businesses to meet the owners of the 44Cup boats.

Maryam al Jadidi, Oman Sail's Senior Project Manager, said, "We are delighted to host the 44Cup Oman again this year

and welcome the teams back to Muscat once more. The race is an ideal opportunity to show Oman's capabilities as a world class host venue, share the sport with visitors from around the world, and strengthen bonds between sport and business in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040. Together with our partners, we are looking forward to another exciting exhibition of high-performance racing at Al Mouj Muscat Marina."

Jessica Gray, 44Cup Communications & Event Manager, said, "This year's 44Cup promises to be more exciting than ever before with new venues, new crew members and new boats launching. Muscat is hosting the first event of the season and we are look forward to a week of good competitive racing in a wonderful venue. In December 44Cup season finale proved that Al Mouj Muscat Marina is the ideal venue to experience the racing from the shore, and this season's opening event will give spectators another chance to get close to the action."

Racing at Al Mouj Muscat Marina begins on March 2 after a practice day, and continues until

March 5 when the prizes will be awarded. Each race typically lasts 40 minutes or less, with team owners at the help and professional sailors deciding tactics.

The action is intense, and teams are frequently separated by just seconds at the finishing line.

The second event in the 44Cup season will be in Marstrand, Sweden, from June 28 to July 2, and then Cowes, UK, from August 9-13. The fourth event of the season will be at the Alcaidesa Marina in Spain, next to the border with Gibraltar, before heading to Calero Marinas in the Canary Islands for the season finale.

The 44Cup Oman is presented by official partners Oman Sail, organisers of the event, and host venue Al Mouj Muscat, in association with Automotive partner Mercedes-EQ, and official supporters Transom Catering and Tanuf Water.

‘Omsyah’ wins car and icon at OCRF final festival

WALEED AL JAHWARI
BARKA, FEB 26

The final competition of Oman Camel Racing Federation (OCRF) festival was launched on Sunday as part of its annual programme of the season 2022-23 at Royal Camel crops track on Barka.

The camel races, under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, will continue until March 1 at the Barka race course. The races will witness participation of more than 1,600 camels from the various governorates of Oman. It includes 65 rounds, divided into six categories, ‘Hagayeg’, ‘Lagaya’, ‘Ythaa’, ‘Thanaya’, ‘Alhaw’ and ‘Ardah’.

The opening day witnessed 27 rounds, for ‘Hagayeg’ category, which is two years old, for 4 km.

Seventeen rounds were held in the morning with cash prizes while nine rounds were staged in the afternoon with cars and icons.

‘Khalapah’ was ranked first in the opening round in the festival. The camel, owned by Hamoud al Wahaibi, finished the race distance in 6 minutes and 23 seconds. The second round honours was claimed by ‘Muqam’, owned by Ahmed al Deree. The third round was won by ‘Moteeb’ owned by Hamdan al Jahafi, ‘Mashkora’ owned by Amer al Selaimi claimed fourth round, the fifth round was snatched by ‘Awayed’ owned by Asaad al Jahafi, the sixth round was won by ‘Mukalef’ owned by Mohammed al Saeedi, the seventh round was claimed by ‘Al kaydah’, owned Ali al Hashmi, the eighth round was won by ‘Altheab’ owned by Salim al Gafali and the ninth round prize was taken by ‘Gazer’ owned by Saleh al Wahaibi.

‘Hamlool’ claimed the tenth round owned by Hamed al Amri, ‘Noof’ won the 11th round owned by Amer al Amri, ‘Alderaa’ ranked the 12th round owned by Ali al Malki, ‘Zafranah’ finished first in



13th round, owned by Hamoud al Wahibi, ‘Shaheen’ owned by Nasser al Harsosi won the 14th round.

The 15th round saw ‘Abaad’ taking the top spot, owned by Nasser al Wahibi, the 16th round was claimed by ‘Muteeb’ owned by Abdullah al Awasi, the 17th round was won by ‘Alshahenyah’ owned by Abdullah al Amri and the last round was claimed by ‘Shaded’ owned by Zaher al Wahibi.

Hamoud bin Tuwairish al Wahibi, the first winner in the festival and the owner of ‘Khlaba’, said: “We thank the God first and Oman government for the support in whole season, especially in the final festival. This achievement is just a beginning, we have targets in the car and icons rounds too.”

“Our camels were ill during the last festival in Al Bashayer. But now they are fit and we hope to achieve the sword,” he added.

In the afternoon session for the same category with cars and icons, ‘Omsyah’ was ranked first to take the first car and icon, owned by Mubarak al Jedealy. The second car was won by ‘Qadam’ owned by Abdullah al Jahafi, the third car was won by ‘Ganayem’ owned by Khalid al Rebaei, the fourth car was claimed by ‘Takreem’ owned by Dawood al Hedawi, the fifth car was grabbed by ‘Fyadah’, owned by Hamed al Wahaibi.

The sixth car was won by ‘Esaaf’ owned by Al Theeb al Gahafi, the seventh car was snatched by ‘Ashwaq’ owned by Ali al Wahibi, the eighth car was claimed by ‘Mothehelah’ owned by Gedayer al Wahibi and the last car was taken by ‘Al Dhab’ owned by Ebrahim al Gefali.

On Monday, the competition continues in the 17th round for the ‘Lagaya’ category, which is 3 years old, for 5 km, with seven cars and two icons, and cash prizes for the top ten. In addition, there are two rounds for human riders (2km) for an icon and a car.

Sri Lankan Embassy to hold cricket tourney on April 28



SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 26

The Embassy of Sri Lanka in the Sultanate of Oman will organise the Sri Lankan Independence Day Cricket Tournament on April 28.

To be held as part of the yearlong special commemorative events of celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Independence of Sri Lanka, the matches will take place at at Oman Cricket (OC) grounds in Al Amerat between 7 am and 10 pm.

The Sri Lankan Embassy in Oman will be having a series of commemorative events for celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Independence of Sri Lanka from this month till January 2024.

The celebrations officially commenced with the flag hoisting ceremony at the embassy for the 75th Independence Day on February 4.

The cricket tournament is

organised by the Embassy of Sri Lanka in coordination with the Sri Lankan expatriate community in the Sultanate of Oman to revamp the splendid memories of Sri Lankan expatriates’ school life in Sri Lanka.

The BPOS Global headed by Anselm Perera in Oman will be the event manager for this tournament.

The organising committee of the tournament has introduced several sponsorship packages: the event partner as well as gold, silver, associate, media, medical, beverages, and food partners for contributing their support to make this event successful.

There will be 12 teams participating in the tournament. Each team will represent a school in Sri Lanka or a group of schools.

Each team will nominate 13 players out of which 11 players will play. For the families and kids, there will be special fun competitions throughout the day to enjoy.



Oman U19 whitewash Hong Kong in bilateral series

MUSCAT: It was a dominating display by the local lads as hosts Oman U19 team made a clean sweep in the four-match bilateral 50-over-a-side series against Hong Kong at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground in Al Amerat recently.

Coached by Adeel Shafique, the hosts won all their matches, played over seven days, by a comfortable margin, underlining their superiority in all departments of the game.

For Hong Kong, who are currently playing the six-nation Asia Regional Qualifier in the UAE, it was not the best of results ahead of the Qualifier. Just one spot is available for the ICC U19 Cricket World Cup 2024 from the ongoing Asia Qualifier, which began on February 24. Beside Hong Kong, the other nations in fray are Kuwait, Malaysia, Nepal, Singapore and hosts UAE.

Oman won the first match by 46 runs with debutant Mustaqeem Sayed hammering 86 runs. Mustaqeem continued his rich vein of form to emerge as the hosts highest run-getter with a total of



The Oman Under-19 team

165 runs in four innings.

Oman had scored 215/8 in the 50 overs and then restricted the visitors to 169/9 in the opener.

Glen Menezes stood out with his bowling throughout the series as he bagged a total of 11 wickets with an economy of 3.14, three of which came in the first match.

The storyline remained the same in the next match, this time, Hong Kong batting first. Oman bowled them out for paltry 137 in 47 overs with Aryan Bisht picking three wickets. The home team cantered to victory in 25 overs with skipper Aditya Gurumukhi hitting a half-century.

The third match witnessed Oman putting up a huge total of 288/8 and then bowling out Hong Kong for meagre 108. Bisht shone with bat this time as he slammed a 67-ball 69 while Menezes ran through the rival batting line-up with a five-wicket haul and mesmerising figures of 10-3-23-5.



Glen Menezes

In the concluding game, Hong Kong batted first and were bowled out for 178 in the 48th over. The hosts needed only 37.4 overs to reach the target with Devansh Loya stroking an unbeaten 52.

Such was the hosts superiority that Hong Kong failed to bowl out Oman in any of the matches,

while the local lads bowled out their rivals on three occasions. The only exception was in the opening game when Hong Kong batted the complete 50 overs for 169/9.

For Hong Kong, the highest run-scorer was Shiv Mathur with 127 in four games.

Another promising display among Oman bowlers was from Mohammed Arafat Islam, who picked six wickets in the series with an economy of 3.06.

Following the morale-boosting series triumph, Shafique’s boys have plenty of time to prepare for their next major assignment in November.

Oman will compete in the ACC Men’s U19 Premier Cup in November 2023 with eight other Associate Asian nations and two other qualifying teams from ACC U19 Challenger Cup.

The ten nations will vie for the three spots available for the Men’s U19 Asia Cup in December 2023. The top-three sides of Premier Cup will then join India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan in the U19 Asia Cup.



Bilarab Bin Haitham Award
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Second Edition

You Lead The Idea



Oman-Japan bilateral trade hits \$4.6 billion

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, FEB 26

The Omani-Japanese Business forum took place yesterday in Muscat under the aims of enhancing trade and economic cooperation between the two nations. The forum is a collaboration between the Japanese Embassy, the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, the Japan Cooperation Center for the Middle East, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, shared, “We, as representatives of the Omani private sector, are interested in establishing economic relations with all countries of the world. These meetings contribute to drawing a road map for trade and investment relations between the Sultanate of Oman and Japan.”

“By conducting this forum, we are hoping to enhance trade



and business relations between Japan and the Sultanate of Oman, as there are many areas and sectors that can be improved and developed between the two friendly countries.”

“We assure you of the interest of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in providing all facilities that will develop trade relations between the two friendly countries.”

According to Al Rawas, the volume of the trade exchange

between the two nations amounted to \$4.6 billion in October 2022 as the value of Japanese imports to the Sultanate of Oman exceeded \$938 million, while Omani exports to Japan exceeded \$3 billion.

Masatoshi Sugiura, Deputy Director-General at the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, shared, “Oman has been a long-standing key partner for Japan, we enjoy a mutually beneficial and complimentary relationship. Oman has supported

Japan’s economic growth and people’s daily lives through its stable supply of oil and gas to us, while Japan has contributed to many projects in Oman by providing financing and technology.”

Additionally, Sugiura highlighted the significance of this forum, a first of its kind in three years due to travel restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. “As you know had a gap period of bilateral visits due to the pandemic, and now we resumed [them], it is

crucial for businesspeople to travel and interact with one another.”

Adding, “we have already established a long-standing relationship within the oil and gas industry, but with this mission, we hope we can develop new areas such as new energy, green hydrogen and ammonia and also the other areas such as food, healthcare, tourism, fishery and [more]. We would like to expand the scope of our economic cooperation and relations.”

In his guest speech, Japanese Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, Jota Yamamoto, discussed the changing attitudes towards business models in the country. “For decades... Japan has cherished the business model of “Made in Japan” and, through foreign direct investment overseas, “Made by Japan”, trying to grip and control the entire supply chain both domestically and internationally.”

“Now we identify a lot of risks and uncertainties, and at the same time, the effect of globalisation has

become a basic premise, then we are now more attentive to stability and durability while ensuring division of labour beyond borders.

If Made in Japan or Made by Japan tradition, as combined with B to C context, is somehow fragile to external uncertainties and changes, and pandemic clearly tells us, yes, this is the case, we may perhaps need to seek and combine another adequate approach.

I call it Made of Japan style, as we grip only the critical part of the entire supply chain with our cutting-edge parts & materials, advanced technologies and well-established know-hows, and cherish the value of division of labour. How to minimise the unforeseen risks and how to assure the business stability and sustainability, that is the point.”

Adding “Getting back from pandemic to normalcy, the Sultanate of Oman announces ambitious but convincing business strategies, policies, programmes, projects, contracts week by week, or, almost day by day.”

Riyadh forum to help MSX-listed firms target new investors and partners

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, FEB 26

Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) is joining hands with a number of Omani public and private sector organisations in organising a key investment conference in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, on March 2, 2023 to showcase opportunities for investment in the Omani capital market.

The upcoming forum is the second in the series of conferences organised by MSX spotlighting investment opportunities in listed and soon-to-be-listed Omani firms. The first event in the series was held in Muscat last September and attracted a number of major companies lined up for public subscription under an exit plan



outlined by Oman Investment Authority.

The Riyadh conference is also backed by Ominvest, OQ Gas Networks and Bank Muscat.

In a statement, MSX CEO Haitham bin Salem al Salmi said the Riyadh forum will provide a powerful platform, given Saudi Arabia’s importance as the biggest Arab economy and

the 20th largest in the world. Participating companies will be afforded a great opportunity to expand partnerships with Saudi businesses, whether in the securities sector or in other economic sectors. In addition, there will be opportunities for networking with large number of Gulf, regional and international investors.

Al Salmi stressed that the conference stems from MSX’s keenness to highlight investment opportunities in the Omani capital market, which is undergoing a major transformation led by Muscat Stock Exchange which is being corporatised as it prepares for a new role on the global stage.

In addition to targeting regional and international investment funds, listed firms will have the opportunity to present their future plans to investors in the region, and attract the attention of the regional investment community towards companies listed on the Omani bourse.

Furthermore, the conference will encourage listed companies to increase their capital by partnering with regional and global investors.

Oman–Vietnam JV to invest in financial services firm



JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, FEB 26

Oman’s oldest joint venture, the Vietnam-Oman Investment (VOI), is investing at least \$30 million in F88 — a financial services firm based in Hanoi.

Founded in 2013, F88 is the pioneer and leading chain of secured lending (pawnshop chain) in Vietnam, targeting micro & small businesses and individual consumers.

The company is now backed by Mekong Capital — a private equity firm funding exclusively on Vietnamese consumer-driven sectors.

VOI is a joint venture established in 2009 between the erstwhile State General Reserve Fund (now Oman Investment Authority) — a sovereign wealth fund of the Sultanate of Oman — and the State Capital Investment Corporation in Vietnam.

In more than 12 years of partnership, the JV has grown into a \$250 million investments ranging from solar power plants, water desalination, education and health, among other sectors.

Among the latest of VOI’s 20 investments is a solar power project which was inaugurated in the Vietnamese province of Long

An. The BCG-CME Long An 1 solar plant, construction with an investment of around \$46 million, covers an area of around 50 hectares and features an installed capacity of 40.6 MWp.

It is one of the first solar power plants to be inaugurated in Long An province and integrated into the national electricity grid.

At full capacity, the BCG-CME Long An 1 solar power plant will power an estimated 22,000 households in Vietnam, and reduce CO2 emissions by around 16,000 tonnes per year.

Vietnam-Oman Investment also invests in Aikya Corporation which is among the top 10 companies in Vietnam pharmaceutical industry. VOI also invests in Hau River surface water treatment plant in Hau Giang and in Song Duong WTP, the largest surface water treatment plant in Hanoi.

Moreover, VOI fully exited from 8 projects, the most notable of which is the Van Lang University project with an IRR of 47 per cent and 18 per cent successively.

It also partially exited from one investment with an IRR of 25 per cent and 65 per cent returns from the invested capital.

Madayn signs pact with Solar Wadi for 100 MW solar project

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 26

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) signed a usufruct contract with Wadi Solar, an Oman renewable energy company, for the allocation of land within Suhar Industrial City for the installation of a 100 MW capacity solar photovoltaic project. The agreement was signed on the sidelines of celebrations marking the 30th anniversary of the establishment of Suhar Industrial City.

The project will be established as part of Madayn’s comprehensive strategy to provide a large part of the energy needs of its tenants from a sustainable source of renewable energy in line with the



sustainability goals of Madayn 2040 Vision. The station aims to provide the cost of electricity for tenants in Suhar Industrial City as an initial stage, in conjunction with attracting new investors, and increasing the competitiveness of all companies within the industrial cities in Madayn and free zones, as the station provides sustainable energy solutions for the economic

and social environment for all investors in Suhar Industrial City, relying on renewable solar energy.

The anniversary celebrations were held under the auspices of Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones. Total investment in Suhar Industrial City amounts to RO 2.300 billion with more than

360 industrial projects operating in an area of 29 million sq metres.

Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Madayn, stressed that the Corporation will focus in the coming period on establishing specialised industrial complexes, and introducing the technologies of the fourth industrial revolution in the current factories.

Hamad bin Hamoud al Qasabi, Acting CEO of Madayn, added that the Madayn is working to establish a complex for plastic industries on an area of 1 million sq metres. Raw material for the complex will come from OQ Group.

Oman-UK bilateral trade jumps 31% to RO 550m

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, FEB 26

Bilateral trade between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom soared 31.5 per cent to £1.2 billion (RO 0.550 billion approx.) at current prices for the 12 months to the end of Q3 2022, according to the UK Department for International Trade.

British exports to Oman amounting to £915 million (RO 420.1 million) accounted for the dominant share of two-way trade during this period — representing an increase of 39.5 per cent over the period 12 months.

Omani exports to the UK, on the other hand, amounted to £245 million (RO 112.5m), with an increase of 8.4 per cent over the previous 12 months to the end of

Q3 2021, the Department stated in its latest “Trade & Investment” factsheet.

Significantly, the export of services accounted for more than half of British exports to Oman during the period under review. The Department for International Trade explained: “Of all UK exports to Oman in the four quarters to the end of Q3 2022, £434 million (47.4 per cent) were goods and £481 million (52.6 per cent) were services.

In the four quarters to the end of Q3 2022, UK exports of goods to Oman increased by 17.9 per cent or £66 million compared to the four quarters to the end of Q3 2021 while UK exports of services to Oman increased by 67.0 per cent or £193 million compared to the four quarters to the end of Q3



2021.”

The five top goods exported from the UK to Oman fell in the following broad categories: Mechanical power generators (intermediate), accounting for 23.5 per cent of total exports; General industrial machinery (capital),

with an 8.4 per cent share; Cars (8.4 per cent); Medicinal & pharmaceutical products (6.6 per cent); and General industrial machinery (intermediate) 4.9 per cent.

On the flipside, goods flowing from Oman to the UK were

broadly classified as follows: Mechanical power generators (intermediate) with a 39.9 per cent share of total goods imports; Plastics in non-primary forms (5.5 per cent); Iron & steel (5.2 per cent); Road vehicles other than cars (intermediate) (5.0 per cent); and Plastics in primary forms (4.5 per cent).

Data for trade in services exported from the UK to Oman was not made available by UK sources, the Department noted.

Notably, the total trade surplus enjoyed by the UK continued to grow, according to the Department, from £430 million (RO 197 million) in the four quarters to the end of Q3 2021 to £670 million (RO 307.6 million) in the four quarters to the end of Q3 2022.

“In the four quarters to the end of Q3 2022, the UK had a trade in goods surplus of £276 million with Oman, compared to a trade in goods surplus of £199 million in the four quarters to the end of Q3 2021.

Meanwhile, in the four quarters to the end of Q3 2022 the UK reported a trade in services surplus of £394 million with Oman, compared to a trade in services surplus of £231 million in the four quarters to the end of Q3 2021,” the Department added.

Of late, Oman and the UK have sought to add new momentum to their bilateral relationship through initiatives designed to deepen cooperative ties notably in Foreign Direct Investment, renewables, green hydrogen, finance, and space, among other sectors.

Bank Muscat strengthens partnership with Sultan Qaboos University

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, participated in the 7th Alumni Day of Sultan Qaboos University, which was held recently under the auspices of HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, the Vice Chairman of Sultan Qaboos University.

The event was attended by a number of dignitaries, alumni, faculty and non-teaching staff of the university as well as bank officials. The Alumni Day stems from the keenness of the university to create an effective communication channel with its alumni, enhance their sense of belonging and offer them a platform to meet and exchange ideas and their professional experience.

Bank Muscat has a highly successful, collaborative and long-standing partnership with the Sultan Qaboos University and participated in the Alumni Day in line with its commitment to national initiatives, especially in higher education, which facilitates the country's progress and development.

During the event, Yasser bin Salim Tabook, Senior Regional Manager, Bank Muscat, said that Bank Muscat is keen to further strengthen bonds with Sultan Qaboos University and contribute to building Omani talent and



human resources. Also, Bank Muscat provides a wide range of world-class products and services to students, faculty and staff at the Sultan Qaboos University.

He added that the bank appreciates the special relationship it has with the nation's leading university and would also continue to further strengthening cooperation and partnership with various government and private sector institutions in the Sultanate of Oman.

The bank actively participates in several events at the university every year including job fairs and exhibitions. Every year, the bank also recruits many university graduates to different departments across the bank.

The bank is also continuously offering many internship opportunities to college and university students as part of its efforts to help develop Omani human resources to achieve further growth and progress.

Dhofar Governorate hosts final Abraj IPO introductory session

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 26

The Initial Public Offering (IPO) of Abraj Energy Services, a subsidiary of OQ, the global integrated energy group, enters its second week on Monday and ends on March 1, 2023 for the small investor category, while the large investors subscription ends on March 2, 2023.

As part of its IPO introductory sessions tour, the company organised its last introductory meeting on Sunday, in cooperation with the branch of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Dhofar Governorate. The session highlighted the detailed offerings of Abraj shares.

The sessions fall under the IPO introductory meetings in the Governorates of Al Sharqiyah South, Al Batinah North, and Al Dakhiliyah, in addition to a session organised in cooperation with the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX).

Speaking on the occasion, Shaikh Nayef bin Hamid Beit Fadil, a member of the Board of Directors of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Chamber's branch in Dhofar Governorate said, “The listing of existing government assets is an aspect preferred by some investors, due to the speed of returns on their investments, as well as the availability of meaningful economic incentives



to invest, it must therefore be accorded importance by facilitating certain government assets, and recycling capital into feasible projects and investments that require significant capital.”

Eng Saif al Hamhami, Chief Executive Officer of Abraj Energy Services, said that by listing its shares for the public offering, the company aims to build a strategic partnership with local, regional, and international investors. This implements the company's expansion plans and diversifies the portfolio of services and solutions provided to clients.

A total of 377,398,000 shares, equivalent to 49 per cent of Abraj's total equity capital, have been released. Musandam Gas Plant LLC, Oman Oil Company Exploration & Production LLC (OOCEP), OQ Exploration and Production LLC, the Selling Shareholders, reserve the right to amend the size of the offering at any time prior to the end of the subscription period in their sole discretion, subject to applicable

laws and the approval of the CMA.

Al Hamhami added that the offering is divided into two categories; corporate category for large investors, and the second category is retail category for small investors.

The subscription price in small investor category 224 Baisas per share, reduced by 10 per cent of the share price, while the share price for the first group is the founding investor 242 Baisas, the lowest underwriting ratio for the small investor group is 1,000 shares, and 803,000 shares for the large investor category.

The company plans to pay a dividend of RO 15.4 million during 2023 for the financial year ended December 31, 2022, or 20 Baisas per share. It also intends to pay a dividend in 2024 that is 85 per cent higher than the net profit for 2023, or 6 per cent higher than the dividend paid in 2023.

In 2025, Abraj plans to pay a dividend 85 per cent higher than the 2024 net profit, or a 6 per cent increase from the 2024 dividend.

Ooredoo continues to champion digital transformation in the public and private sectors



MUSCAT: Ooredoo is committed to delivering responsive and innovative solutions that support the operational effectiveness and digitisation of public and private sector entities.

One of these solutions includes its local and global M2M (Machine to Machine) service; a state-of-the-art technology used to manage, track and monitor local and global assets.

M2M services allow customers to use their connected devices both locally and while roaming.

This means they can monitor their assets and devices anywhere in the world, without the worry of soaring roaming charges.

M2M technology can be used across industries, including for in-vehicle monitoring systems (IVMS), smart parking, smart-lighting sensors, water and electricity metres, wireless CCTV and much more.

The technology allows businesses to improve their operational efficiency, save costs, and increase productivity.

Said al Lawati (pictured), Director of Business Marketing & ICT Solutions at Ooredoo, said, “Our smart solutions are designed to support entities across all sectors, allowing them to further streamline their daily processes and activities, as well as deliver on their objectives and truly thrive.

We aim to support the Omani government and the private sector in navigating digital transformation, which is in line with Oman's Vision 2040. We achieve this by leveraging disruptive technologies, such as Cloud, M2M and the Internet of Things, which drive this vital and increasingly growing industry trend.”

OEA announces 2nd edition of research award

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, FEB 26

The Oman Economic Association (OEA) has unveiled the second edition of its economic research award series, titled ‘Scientific Article’, which aims to encourage scientific research in the field of economic diversification and growth stimulation.

The launch was under the auspices of Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy at the ministry premises. Dr Khalid bin Said al Amri, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Omani Economic

Association, said that the award series, from its outset, has catalysed the growth of innovative ideas through research papers covering various methodologies and approaches. The maiden edition of the award series garnered 36 local and international research papers, he stated.

The award, Dr Al Amri said, helps encourage decision-makers to develop new solutions to existing economic challenges. Furthermore, it creates a platform for researchers to engage with each other on various economic issues.

A digital compilation of these research findings is now available



in local and Arab libraries. The Association, the Chairman said has been supporting efforts to study novel ways of achieving

economic sustainability, which is also an objective of the second award.

Submissions will be evaluated

against four criteria: financial policies, social policies, laws and legislation, Oman Vision 2040, developmental economic trends, and sustainability.

The second edition of the Association's Award for Economic Research features two categories: the category of researchers holding master's and doctoral degrees, and the category of researchers holding a bachelor's degree and students of universities.

The timeline for submission and evaluation of entries is available on the Association's website. The results will be announced in December.

UNLEASHING YOUR ENTREPRENEURIAL POTENTIAL

Mastering your finances: The key to sustainable business growth in the digital age



KAMLA SAID
AL RAHBIYAH
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The author is a renowned coach, trainer and consultant

Financial management is an essential aspect of running a successful business in the digital age. Whether you are an entrepreneur starting a new venture, an SME owner looking to grow your existing business, or a business owner seeking to maintain your financial stability, mastering your finances is the key to sustainable growth. In the fast-paced and ever-changing digital age, financial management has become more complex and challenging. With new technologies, shifting market conditions, and increased competition, businesses must be proactive in managing their

finances to stay ahead of the curve. Here are some key steps to help you master your finances and achieve sustainable business growth:

- 1. Develop a budget**
A budget is the cornerstone of financial management. It provides a clear picture of your financial situation and helps you to plan for future growth. Your budget should take into account your revenue, expenses, and capital investments, and should be updated regularly to reflect changes in your financial situation.
- 2. Manage cash flow**
Cash flow is the lifeblood of your business. It is essential to monitor your cash flow closely and to manage it effectively to ensure that you have the funds you need to meet your obligations and invest in growth. This may involve using cash flow forecasting tools, negotiating favourable payment terms with suppliers, and seeking out alternative funding sources.
- 3. Maintain accurate financial records**
Accurate financial records are essential for managing your finances effectively. They provide you with the information you need to make informed decisions about your business, and they are



also critical for tax purposes. It is important to have a system in place for tracking your financial transactions and to update your records regularly.

- 4. Make informed investment decisions**
Investing in growth is an important part of financial management. However, it is essential to make informed investment decisions that are aligned with your business strategy and financial goals. This may involve seeking out
- 5. Use technology to your advantage**
Technology is changing the way that businesses manage their finances. There are now a wide range of financial management tools and software available that can help you to automate your financial processes, improve your financial reporting, and gain a

more comprehensive view of your financial situation. By using technology to your advantage, you can simplify your financial management processes and make more informed decisions about your finances.

- 6. Stay informed about changes in the market and regulatory environment**
The digital age is characterised by rapid change and disruption. To succeed in this environment, it is essential to stay informed about changes in the market and

regulatory environment and to adjust your financial management strategy accordingly. This may involve seeking out professional advice, attending conferences and workshops, and staying up-to-date with the latest news and trends in your industry. In conclusion, mastering your finances is the key to sustainable business growth in the digital age. Whether you are an entrepreneur, an SME owner, or a business owner, it is essential to develop a comprehensive financial management strategy that takes into account your financial goals, market conditions, and regulatory environment. By using technology to your advantage, staying informed about changes in the market, and making informed investment decisions, you can build a strong financial foundation for your business and achieve long-term success. We hope you have enjoyed this article on financial management. As a closing enthusiasm question, are you ready to reach your target audience and grow your business with digital marketing? Stay tuned for our next article on Digital Marketing: Reaching Your Target Audience: A Guide to Digital Marketing for the Modern Entrepreneur.

World Bank pick Ajay Banga comes with green finance cred

REBECCA CHRISTIE

American soft power has officially entered its climate finance era. US President Joe Biden on Thursday nominated Ajay Banga to be the World Bank's next president, replacing David Malpass, who announced last week he would step down a year ahead of schedule. It's a strong signal that the United States wants to help developing countries switch to greener forms of energy.

Both Banga and Malpass spent time at big banks, but that's where the similarities end. Malpass was chief economist at Bear Stearns until it almost failed during the 2008 financial crisis.

His likely successor spent 15 years at Citigroup, rising to lead the too-big-to-fail behemoth's Asian operations, before taking charge of Mastercard. While Malpass expressed scepticism about global warming, Banga is a bona fide climate financier.

A naturalised US citizen raised in India, he has extensive experience of lending in the developing world and of advocating for equity and the environment.

That's a potent combination for an institution whose model US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen recently declared to be "insufficient to meet the moment".

As the World Bank's biggest donor, the United States has traditionally installed government careerists who used the post to promote Cold War-era priorities. By choosing a banker who cares about the planet, Washington is signalling that green finance is a political priority.

— Reuters

Countering structural disruptions

MICHAEL SPENCE

The author, a Nobel laureate in economics, is Emeritus Professor at Stanford University and Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution.

Trade and technology development policies almost always have distributional consequences. There may be a few exceptions for which the implementation of a policy produces either gains or no loss for nearly everyone, what economists would call a Pareto improvement.

But these instances are relatively rare. You could argue that for early-stage developing countries, the export-driven growth model that draws surplus labor into the modernising manufacturing and urban sectors comes close to meeting this standard.

But even there, the gains are not spread evenly, and income inequality normally increases. Distributional impacts are the norm, within countries and across national boundaries.

Successful developing countries experience structural change as part of the growth process. The long-term benefits of exposure to global markets and investment are very large, driving both growth and significant structural adjustments in terms of jobs, skills, and human capital.

But some sectors are inevitably adversely affected. To ensure that new economic opportunities and pressures do not overwhelm the ability of developing countries—particularly the labour force—to adapt, policymakers should manage the pace and sequencing of the opening process in trade, investment, and the capital account.

For example, if net employment creation—jobs created minus jobs lost—turns negative, opening may be happening too fast.

Efforts to calibrate the pace of opening should be complemented by some redistribution toward adversely affected people or sectors, but not at the expense of investment.

Most important, to support the creation of an inclusive pattern of structural adjustment, government must invest heavily in high-quality, affordable (either low-cost or free) education for young people and training for older workers.

All of this is vital to ensure that the policies that underpin the growth model retain popular support; otherwise, political opposition will likely disrupt or even abort the growth strategy.

These challenges are not limited to developing economies. Trade, investment, and technology have significant effects on economic structure, relative prices, and income and wealth distribution pretty much everywhere.

One recent paper argues that trade with China not only has direct negative effects on employment and wages in the US manufacturing sector, but also produces negative upstream effects on suppliers of intermediate products.

To be sure, the paper's authors conclude that, for the United States, trade with China yields net benefits, because the positive downstream effect—a wide range of industries gaining access to cheaper intermediate products—is larger than the combined direct and upstream negative effects.

Nevertheless, US-China trade still has important distributional implications because the negative effects are more concentrated by sector and geography, whereas the positive effects are spread widely.

This has arguably had a significant impact on American attitudes toward trade with China—and thus on US trade policy generally.

Of course, the debate about trade with China is particularly heated in the US, owing not least to allegations that China has violated World Trade Organisation rules. But this is a red herring. There are surely many cases of developing countries' failure to comply strictly with WTO rules.

But the structural and distributional effects of trade do not depend on a country's compliance with WTO rules, but rather on its stage of development, the scale of trade, and its comparative advantages.

The severity of the so-called China shock in the US reflected its speed and scale. Policymakers' mistake was to devote relatively little attention to modulating the speed of the transition or supporting those affected by the structural adjustment.

But slowing the pace of structural change is easier said than done, particularly when it comes to the green transition—another key driver of structural change today.

Decades of inaction mean that rapid reductions in greenhouse-gas emissions are now urgently needed. But this is already creating major dislocations, with serious distributional implications. As these effects grow, so will resistance to the necessary initiatives.

A third driver of structural transformation today is technology. As David Autor and others have documented, even before the latest breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, digital technology was removing routine (codifiable), mainly middle-income jobs from the economy, leading to job and income polarisation.

This phenomenon can be observed in all advanced economies.

Compounding the challenge in the US, productivity growth has moved onto a dual track. As Belinda Azenui and I recently noted, breakthroughs in machine learning have enabled productivity to grow rapidly in what technologists call the "bits layer" of the economy—where information is processed, stored, accessed, and used, where transactions occur, and where decisions are made.

But in the "atoms layer," where physical economic activity takes place, productivity growth is mixed—higher in structured environments like manufacturing and logistics, and lower elsewhere, including large employment sectors like hospitality. If these trends—and policymakers' inaction—persist, the gap in productivity and incomes will continue to widen.

In a 2022 article entitled "The Turing Trap," Erik Brynjolfsson suggested that the AI research agenda is overly focused on human-like artificial intelligence, motivated by the famous Turing Test: can a person interacting with a machine determine whether it is one? Clearly, that benchmark has produced astonishing advances.

But Brynjolfsson argues that it needs to be complemented with a more aggressive and well-funded machine-augmentation agenda. The goal of developing semi-autonomous vehicles must be accompanied by a push to boost the productivity of a broad range of service-sector jobs.

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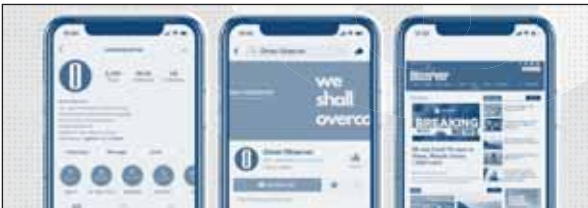
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Samurai artist dazzles Muscat audience

Tetsuro Shimaguchi, founder of the 'Kamui' Samurai performance team, performed in Oman to praise and applause. He showcased the power of Samurai art and culture during his maiden visit with a unique performance at the recent Muscat Nights and has now set his sights to train Arabs in Samurai art... **P20**

Rihanna to perform 'Black Panther' song at Oscars

POP SUPERSTAR RIHANNA will perform at the Oscars next month, organisers said on Thursday, just weeks after she made her long-awaited — and visibly pregnant — return at the Super Bowl.

The Barbados-born singer will perform her Academy Award-nominated song "Lift Me Up" from

"Black Panther: Wakanda Forever" at the film industry's top awards show in Hollywood.

The song is competing with the likes of Lady Gaga's "Hold My Hand" from "Top Gun: Maverick," and the current frontrunner "Naatu Naatu" from Indian crowd-pleaser "RRR."

Rihanna, 35, had not performed



a live show in seven years before bringing a career-spanning medley of hits to the NFL flagship halftime show earlier this month.

She has instead concentrated on the successful makeup, lingerie and high-fashion brands that have helped make her a billionaire — as well raising her first child, a son, who was born in May.

Her new baby bump dominated conversation at the Super Bowl, with representatives for the singer confirming soon after the show that Rihanna is pregnant with her second child.

But fans hoping for a glimpse of the album she's been teasing for years were left disappointed.

"Lift Me Up" is the first Oscar nomination for Rihanna, a nine-time Grammy winner with eight multi-platinum albums.

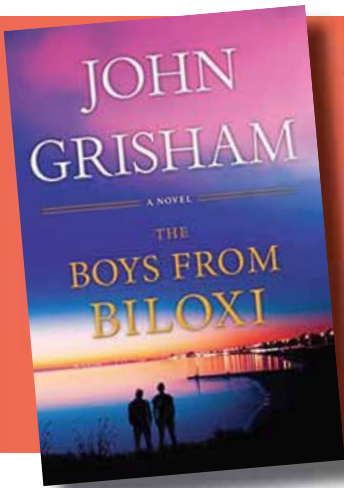
The 95th Academy Awards, hosted by Jimmy Kimmel, will be held at Los Angeles' Dolby Theatre on March 12. — **AFP**

READ

THE BOYS FROM BILOXI

BY JOHN GRISHAM

Two childhood friends follow in their fathers' footsteps, which puts them on opposite sides of the law.



CULTURE

People visit Baghdad's national museum after it opened its doors to receive visitors free of charge every Friday. Closed for three years as of 2019 due to demonstrations and then the Covid-19 pandemic, the museum reopened in March 2022. — **AFP**



CHANGING WORLD

Heavy snow falls on the Mt. Baldy Museum in the town of Mount Baldy, California. Californians more used to flip flops and shorts were wrapping up warm on Thursday as a rare winter blizzard, the first in more than 30 years, loomed over Los Angeles, even as the US East Coast basked in summer-like temperatures. — **AFP**





A Book Review: Is it ‘Dates on My Fingers’?

Novel title: "Dates on My Fingers"
Author: Mohsin al Ramli
Language: Arabic
Publisher: Al Mada House for publishing
Pages: 173

"Dates on My Fingers" is a novel of moral values that advises readers not to spend time thinking of a plan that reaps nothing finally. The novel focuses on the discrepancy between achieving one's ends after consuming long time by harnessing all self-abilities and the quality of the results that one reaches afterwards. It gives a lesson that not all enjoyable actions leave good impression after they are over.

Noh, an obedient son of a Shaikh who belongs to a tribe of a huge number of his own people, is changed suddenly into a man who lost his temper and starts behaving savagely. The change in his personality frightened psychologists as his sudden transformation into a whimsical man proves how people can change easily to this extent. Noh spends most of the remaining of his life seeking revenge; not for the sake of ecstasy but for regain rectitude that he lost when his ill daughter is harassed, in his presence, by a son of an influential man. He does not know that he is going to be fatigued by the psychological thinking of revenge which will put an end to his clannish, social and moral pertinence. In the same way that Hamlet does when he abnegates the luxurious and royal life he lives just to make himself convinced whether his mother and his uncle are betrayals when they lead such a harmful conspiracy against his father or not, the inner conflict that leads to his fate.

The context of the story shows the reader that the more time you take to achieve your end, the more disastrous results will be not only on your shoulders but also on those whom you like as well. His reaction to get revenge, which is supported by his relatives, burdens him insofar as burdening them all and it becomes a boring mission though it still sounds interesting to him. The loss that Noh faces, so to speak, is not only ideological, but it is a loss of an individual's own social entity. This is because the decision of counterattacking, as a reaction to revenge, is a conduct of challenging a state, and it comes to be thought politically as making a rift in the entity of the state itself. No one cares about Noh's feeling as a father who is insulted in



Azeez Jasim Mohammed



Azeez Jasim Moham-med is the Head of the Department of English Language and Literature of Al Zahra College for Women.

public and in his daughter's presence. Noh spends his life respecting others in the same way that he expects respect from others and that's perhaps why he expects more from those who find him doing nothing rather than destruction.

From a rural character into a dude one, from a man of social commitments into an apathetic man, and from obedient into indocile, Noh is seen changed completely throughout the plot of the story. All his family members are shattered here and there in this world, and he finds himself travelling to different countries, changing his habits and dropping most of his values just to bite a dog in the same way that the dog bites him.

The novel reflects Mohsin al Ramli's bad impression about life in diaspora through his experience of living abroad. The author calls for compromise and he tries to forward a message of hope to those who suffers from consuming their life just for the sake of getting revenge. The concept of this novel is quite clear that if you want to live with peace of mind then think as Dale Carnegie puts it "stop worrying and start living."

Milan Fashion: Gucci revisits past to pave new way, sober looks at Tod's

ITALIAN LUXURY LABEL Gucci drew from its past to present an eclectic mix of looks at its womenswear show at Milan Fashion Week on Friday, paving the way for the next chapter as it awaits its new creative director.

The brand's creative team revisited Gucci's glamorous and colourful looks of the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s - nodding to silhouettes and creations by past designers like Tom Ford and Frida Giannini.

Gucci parted ways with its star designer Alessandro Michele last November as sales lagged competitors, and the prized brand of French luxury group Kering will welcome its new creative director, Sabato De Sarno, later this year.

A model wearing a tiny metallic bikini top, long black satin pencil skirt and gloves opened the show. Androgynous trouser suits followed as did plenty of faux fur coats in lilac, blue, fuchsia and yellow. There were furry lapels, oversized knits, footwear and bags. One coat dazzled with sparkling silver fringes.

"The Gucci Fall Winter 2023 Women's Collection connects the creative cultures that cross-pollinate the history of the House in an evocative but contemporary proposal," show notes read.

"A free expression founded in collective memories that blur the lines of time, it is an illustration of the beating heart of Gucci: the ecosystem of designers and artisans whose shared understanding of the House has passed down and evolved from creative to creative for over a century."

Slim trousers were slit at the bottom front while bustier dresses had exaggerated sides. One model wore a crumpled shirt tucked into a miniskirt, others were dressed in coats with voluminous shoulders.

There were plenty of see-through designs: white embroidered sheer shirts and skirts and black transparent dresses.

Tights were red, orange, lime and pale blue. There were new offerings of the Gucci loafer and the brand's famed handbags.

At the end of the show, Gucci's creative team came out to loud applause. De Sarno will present his first collection for Gucci in September.

At Tod's, creative director Walter Chiapponi offered a sober collec-



tion in earthy tones that played with tailoring. Models wore pea coats as well as

long oversized coats, and also appeared in parkas and cropped aviator and elongated bomber jackets. Zipped ribbed tops had leather detailing while round-collared shirts had slightly voluminous shoulders.

Dresses were belted or had draped shoulders.

Called "Italian Feeling," the collection came in hues of brown, dark green, camel and cream. Chiapponi ended the show with several pin-stripe looks.

"The idea was to go back to sobriety, with a certain rigidity in the construction," Chiapponi told reporters.

"In a way it's a very masculine show. The feminine touches are the skirts, embroideries... high heels." — Reuters

ENTERTAINMENT

World class artists and musicians grace Abu Dhabi fest



ON MARCH 1, acclaimed Peruvian tenor, Juan Diego Flórez will kick off the 20th edition of Abu Dhabi Festival – a three-week long festivities that will feature the world's most renowned performers and musicians.

Presented by Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation and held under the theme "The Will for Evolution", the festivities will be held under the honorary patronage of His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

Abu Dhabi Festival 2023 will present exclusive commissions and productions, along with local, regional, and global premieres, in addition to a series of world-class events that include musical tours, panel discussions, and workshops. Additional information on the Abu Dhabi Festival programme and ticket booking details are available at abudhabifestival.ae/programme-2023/

The line up of performance will be as follow:

JUAN DIEGO FLÓREZ AND FRIENDS AT EMIRATES PALACE ON MARCH 1

Acclaimed for his command of the high tenor range, Juan Diego Flórez gives a spectacular performance accompanied by an orchestra featuring a programme of opera arias followed by Latin American songs. In addition and as part of Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation's ongoing commitment to providing opportunities for young artists to showcase their talent, Emirati singer and rising star Rashed Al Nuaimi will take the stage to open for the world renowned tenor.

DE SCHEHEREZADE A YO, CARMEN AT EMIRATES PALACE ON MARCH 10

On 10 March, the Emirates Palace will host the Middle East premiere of De Scheherezade a Yo, Carmen. Throughout the mesmerising performance, Vanguard flamenco dancer and choreographer, Maria Pagés, transcends the legendary female character – Carmen, the gypsy cigarette girl from Mérimée's novella.

GREGORY PORTER AT EMIRATES PALACE ON MARCH 11

Two-time Grammy Award-winning Jazz musician Gregory Porter makes his UAE debut on March 11, performing a set of his smooth original tracks from his albums Liquid Spirit and Take Me to the Alley, as well as captivating renditions of the classics, joined by Chip Crawford on piano, Emanuel Harrold on drums, Tivon Pennicott on saxophone/horns, and Jahmal Nichols on bass.

RECITAL SERIES: BRUCE LIU AT NYUAD ARTS CENTER ON MARCH 14

Winner of the 2021 International Chopin Piano Competition, Bruce Liu, will perform a captivating piano solo with classical and romantic highlights on 14 March at The Red Theatre at NYUAD Arts Center. Dazzling audiences at sold-out venues around the world, the international star pianist will present a selection of pieces by Rameau, Chopin and Liszt during the recital.

RECITAL SERIES: HAOCHEN ZHANG AT NYUAD ARTS CENTER ON MARCH 16

Acclaimed Shanghaiese pianist, Haochen Zhang, will

perform some of Beethoven's most celebrated sonatas on 16 March at NYUAD Arts Center's The Blue Hall. The gold medal winner of the Thirteenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition promises a captivating solo performance.

FROM WEST TO EAST: A CLASSICAL ODYSSEY BY TAN DUN AT EMIRATES PALACE ON MARCH 17

For the first time in the Middle East, the Emirates Palace will host From West to East: A Classical Odyssey on 17 March. Academy Award-winning composer Tan Dun conducts the Orchestra of Teatro Comunale di Modena Pavarotti-Freni, joined by world-famous Chinese cellist Jian Wang, in an unforgettable musical journey from West to East featuring an iconic classics repertoire of Mozart, Tchaikovsky, and Mussorgsky, followed by the UAE premiere of his original Pipa Concerto.

Buddha Passion by Tan Dun at Emirates Palace on March 18

Abu Dhabi Festival will present the Middle East premiere of Buddha Passion by Grammy and Academy Award-winning composer Tan Dun on 18 March. Spanning the boundaries of classical music and Eastern and Western traditions, the performance is a 95-minute oratorio illustrating six Buddha parables and stories, with the sixth being the Buddha's ascension into Nirvana. The performance captures the ancient narratives of the Buddha's teachings and the timeless, universal concepts of love, forgiveness and sacrifice.

PEARL DIVER'S DAUGHTER AT CULTURAL FOUNDATION ON MARCH 19

Blending cutting-edge technology with choreography, music and narrative, Pearl Diver's Daughter takes audiences of all ages on a journey beneath the waves of the Gulf, taking place on 19 March at Cultural Foundation. In what will be the longest continuous augmented reality experience ever created, Emirati Writer Maitha Al Khayat and Emirati Composer Eman Al Hashimi join forces with American contemporary dance Company E to present a story of family, tradition, and the perils of the diver and the wonders of the sea.

RECITAL SERIES: LEIA ZHU, VIOLIN & BENJAMIN ENGELI, PIANO AT NYUAD ARTS CENTER ON MARCH 20

Sixteen-year-old British-Chinese violin prodigy, Leia Zhu will be accompanied by versatile Swiss pianist, Benjamin Engeli to perform renditions of Mozart, Strauss, Debussy, Wieniawski and Sarasate on 20 March at The Blue Hall, NYUAD Arts Center.

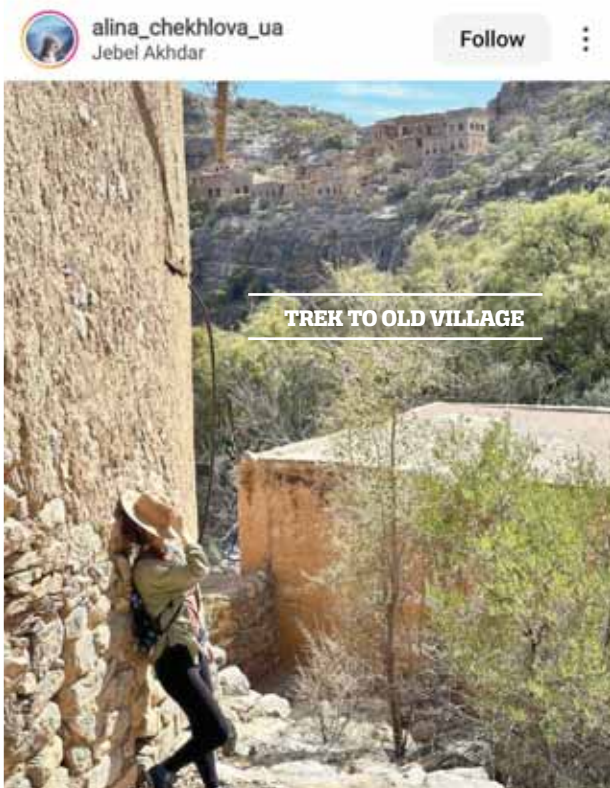
Founded in 2004, the Festival was generously granted the patronage of the President, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, from 2007 to 2011. The first Abu Dhabi Festival was held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the then Minister of Information and Culture (currently the UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation).

Abu Dhabi Festival is the festival of "Bilad Al Khayr", the land of blessings, the land of Zayed, and embraces the values of dialogue, tolerance, respect and peace.



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INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



AROUND THE WORLD

ART

Roald Dahl classics to be released after criticism of recent editing



BRITISH PUBLISHER Puffin UK has announced the release of the Roald Dahl Classic Collection "to keep the author's classic texts in print", following criticism of recent editing of his work to remove potentially offensive language.

Classic books from the much-loved but controversial children's author have been rewritten to cater for the sensitivities of modern audiences.

The Roald Dahl Story Company and Puffin Books carried out a review of Dahl's classics which led to the removal or rewriting of content deemed offensive — including references to weight, mental health, violence, gender and race.

But critics including acclaimed author Salman Rushdie and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak later condemned the changes.

"We've listened to the debate over the past week which has reaffirmed the extraordinary power of Roald Dahl's books and the very real questions around how stories from another era can be kept relevant for each new generation," Francesca Dow, managing director of Penguin Random House Children's said on Friday.

"As a children's publisher, our role is to share the magic of stories with children with the greatest thought and care. Roald Dahl's fantastic books are often the first stories young children will read independently, and taking care for the imaginations and fast-developing minds of young readers is both a privilege and a responsibility.

The publishing company confirmed 17 Dahl titles will be published under the Penguin logo, including archive material relevant to each of the stories, and will be available later this year.

The titles include fan-favourites Charlie And The Chocolate Factory, Matilda and Fantastic Mr Fox alongside The BFG and James And The Giant Peach.

The Roald Dahl Classic Collection will sit alongside the newly released Puffin Roald Dahl books for young readers, and readers will be free to choose which version of Dahl's stories they prefer.

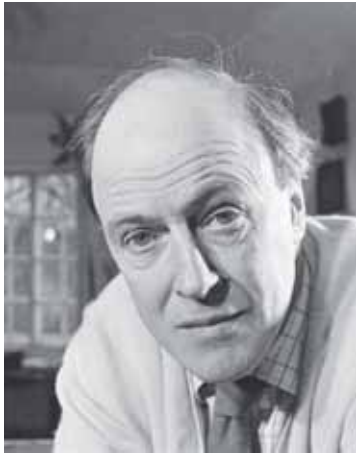
A spokesperson for The Roald Dahl Story Company said: "The last few days have demonstrated just how important Roald Dahl's stories are to fans all around the world, and we've been deeply moved by the strength of feeling.

"The most important thing to us is that the stories continue to be enjoyed by all."

Dahl died in 1990 at the age of 74 but has regularly topped the list of the nation's favourite authors. But his legacy has been marred by his antisemitic views.

In 2020, his family apologised, saying they recognised the "lasting and understandable hurt caused by Roald Dahl's antisemitic statements".

— PA Media/dpa



HEALTH

Colds and flu fighter



THE COMMON COLD and flu—a fact of life for most people—are common infections caused by viruses, usually lasting for a few days. But even though it's so common and it takes around 1-2 weeks to recover fully, most of us are not quite sure what to do when they or their family member have got one. Viruses continue to change with time; making people susceptible throughout their lives and the discouraging truth is that people with immune systems weakened by stress are especially at risk. The first thing is to identify whether your cold is really a cold; it could be the flu or some kind of allergy. Once you know that it's common cough & cold, here's what you can do about it.

SIMPLE TIPS TO HELP RELIEVE THE DISCOMFORT

- Drink warm liquids/ hot soups as it not only helps your lungs do their job, the warm moisture loosens the mucus and makes it easier for your lungs to cough it up.
- If you have a runny nose, try to put up with it as this is your body's natural way of flushing out the virus that caused your cold in the first place so give some time and allow your body to do its job.
- Since ancient times, hot tea with honey has been a staple in homes; some people feel better with hot, clear soups (chicken soup with some vegetables).
- Adequate rest and good sleep is quintessential.
- A healthy and nutritious diet will help your body fight the infections more effectively. So go ahead and look through your kitchen; you will



Dr Monika Seth

Dr Monika Seth is a nutritionist and free lance consultant residing in Oman for the last 22 years. She is a health enthusiast with more than two decades of experience in the health field.

find a variety of foods that can help speed your recovery and keep you healthy.

TOP 5 FOODS

Water — Drinking plenty of water and other warm liquids forms the very first defence system and will work as natural healers.

Garlic — Throwing some minced garlic into your favourite soup will not only bolster your immune system along with keeping the viruses at bay.

Vitamin C — Enjoy a balanced diet rich in guava, orange, lemon, red & green peppers, strawberries, gooseberry, cantaloupe, kiwi, etc.

Beta carotene — Your best bet would be to eat lots of carrots, pumpkin, sweet potato, kale, spinach, apricots, cantaloupe, broccoli etc.

Zinc — Aim to include healthy sources like chicken, lamb, turkey, beans, barley and wheat as a part of a balanced diet.

While you or your loved ones are down with cold and flu, the last thing you feel like doing is eating. It's OK to eat a little less while you are fighting with cold and flu, still you will have to eat the right foods to provide you with energy and nutrients to sail through it.

Though we have no sure way to protect ourselves from getting colds, but washing your hands regularly and managing stress levels well will strengthen the immune system.

DISCOVERY

Bone study transforms understanding of dinosaur growth



THE DINOSAUR GROUP called theropods included the largest land meat-eaters ever on Earth — up to the size of a school bus. But there also were theropods the size of a tabby cat and others of various dimensions, including beaked and toothless fruit eaters and some bizarre long-clawed species that redefine weird.

Scientists had long believed that these dinosaurs followed a uniform pattern in determining the body size of a species, whether gigantic or diminutive, with the rate of growth being the deciding factor — faster meaning bigger and slower meaning smaller. A new study adds to the evidence overturning that idea.

Researchers said on Thursday they examined rings called cortical growth marks laid down annually inside the bones as these animals grew — akin to growth rings inside tree trunks — of three dozen theropod species. Widely spaced rings indicate a speedier growth rate. Closely spaced rings indicate slower growth.

They found no common pattern underpinning body size. Some huge theropods grew quickly and stopped growing and some grew gradually over a longer period of time to reach the same size. Some small theropods grew rapidly and others slowly.

"Our paper overturns an axiom about dinosaur growth, suggesting that other groups should be studied systematically as well to see if our conclusions apply to other animals," said paleontologist Mike D'Emic of Adelphi University in New York, lead author of the study published in the journal *Science*.

"It's equally likely that an animal evolved larger body size by growing at the same rate for longer, rather than just growing faster. It is surprising and important to know that animals are just as likely to evolve to gigantic sizes at slow rates. That means they are smaller for longer — and are thus susceptible to predators for longer — and have longer lifespans," D'Emic added.

Tyrannosaurus, topping 40 feet (12 metres) long, was an example of a big and fast-growing theropod, with a large growth spurt in its teenage years — in some years quadrupling its body mass. Acrocanthosaurus, a bit smaller than T. rex, was an example of a big but slow-growing theropod.

Coelophysis, about 7 feet (2 metres) long, was a fast-growing smaller theropod. Xixiyanikus, one of the tiniest dinosaurs at 20 inches (50 cm) long, was a small and slow-growing theropod.

Spinosaurus, an immense semi-aquatic theropod up to 50 feet (15 metres) long, grew much more slowly than Tyrannosaurus. Mapusaurus, which reached about 38 feet (11.5 metres), grew even more quickly than Tyrannosaurus, while its similarly sized cousin Tyrannotitan had a growth rate like that of Spinosaurus.

"This is the first study to consider developmental mechanisms related to bone growth and body size variation in a large sample of predatory dinosaurs," said Ohio University evolutionary biologist and study co-author Patrick O'Connor.

"Although focused on theropod dinosaurs, the implications of this work should extend to most groups of land-living animals, allowing scientists to better constrain the interplay among genetics, development and environmental factors that ultimately give rise to the diversity of life around us," O'Connor added.

Theropods are known for their bipedal stance and a set of shared anatomical traits. The earliest theropods may have lived as long as 230 million years ago during the Triassic Period in South America. The group spread worldwide and lasted to the end of the age of dinosaurs when an asteroid strike triggered a mass extinction 66 million years ago during the Cretaceous Period.

Birds evolved from small feathered theropods during the Jurassic Period and are considered part of the theropod group, though they were not included in this study. — Reuters

art & life

Local Scene

MONDAY | FEBRUARY 27 | 2023

Samurai artist dazzles Muscat audience

By Liju Cherian
@lijuchermanoman

Tetsuro Shimaguchi is a highly acclaimed 'Samurai artist' hailing from Japan. He is the founder of the Kamui Samurai performance team, which has been entertaining audiences around the world for over 25 years.

Tetsuro, also known as 'Samurai Tetsuro', has earned a reputation as a modern-day Samurai due to his unique blend of traditional Japanese martial arts and contemporary dance.

Tetsuro recently visited the Sultanate of Oman as part of the Muscat Nights, where he performed on stage for three nights at the Oman Automobile Association.

His performances were captivating, holding the audience spellbound.

Tetsuro's visit provided not only entertainment but also an opportunity for cultural exchange between Japan and Oman.

As head of the samurai school 'Kamui', Tetsuro trains a new generation of youth from around the world in the ways of the sword, as well as the warrior's mindset.

In Oman, he mingled freely with the Omani and expatriate youth after his endearing performance.

Tetsuro is also an actor and a choreographer having participated in the sword fighting scene and training actors in Quentin Tarantino's film 'Kill Bill Vol 1'. He also established his original Samurai method 'Kengido' in 2012 and received the Consonance award in Florence, Italy in 2018.

As one who has been promoting 'Samurai' and Japanese culture and art to the world he was extremely happy to perform in the sultanate of Oman.

Says Tetsuro, "It was the first-time experience for me to have a performance in Oman, so I prepared a video with beautiful sights and history of Japan for the opening. In addition, I included the experience programme in our show for the cultural exchange."

Though a short stay in Muscat, the Samurai could spend "wonderful days with the kind attention of the officials, and the beautiful city and its nature."

The samurai warrior is one of the most iconic cultural symbols of Japan. The swordsmen are a class of noblemen devoted to serving regional lords as soldiers, diplomats, and guards which was amply demonstrated by Tetsuro in his performances.

He made performances with his original style instead of customisation. However, it was so pleasant for him when he felt there was something to convey without words thanks to an understanding audience.

Samurai Tetsuro started with the opening video which screened the sight in Japan, and the image of Tetsuro as a Samurai artist, and the image of his original Samurai method 'Kengido'.

Then came his solo performance with Tsugaru shamisen and later a realistic battle with another samurai, and finally a samurai experience with the audience. The last performance was themed on the samurai spirit which wrapped up the show.

He received rave reviews for this performance from the audience and it seemed the people were really happy to watch his performance regardless of age and gender.

They gave me a lot of pleasant comments, he said. "It was really beautiful and powerful," said a fan while some others felt like witnessing the real Samurai.

Samurai Tetsuro snapped pictures with a lot of people and felt respected and to his surprise, many talked to him in Japanese.

Tetsuro admits that with the development of high technology human beings have progressed in some ways but some of our abilities such as power of sympathy, motivation to live seems fading.

"I am proud of the Samurai method as the way you can learn to face others, respect each other and communicate while having fun and

I am working with responsibility to the future generations."

If offered a chance Tetsuro admits he is open to train Arabs in Samurai art. "Yes, of course. I would like to deepen my engagement with Arabian people. It makes me excited to imagine if an Arabian Samurai could be born," he adds.

He plans to come back again with pleasure to Oman soon.

"It would be an honour for me if I could contribute to the friendship between Japan and Oman."

Master Tetsuro says about Oman that he strongly felt they are really quiet, kind and full of love.

In addition, quite a few people speak Japanese. And he hopes that the cultural exchange between Japan and Oman could be increased and the opportunities Japanese people meet Oman people could be more.

Tetsuro was born in Saitama prefecture, Japan, in 1970 and graduated from Nihon University College of Arts. After gaining several years of experience in theatre activities, such as kabuki, he established a samurai sword performance group, 'Kengishu Kamui', of which he has been serving as a leader.

Both Tetsuro and Yoshimi Uto are based in Tokyo and have the dojo (school) in Aizuwakamatsu (Fukushima prefecture), Florence in Italy, Tuhan in Czech Republic and London, UK.

He was appointed as a tourism ambassador for Aizuwakamatsu City and Fukushima Prefecture in 2019 and has been devotedly promoting 'Samurai' as Japanese culture and art to the world still now.

In the future, the Japanese Embassy in Muscat, along with Tetsuro, will strive to make a continuous effort for the cultural exchange between Japan and Oman.

In 2012, he established his original samurai dojo, "Kengido" and has been expanding it not just in Japan, but in other countries such as Italy, Poland, the US and the Republic of Lithuania.

This exemplifies his dedication to promoting Samurai culture both inside and outside of Japan.

In March 2022, he performed for NBA games during the LA Lakers vs Washington Wizards. Earlier in January 2023 he also performed in Riyadh and Jeddah.

Tetsuro operates dojo in multiple countries and oversees the largest samurai-centric cultural preservation campaign in the world. Omanis seemed to be excited about his performance.

He says it was so exciting to listen about the history and the culture of Oman. "This time it was a short stay, I would definitely like to come back to Oman and I really appreciate the kindness of people in Oman. See you again soon. Thank you from the bottom of my heart," he says gleefully.

As he left Oman, Tetsuro fondly recalled his performance and expressed his eagerness to visit again for an extended stay. He brought back with him some Omani sweets as a souvenir, having enjoyed strolling along Love Street in Qurum and sipping coffee at a beachside café.

