



HM DISCUSSES
OMAN'S FUTURE
STRATEGIES
AND ITS
POLICIES WITH
STATE COUNCIL
MEMBERS

CONSOLIDATING
THE
PARTNERSHIP
BETWEEN THE
COUNCIL OF
MINISTERS
AND THE STATE
COUNCIL

PRESERVE THE
PROGRESS
OF THE
DEVELOPMENT
MARCH, ITS
GAINS AND
ACHIEVEMENTS

FOCUS ON
ANTICIPATING
THE FUTURE,
ENGAGE IN
JUDICIOUS
PLANNING AND
EXPLORE IDEAS

HM MEETS STATE COUNCIL MEMBERS

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq gave an audience to the Chairman and members of the Office of the State Council at Al Barakah Palace on Monday.

At the outset of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan gave thanks and praise to Almighty Allah for the bounties He conferred on Oman and divine riches that are deeply enshrined in our benign homeland.

His Majesty the Sultan also expressed gratitude to the Almighty Allah for the accomplishments and progress that cover all aspects of life, heralding yet a brighter future for this dear nation. He prayed to the Almighty to endow Oman and its people with everlasting bounties and success.

Then, His Majesty the Sultan touched on Oman's future strategies and its policies aimed at maintaining the forward-march

of comprehensive development, progress and prosperity. He spoke about a range of topics and issues of importance to the nation and citizens.

His Majesty the Sultan underscored the significance of the current stage which, he affirmed, requires exerting intensive efforts and giving priority to the country's supreme interest, notably to preserve the progress of the development march, its gains and achievements.



His Majesty congratulates Qatar Emir for making World Cup a success

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq has sent a cable of congratulations to Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, for the tremendous success in organising the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to Shaikh Tamim and the people of Qatar.

His Majesty also lauded the efforts exerted by the government and people of Qatar in making this global football event a success. His Majesty the Sultan wished the people of Qatar further progress and prosperity under the wise leadership of Shaikh Tamim. — ONA

Over 7,000 ready to donate organs

STAFF REPORTER
Muscat, Dec 19

Culture of organ donation is slowly spreading its roots in Oman going by the numbers of donors registered on the Shifa app of the Ministry of Health.

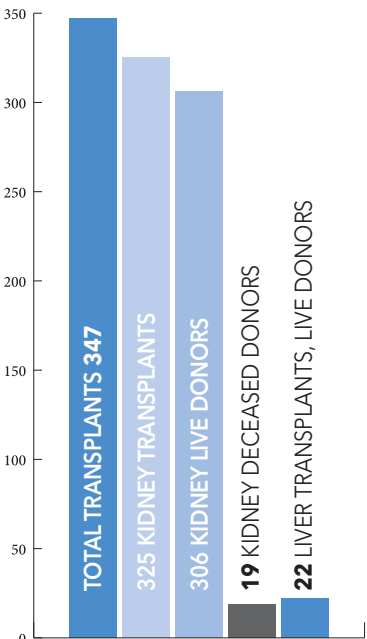
As many as 7,092 have agreed to donate their organs after death, thanks to MoH led awareness drives about organ donation among the people of Oman.

Since 1988, the number of organ transplants in Oman stood at 347, among them 325 kidney transplants from 306 live donors and 19 from deceased donors. The number of liver transplants from live donors stood at 22.

The figures were revealed during MoH's launch of the National Campaign for Organ Donation on Oman Organ Donation Day, which falls on December 19 every year.

The event included a workshop on organ donation. Specialists in the field took part

THE NUMBER OF ORGAN TRANSPLANTS SINCE 1988



in the workshop, which also saw the felicitation of a number of donors.

The National Campaign for Organ Donation highlights organ donation as a humanitarian

gesture, a generous initiative and an ideal solution towards the treatment of kidney failure and liver malfunction, among other ailments suffered by millions of people around the world.

Oman Organ Donation Day commemorates the first organ transplant on December 19, 1988. During the event, the National Organ Donation Awareness Campaign was launched. The event further introduced the National Programme for Organ Transplant, and trained health workers on the programme's policies and protocols.

The event was held on Monday at the Grand Millennium hotel under the auspices of Dr Mohammed bin Said bin Khalfan al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, in the presence of senior government officials, under-secretaries, and senior MoH officials and medical staff from various health sector institutions in the Sultanate of Oman.

GLOBAL 'PEACE PACT' SIGNED TO PROTECT NATURE

MONTREAL: Countries reached a historic deal on Monday to reverse decades of environmental destruction threatening the world's species and ecosystems, in what the UN chief hailed as "a peace pact with nature."

After the marathon COP 15 biodiversity summit in Montreal ran into the small hours, chair Chinese Environment Minister Huang Runqiu, declared the deal adopted and banged his gavel, sparking loud applause.

"We are finally starting to forge a peace pact with nature," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said, hailing the accord.

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said the deal was a "foundation for global action on biodiversity, complementing the Paris Agreement for Climate."

After four years of fraught negotiations, more than 190 other states rallied behind the Chinese-brokered accord aimed at saving Earth's lands, oceans and species from pollution, degradation and the climate crisis.

"We have in our hands a package which I think can guide us all to work together to hold and

reverse biodiversity loss, to put biodiversity on the path of recovery for the benefit of all people in the world," Huang told the assembly.

He overruled an objection from the Democratic Republic of Congo, which had refused to back the text, demanding greater funding for developing countries.

The deal pledges to secure 30 per cent of the planet as a protected zone by 2030, stump up \$30 billion in yearly conservation aid for the developing world and halt human-caused extinctions of threatened species.

Environmentalists have compared it to the landmark plan to limit global warming to 1.5C under the Paris agreement, though some warned that it did not go far enough. Brian O'Donnell of the Campaign for Nature called it "the largest land and ocean conservation commitment in history." "The international community has come together for a landmark global biodiversity agreement that provides some hope that the crisis facing nature is starting to get the attention it deserves," he said. — AFP



His Majesty meets State Council members



FROM PAGE 1

This, His Majesty the Sultan said, will contribute to supporting the government's efforts in implementing the preset plans and programmes and upgrading the comprehensive development march.

His Majesty the Sultan commended the tasks and studies undertaken by the State Council to research issues of concern to the nation and the citizens. He laid emphasis on maintaining such tasks and studies, with

focus on anticipating the future, engaging in judicious planning and exploring ideas that contribute to the efforts exerted by the government.

At the conclusion of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan underlined the importance of consolidating the ongoing partnership between the Council of Ministers and the State Council in a manner that serves the public interest. He wished all success in achieving further growth and prosperity in Oman.

— ONA





Over 7,000 ready to donate organs



FROM PAGE 1

World Health Organisation Representative John Jabbour commended the ceaseless efforts of the Sultanate of Oman represented by the MoH in cooperating with the office where the Organ Transplantation Programme was reviewed and recommendations were provided.

One of the most prominent recommendations was carrying out the national workshop that gathered representatives from all governmental and private agencies, and civil society organisations to create a solid foundation for the organ transplantation programme in the Sultanate of Oman.

He added that the WHO prepared a comprehensive

report that included an in-depth review of the status of the national programme for organ transplantation. The report identified priority areas that need to be strengthened and the legal, ethical and clinical points of view that must be addressed.

In addition, the WHO working group on human and organ tissue donation and transplantation suggested a clear national roadmap to guide the programme forward.

Dr Ahmed al Busaidy, Director of the National Organ Transplant Programme and Chair of OTS, shed light on the National Programme that aims at realising the established principles in human organ and tissue transplantation.

Al Busaidy pointed out that the number of organ failure patients

are on the rise in the country and that organ transplant can be the only way to end their agony.

The Sultanate of Oman was among the first countries in the region to perform organ transplant. The first surgery in the country was done in 1988 followed by limited surgeries in Sultan Qaboos University Hospital and Royal Hospital, said Al Busaidy.

"However, no notable progress was seen in this regard due to the absence of a national programme that regulates and supports organ donation. Therefore, the National Organ Transplant Programme was established by a Ministerial Decision in 2018, where the national Committee for Organ Transplant has emanated from the latter programme," he said.

Survey on citizens' views on local media content published

VINOD NAIR

@vinot_nair

The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) in cooperation with the Ministry of Information has published a survey on citizens' opinions about the local media content.

The survey, which covered the period from March 20 to 31, 2022, covered the opinions of citizens on media content across various platforms.

The survey data showed that 70 per cent of citizens watch the Oman TV channels, of which 61 per cent watch those channels on their TV, while 19 per cent

watch on social media.

The survey indicated that the public Oman channel is the most watched local TV channel by Omanis (48 per cent).

The frequency of male viewing of Oman TV channels was 86 per cent, compared to 18 per cent for females.

The survey said 1 out of 10 Omanis do not watch the Sultanate of Oman TV channels with the reasons being poor content (66 per cent) and lack of time (26 per cent).

It was noted that 74 per cent of Omanis listen to local radio channels in the Sultanate of Oman, while 24 per cent do not listen to the radio at all.

It was revealed that 70 per cent of citizens do not read newspapers.

The poll covered 1,739 citizens residing in the Sultanate of Oman in the age group of 18.

Approximately four out of 10 of the targeted people who prefer to read Oman newspapers read them once or twice a week.

Current affairs (political/economic) in Oman newspapers are the most preferred by readers, followed by sports.

Newspapers have more male Omani readers (30 per cent) compared to female readers (15 per cent). 35 percent of newspapers are in the age group 50 years and above.

Sultan Qaboos Awards ceremony tomorrow



MUSCAT: Delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, will preside over the handing over ceremony of the 9th edition of Sultan Qaboos Award for Culture, Arts and Literature, on Wednesday.

The winners of this edition, which is for Omanis only, will receive a medal of commendation, in addition to a cash prize, in fields of culture, science, arts and literature. — ONA

Ancient city unearthed in Wilayat of Dhank

DHANK: Archaeological excavations carried out by a joint mission from the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) and the University of Warsaw, have resulted in the discovery of remnants of an ancient city that dates back to the first millennia BC during the Iron Age at Ayn Bani Saida archaeological site.

The archaeological discoveries included pottery, staircases, stoves.

Dr Peter Belinski from the University of Warsaw said: "We are uncovering a small ancient city which was a replica of a larger one. The city was the result of a social state at that epoch. Among the discoveries was a hand-made, decorated crockery representing the first mixture of ceramic and pottery. It was found whole."

He added: "When the inhabitants abandoned their city, they took small pottery with them leaving the larger ones which were used for keeping water and cereals and dozens of them were

The city was the result of a social state at that epoch. Among the discoveries was a hand-made, decorated crockery representing the first mixture of ceramic and pottery

DR PETER BELINSKI
University of Warsaw

unearthed. We could not find out about the way they made food, however we could ascertain the methods they used to store food."

The astonishing thing about the discovered site is that it rises 8 metres above the surface of the plain. The peasants used to fetch from water sources every morning using large potteries. The head of the mission said that it is probably that the biggest



house belonged to the chieftain.

Ali bin Khamis al Sidairi, director of the directorate of heritage and tourism in Al Dhahirah Governorate, said that this site was historically linked to the archaeological sites of Bat, Salut and Dahwa.

Those archaeological sites established a strong connection throughout the successive ages. — ONA



Announcement

Works of transferring affected assets on the expansion of Rusayl-Bidbid road

Due the expansion of the Rusayl-Bidbid Road and the impact of the water transport pipes of Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company(OWWSC) , in coordination with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, will carry out the work of moving the main water pipe of Dakhiliyah Governorate during the period from 26 to 27 December.It is expected that the work implementation period will reach 24 hours, and the water service will gradually return within 48 hours.

The company has taken the necessary measures to ensure the provision of water according to the emergency procedures guide by activating alternative water sources (wells) and using water tankers to transport water to the main reservoirs. It also provided water tankers to supply water to customers, which can be obtained by contacting the call center 1442.

The company apologizes for any shortage that may occur in the water supply and urges all customers to take the necessary measures, and to continue to rationalize water consumption.

For more information, please contact the Call Center (1442).

[@owwsc_om](#) [www.owwsc.nama.om](#)

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TENDER NOTICE

Oman Development Bank is the leading player in financing projects that add value to national development. The Bank provides facilities for micro, SMEs and corporates.

Oman Development Bank seeks tenders for the following services from reputed vendors which specialized in providing Supply, Installation, Configuration, and Integration of SAN Storage at DR Site:

Tender No.	Description of service	Tender fee (RO)	Last Date of Submission of Tender
24/22	Supply, Installation, Configuration and Integration of SAN Storage at DR Site	-	2022/12/26

- Interested vendors may obtain tender documents from the Head Office of the bank (Ground Floor) located in MBD Area near the Ministry of Commerce & Industry on any working day (Sunday to Thursday) between 8 AM and 2 PM.
- The Tender enclosed in a sealed envelope addressed to IT Department, Oman Development Bank SAOC, should be submitted to the reception at Grand Floor by 12:PM on or before 2022/12/26.
- Oman Development Bank SAOC reserves the right to accept or reject any or all of the offers, extend the tender closing date, modify tender document(s) or cancel the tender without assigning any reason. Tender Committee's decision shall be final and binding.

OMAN DEVELOPMENT BANK SAOC

3077, PC 122, Ruwv, Sultanate of Oman 34726828 tender@oddb.om oddb.om



Effective and secure app for municipal councils voting

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@Afrahalbalushia

A first-of-its-kind electronic voting system with a high level of security is in place for 731,767 voters for the municipal council's third term. Among the eligible voters, 347,965 are women, and 383,802 are male voters.

On Sunday, December 25, citizens in the Sultanate of Oman will cast their votes, while citizens living outside Oman voted on December 18.

Omani citizens completed voting to choose their representatives in the municipal council's third term electronically through the "Intakhib" successfully.

Municipal councils contribute to the development of the states. Within the framework of the importance of this, voting took place for the first time through an electronic application, "Intakhib" to rule out manipulations.

The "Intakhib" application provides a high level of security using the latest technology.

The Ministry of Interior introduces the latest technologies in every electoral period in line with the development in technology.



For that the Ministry of Interior has announced to all voters that a certificate of attendance will not be issued.

An eligible voter can cast his vote via smartphone.

The application is characterised by a high level of security, as the voter is verified in a safe manner by reading the face print, as well as reading the identity card data electronically without manual intervention.

Malik al Hinai, a member of the media team for the elections of members of municipal councils in the Ministry of Interior, said, "The ministry is keen, with the launch of the elections, to use technology extensively and in line with the electoral period, through the launch of the "Intakhib"

application as a mechanism in the use of artificial intelligence, which is characterised by an easy and simple user experience. There was a high turnout of voters from outside the country. The voters praised the ease of voting."

He also stated, "The ministry has worked on a set of measures to ensure the safety of using this application, which enables optimal use of the application and maintains the validity of the voting service throughout the period specified for voting, using the highest technologies in the field of encryption to ensure that the application is effectively secure."

It is possible to vote through the application following four easy steps. After activating the Near Field Communication (NFC) feature the

App takes a photo of the ID card from both sides, and then puts a slide of the ID card attached to the phone read the data. After that the voter takes a picture, then a list of candidates appears for voter to choose the candidate in the state in which voter is registered, until presses the confirmation button to complete the voting process.

Citizens can also download the "Intekhab" application launched by the Ministry and participate in a social partnership. The dialogue area represents an electronic dialogue window that allows segments and groups of society to express their opinions and suggestions on various issues related to the elections.

"Intekhab" contains a package of electoral services for the user, through which the user can view many contents, including the preliminary and final lists of candidates, and the preliminary and final lists of voters, as well as the possibility of verifying registration in the electoral register.

The application also provides the ability to view the indicators of automatic counting on voting day, and a numerical statistic that shows the voter turnout in each state, and the age and gender groups of voters.



Edu ministry joint committee meeting evolves action plans

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education (MoE) held the first meeting of the joint committee between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education, represented the Ministry while Dr Bakhit bin Ahmed al Mahri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Higher Education, represented the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

The meeting of the joint committee is to be held on a regular basis of six months, with the aim of strengthening the existing cooperation between the two ministries on common issues. This also involves matters related to developing mechanisms and systems related to students and

employees sent to study.

The meeting also aims to develop action plans to ensure the work flow and face challenges related to enhancing the educational aspect of students in accordance with the requirements of the labour market, meeting academic standards, and harmonising the strategic plans of the two ministries in the field of developing educational system.

During the meeting, aspects of joint cooperation between the two ministries were discussed in the field of training courses for the employees of the two ministries, in order to ensure raising their efficiency in various developmental sectors, by developing specialised, qualitative programmes.

Educational specialisations in private universities and colleges, educational qualification programmes, and the rebuilding of the student guidebook from the Unified Admission Centre were also discussed.

ANNOUNCEMENT



RECALL CAMPAIGN 2018 (JL) JEEP WRANGLER

Starting Date of Campaign: 20/12/2021
Recall Segment: **Steering System**
Recall Type: **Electrical**
Recall Code: **Y95**

Jeep



Product Description:

MODEL AND MODEL YEAR	CHASSIS RANGE		NUMBER OF UNITS AFFECTED
	From	To	
2018 (JL) Jeep Wrangler	1C4HJXD6JW131111	1C4HJXFG5JW209231	52

Note: This recall only applies to the above vehicles.

Description of Recall:

On about 52 vehicles of the above model, customers may experience the need to exert greater effort when steering the vehicle during colder ambient and system operating temperatures and at speeds above 96 KPH (60 MPH). At lower speeds or warmer system temperatures, the steering assist will feel normal.

Rectification Procedure:

Use wiTECH II to perform a Body Control Module (BCM) Restore Vehicle Configuration routine. The reconfiguration will update the Electro Hydraulic Power Steering (EHPS) calibration.

Parts Number	Description
See Recall	No parts are required to perform this service procedure.

Service Procedure:

If you have a 2018 model year Jeep Wrangler, please contact our Customer Centre at Dhofar Automotive on 245004530 to, to make an appointment for your vehicle to be repaired if required.

Contact Details:
Telephone No: +968 24 500 530

E-Mail:
info@da-oman.com

Info meet discusses strategic plan



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Information, chaired the meeting of GCC Information Undersecretaries, held on Monday via video-

conferencing.

Oman was represented by Mohammed bin Said al Balushi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information. The meeting discussed

a number of topics, including the strategic plan on joint cooperation in the media field, as well as various initiatives and projects, among other topics. — ONA

MSX index rises 8 points

MUSCAT: Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) general index (30) on Monday gained 8.8 points, comprising a rise by 0.18 per cent to close at 4802.52 points, compared to the last session, which stood at 4793.73 points. The trading value stood at RO 2,171,407, comprising a decline by 0.72 per cent, compared to the last session, which stood at RO 2,187,173.

The report released by MSX pointed out that the market value went up by 0.069 per cent to reach about RO 23.76 billion. The report added that the value of shares bought by non-Omani investors reached RO 190,000, comprising 8.74 per cent. The value of shares sold by non-Omani investors reached RO 138,000, comprising 6.36 per cent.

The net non-Omani investment increased by 2.38 per cent to RO 52,000. — ONA

Tender Notice

Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company support services (Musandam Governorate) announce the following Tender:

Tender No.	Description	Eligibility	Last Date of Sale Tender Documents	Date of Submission	Tender Fee (RO)
T/003/OWWSC/2022	Civil Works in Al Rawdah Well Fields at Khasab Wilayat in Musandam Governorate (re-floating2)	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned.	06/01/2023	26/01/2023	25 Riials (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable

The tender documents can be obtained from Financial & Facility Section Support Services Department Musandam Governorate from the date of publication of this announcement (from 8.00 am to 12.00 pm, Sunday to Thursday) up to the last date of distribution of tender documents stated above.

Tenders should be submitted in a sealed envelope addressed to the Chairman of the Sub Tender Committee Musandam Governorate and marked with Tender Number and the subject. No other marks or any reference thereto should be printed outside the envelopes.

All participating companies shall submit a Bid Bond of 1% of bid value along with their offer. Bid Bond must be obtained from a Bank registered in the Sultanate of Oman and it should be addressed in favour of The Chairman of the Tender Committee and valid for 90 days.

Sealed bid along with all required documents shall be delivered to the Tender Box, in the Support Service Building in Musandam Governorate, located at Wilayat of Khasab not later than 10:00 am on the date specified above.

Tenderer should provide Tender Board registration certificate & Visa Card for Payment

For more information, please contact: 26830810 - 26830843

@owwsc_om 1442
www.owwsc.nama.om



Al Dakhiliyah celebrates Intl Day of the Arabic Language

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, DEC 19

The Directorate General of Education in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate celebrated the International Day of the Arabic Language, which falls on December 18 of each year, under the slogan (The Contribution of the Arabic Language to Human Civilization and Culture), at the Sultan Qaboos Mosque in Nizwa.

The ceremony was organised by the Directorate's Educational Supervision Department under the auspices of Dr Masouma bint Habib al Ajamiyah, and in the presence of Saif bin Hamad al Abdali, Assistant Director General for Education Affairs.

The ceremony began with the opening of the Arabic Calligraphy Alphabets exhibition, which included 20 artworks produced by students and teachers of arts subjects in the governorate's schools. The exhibition is under the supervision of Said bin Abdullah al Farsi, supervisor of art subject, and teacher Asila bint Salim al Kindiyah,



from Madinat Al Ilm School.

Majid bin Ahmed bin Majid al Qasabi, an Arabic language supervisor at the Directorate General of Education in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, in his speech said that this year, we chose the axis that embodies a manifestation of its greatness and a feature of its immortality.

A short film talked about the importance of the Arabic language was also shown in the ceremony.

Dr Abdullah bin Muslim al Hashimi, Associate Professor in the College of Education, SQU presented a lecture entitled, 'The role of the Arabic language in shaping the identity of the Arab person.'

Poet Hisham al Saqri, from the University of Nizwa, presented a poem that expressed the role of the Arabic language.

The celebration also included a presentation on the distinguished school initiatives in teaching and learning the Arabic language. Its idea is based on presenting the initiatives implemented in public and private schools of the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, which support the teaching and learning the Arabic language. It clearly impacts raising academic achievement for grades (1-12). These initiatives aim to exchange experiences between public schools and private

schools.

Enhancing the motivation of male and female teachers towards implementing this type of initiative by presenting their initiatives. And adopting initiatives that contribute to raising the level of achievement among students in the Arabic language, spreading the spirit of cooperation and teamwork in schools, and exchanging practical experiences in implementing specific initiatives that contribute to treating weaknesses in Arabic language skills and raising academic achievement.

The initiative targeted public and private schools for grades (1-12) in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, where 76 initiatives were submitted for the competition. Five initiatives have won after the evaluation.

Dr Masouma bint Habib al Ajamiyah, honoured the participants and praised the winning initiatives. Ahmed Bin Majid Strategic Initiative for the Belarab Bin Sultan School won first place. Bahla school won second place for the reading initiative.

OWWSC to carry out water pipe works on Al Rusayl-Bidbid Road

MUSCAT: Due to the expansion of Al Rusayl-Bidbid Road and the impact of the water transport pipes of Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (OWWSC), in coordination with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, will carry out the work of moving the main water pipe of Al Dhakiliyah Governorate on December 26, 27. It is expected the work will be implemented in 24 hours, and the water service will gradually return within 48 hours.

Eng Abdullah bin Mohammed al Nuaimi, CEO, Operation and Maintenance, OWWSC said: "The Company has taken necessary measures to ensure the provision of water according to the emergency



procedures guide by activating alternative water sources (wells) and using water tankers to transport water to the main reservoirs. It also provided water tankers to supply water to customers, which can be obtained by contacting the call centre.

Al Nuaimi added: "The OWWSC will also provide water storage tanks for groups of society, including those with limited income and social security. The distribution is in co-operation with the walis' offices of each wilayats and based on special criteria.

Blood bank calls for platelet donation

MUSCAT: The Central Blood Bank in Bausher urged donors to donate blood platelets as there is a daily need for more than 15 platelet donors.

On Sunday, the blood bank requested those with blood group AB - due to an urgent need.

Making a desperate call, the blood bank urged all citizens and residents to take the initiative and continue to donate blood.

"Generally, blood banks face difficulty in providing negative blood types. If your blood type is negative, do not delay your bid, and remember that there are those who are in dire need of your blood donation, the central blood bank said.

A platelet can only be kept alive for five days, the Department of Blood Bank Services, DBBS said several many cancer patients require daily platelet transfusions for 7 days.



Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Center

Tender Advertisement

Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Centre announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Fees	Last date for Collection of tender Document	Site Visit Date	Bid Submission Closing
CCCCRC/T/788/2022	Retender- Study, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of HVAC system for SQCCRC	50 OMR	01/01/2023	02/01/2023 09:00AM Meeting Point: SQCCRC Main Lobby	08/01/2023
CCCCRC/T/789/2022	Provision of Engineering Consultancy services for the Construction of Medical Store-B, Radioactive and Chemical Stores at SQCCRC	25 OMR	01/01/2023	-	05/01/2023

Qualified companies interested in participating in this tender shall collect the tender specifications from the date of this advertisement from the following address:

Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre – Purchase Department.

Biddings that meet the above requirements should be submitted in a sealed envelope (hardcopy & softcopy) and should be delivered and deposited in the tender box at SQCCRC.

Please note:

- Bids received after the deadline indicated above, for whatever reason, will not be considered.
- Queries/ clarifications should be submitted immediately, but not later than One week before the date of tender submission.
- For Queries you may Contact via e-mail: purchase@ccrc.gov.om
- The committee is not obliged to accept the lowest price of the bid or any other bid.



Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of tender document	Last date for tender submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)
Re-tender 232/2022	Establishment of a hydrotherapy unit at Al-Wafa Center for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Ibri	Companies specialized in building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the second degree	Tuesday 3-1-2023 02:00 PM	Wednesday 18-1-2023 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=
272/2022	Four-wheel drive car rental	Companies specialized in the field of car rental services and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the category of excellent, first, second, third or fourth	Monday 9-1-2023 02:00 PM	Sunday 29-1-2023 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=
273/2022	Buying cars	Companies specialized in the field of supplying cars, equipment and boats and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the grade of excellent, first, second, third or fourth	Monday 9-1-2023 02:00 PM	Sunday 29-1-2023 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

- ❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On Tuesday 20/12/2022.
- ❖ Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.
- ❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

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

www.mosd.gov.om



JOB VACANCY

OMANI NATIONALS ONLY

JOB TITLE: QUALITY ASSURANCE & QUALITY CONTROL LEAD

- ◆ **Location** - Site
- ◆ **Qualification** - Civil Engineering degree and ISO 9001-2015 lead auditing training. - Familiar with building/structural standards such as BS, ACI, ASTM, NFPA, etc.)
- ◆ **Experience** - Minimum of 15 years of relevant work experience of which 10 years in a similar position in an oil and gas environment.
- ◆ **Role & Responsibilities:** Implementing the Quality systems on site in accordance with Quality plans, Inspection & Test plans and procedures, preparing all Quality Control documentation, Procedure Qualification, etc., liaising with the contractor construction manager and QC/QA site inspector to resolve all QA/QC related problems and reviewing site generated daily documentation with site inspector/construction manager.

JOB TITLE: (HSSE) MANAGER

- ◆ **Location** - Site
- ◆ **Qualification** - NEBOSH diploma/certified safety professional/chartered member of IOSH.
- ◆ **Experience** - Shall have minimum 10 years' relevant work experience in oil and gas industry of which 6 years of experience in HSSE managerial position.
- ◆ **Role & Responsibilities:** Inspecting, auditing the activities, liaise with contractor management to provide all necessary HSE resources at site.

Email:hr.alezco1977@gmail.com

■ TAKING STOCK OF DAMAGE



Head of the European Union's mission to the West Bank and Gaza Sven von Burgsdorff visits the site of a Palestinian school which was demolished by Israeli authorities in the village of Esfay, in the Masafer Yatta area in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, on Monday. – AFP

UN nuclear officials leave Iran after talks, result unclear

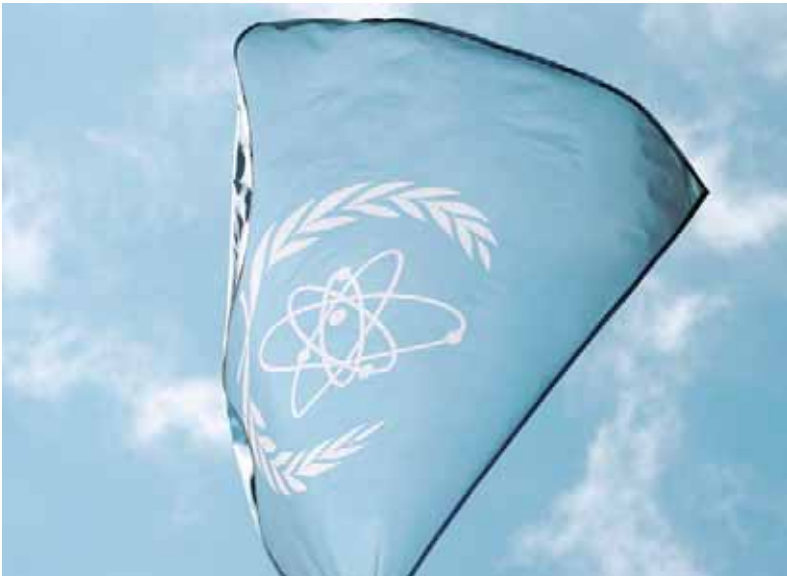
DUBAI: UN nuclear watchdog officials left Iran on Monday after talks with the head of its nuclear energy organisation, the semi-official ISNA news agency reported, without saying whether they addressed an impasse over uranium traces at undeclared sites.

The issue has been an obstacle to progress in wider talks to revive Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with major powers, meant to curb its disputed uranium enrichment programme in return for lifting sanctions imposed by Washington after exiting the pact in 2018.

Talks to restore the nuclear accord have been at a stalemate since September. Western powers accuse the Islamic Republic of raising unreasonable demands after all sides appeared to be nearing a deal.

The uphill climb to salvage the pact has grown steeper this year. Iran has brutally cracked down on street protests, Western states say Russia has used Iranian drones in its war in Ukraine, and Tehran has accelerated its nuclear programme, all of which raise the political price to giving Iran sanctions relief.

Iran has acknowledged that it supplied Moscow with drones but



Talks to restore the nuclear accord have been at a stalemate since September.

said they were sent before Russia's attack on Ukraine.

Kamal Kharrazi, a senior adviser to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said the issue of nuclear safeguards was the last one to resolve ahead of reviving the deal, the semi-official Tasnim news agency said.

"Iran is ready to return to its JCPOA (nuclear deal) obligations. Many problems have been resolved in the negotiations, now the only issue is safeguards," it quoted Kharrazi as saying.

"We hope that this matter will be resolved during the visit of the (UN nuclear) agency's delegation to Tehran," he said.

The United States said in October that reviving deal was "not our focus right now" as Iran had showed little interest, and that Washington was concentrating on how to support Iranian protesters - a view echoed by Germany in November.

ISNA said the delegation of the International Atomic Energy Agency, led by the IAEA's deputy director general for safeguards, Massimo Aparo, held negotiations with Iranian teams and met Mohammad Eslami, head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation. — AFP

Drones batter Kyiv

KYIV: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday arrived for a rare visit to neighbouring Belarus, which Moscow used to launch its attack on Ukraine nearly 10 months ago, for talks with close ally and strongman leader Alexander Lukashenko.

His arrival on an icy runway in Minsk came hours after Russian forces launched a swarm of attack drones at critical infrastructure in Kyiv, which provoked emergency blackouts in a dozen regions.

The Kremlin has for years sought to deepen integration with Belarus, which relies on Moscow for cheap oil and loans, but Lukashenko had resisted outright unification with Russia despite being a key ally in the war.

Speculation was mounting ahead of the Russian leader's visit that he would pressure Lukashenko to send his troops to Ukraine alongside Russia's military after a series of defeats for Moscow in nearly 10 months of fighting.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov however described the reports "as totally stupid, groundless fabrications."

The drone attacks, which left three injured near Kyiv, came as Russia said it had shot down several US-made missiles over its airspace near Ukraine.

"I first heard the air raid siren howling from the street... I thought there is going to be a drone attack. For the first time, it scared me," Natalia Dobrovolska, a 68-year-old resident of Kyiv, said.

She described hearing multiple explosions before power shut off in her building in western Kyiv. Officials said Russia had dispatched 35 attack drones



Firefighters work at a site of a critical power infrastructure object, which was hit during Russia's drones attacks in Kyiv on Monday. – Reuters

nationwide, including 23 over Kyiv.

Ukraine said it had downed 30 of the aerial weapons, including Iranian-made "Shaheds", which have pummelled the capital in recent weeks.

Mayor Vitali Klitschko said critical infrastructure facilities were "damaged" while regional authorities said nine homes had been scarred by the attacks.

Energy operator Ukrenergo meanwhile announced that emergency electricity outages were scheduled in the capital and nearly a dozen regions.

At the same time, Moscow said its air defence systems had shot down four US-made missiles over Belgorod, a Russian region bordering Ukraine, in one of its first such claims in nearly 10 months of fighting.

"Four American 'HARM' anti-radar missiles were shot down in the airspace over the Belgorod region," the defence ministry said on social media.

Ukraine has experienced frequent and deadly aerial attacks in the 10 months since Russia attacked in late February.

After a series of battlefield setbacks and lost territory this summer and autumn, Moscow stepped up its aerial campaign to target the country's energy grid.

With winter setting in, missile and drone attacks have plunged cities around the country into darkness, and severed water and heat supplies to millions of Ukrainians.

After a major Russian assault aiming more than 70 missiles on cities last Friday, the national electricity operator was forced to impose emergency rolling blackouts as it raced to repair the battered energy grid.

Speaking to the leaders of several NATO countries via videolink after the drone attacks on Monday, President Volodymyr Zelensky urged Ukraine's allies to supply its military with more weapons. — AFP

UK judges rule Rwanda deportation plan lawful

LONDON: Judges in London on Monday ruled that the UK government's controversial plan to deport migrants to Rwanda was lawful, after a legal challenge by migrants and campaigners.

Former prime minister Boris Johnson brought in the proposal to try to tackle record numbers of migrants crossing the Channel from northern France by small boats.

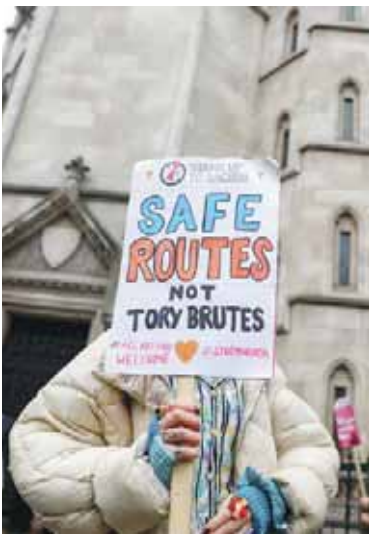
But it triggered a wave of protests from rights groups and charities, and last-gasp legal challenges successfully blocked the first deportation flights in June.

Several individuals who arrived in small boats and organisations supporting migrants brought a case at the High Court in London for a judicial review of the policy, claiming it is unlawful.

Lawyers for the parties argued that the policy was unlawful on multiple grounds, including the assessment of Rwanda as a safe third country.

The judges acknowledged that the issue had stirred public debate but said its only remit was "to ensure that the law is properly understood and observed, and that the rights guaranteed by parliament are respected".

"The court has concluded that it is lawful for the government to make arrangements for relocating



Protesters demonstrate outside the High Court over the legal challenge against the government's policy to deport illegal immigrants to Rwanda in London on Monday. – Reuters

asylum-seekers to Rwanda and for their asylum claims to be determined in Rwanda rather than in the United Kingdom," they said in a summary.

"The relocation of asylum-seekers to Rwanda is consistent with the (UN) Refugee Convention and with the statutory and other legal obligations on the government including the obligations imposed by the Human Rights Act 1998."

The judges however said interior minister Suella Braverman had not properly considered the circumstances of the eight claimants in the case

and referred their cases back to her. Tackling asylum claims has become a political headache for the ruling Conservative government in London, despite its promise to "take back control" of the country's borders after Britain's Brexit departure from the European Union.

More than 43,000 migrants have crossed the Channel this year in small boats, heaping pressure on social services to accommodate them while their asylum claims are processed.

Johnson's short-lived successor Liz Truss and the incumbent Rishi Sunak have backed the Rwanda deal, which aims to send anyone deemed to have entered the UK illegally since January 1 to the African nation.

Sunak and Braverman have both said urgent action is needed to prevent further tragedies in the Channel. Four people died last week when their boat capsized in freezing waters.

Both welcomed the ruling. "We have always maintained that this policy is lawful and today the court has upheld this," Braverman said, insisting it will help those relocated to "build new lives".

Sunak's official spokesman told reporters the government would "look to push ahead with this as soon as possible", although an appeal is likely. — AFP

Sultanate of Oman

Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs

TENDER NOTICE

The Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs hereby announces the following tender:

Tender Number	Name/Description	Grade	Closing Date for Collecting Tender Documents	Closing Date for Submitting Tender	Tender Document Cost
6/2022	INTERIOR, EXTERIOR AND ELECTRO-MECHANICAL WORKS FOR VIP HALLS IN THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND LEGAL AFFAIRS	FIRST	29/12/2022	12/1/2023	25 R.O

All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the Tender Board participate and get the specifications and condition of the tender from the ESNAD Electronic Tendering Services website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) in exchange for paying the amount specified above electronically, which amount shall be non-refundable.

Each company wishing to participate in the Tender must enclose with their Tender a Tender Bond in the form of a Bank Guarantee from a bank registered in the Sultanate of Oman for a value of one percent (1%) of the tender value and addressed to His Excellency the Chairman of the Internal Tenders Committee at the Ministry, and must be valid for ninety (90) days from the closing date for submitting tenders. Any bid that does not meet the Tender Bond requirement will not be considered.

***The Ministry is not obliged to accept the lowest or any Tender.**



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In brief

■ KUALA LUMPUR



MALAYSIA PM WINS CONFIDENCE VOTE IN PARLIAMENT

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim won a confidence vote in parliament on Monday, cementing his mandate a month after an inconclusive election result forced him to ally with the graft-tainted party of his former political rivals.

The affirmation of support was done via voice vote late in the day, with those in favour of Anwar's leadership drowning out those opposed, said Johari Abdul, speaker of the lower house of parliament.

Anwar said he had the support of 148 members of the 222-seat legislature, giving him the two-thirds majority necessary to pass reforms.

■ WASHINGTON



US NAMES KENNEDY SCION TO N.IRELAND ROLE

President Joe Biden's administration on Monday named Joe Kennedy III, a scion of the Irish American political dynasty, as an envoy on Northern Ireland.

Kennedy was given a title of special envoy to Northern Ireland for economic affairs with a focus on promoting investment and development.

The United States previously had a broader position of special envoy for Northern Ireland that started with former senator George Mitchell, who negotiated the landmark 1998 Good Friday agreement that largely ended decades of violence in the British-administered region.

■ STOCKHOLM



SWEDEN BLOCKS EXTRADITION OF TURKISH JOURNALIST

Sweden's Supreme Court on Monday blocked the extradition of an exiled Turkish journalist, a key demand by Ankara to ratify Stockholm's Nato membership.

There were "several hindrances" to sending back former editor-in-chief of the Zaman daily, Bulent Kenes, who Turkey accuses of being involved in a 2016 attempt to topple President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the court said.

Some of the accusations against Kenes are not crimes in Sweden, which along with the political nature of the case and his refugee status in Sweden, rendered an extradition impossible, the court added.

■ TITLE 42 ENDS TOMORROW



A child is carried over the water as migrants walk across the Rio Grande river from Mexico to cross into the United States to surrender to US Border Patrol agents in El Paso, Texas, as seen from Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua state, Mexico, on Monday. The "Title 42" measure has been used to expel hundreds of thousands of people since being invoked by former president Donald Trump in the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, and has been criticised as cruel and ineffective. It expires on Wednesday. — AFP

Ramaphosa survives scandal

JOHANNESBURG: South African President Cyril Ramaphosa was re-elected leader of the governing African National Congress (ANC) on Monday, overcoming the "Farmgate" scandal and paving the way for him to contest the presidency again at 2024 elections.

Ramaphosa's political future had been hanging in the balance earlier this month after a report by a panel of experts found preliminary evidence he may have violated the constitution over a stash of foreign currency hidden at his private game farm.

He has denied wrongdoing over the scandal, which has been dubbed "Farmgate" by the media, and challenged the report in court. He has not been charged with any crime, but some opponents have called for his resignation.

Ramaphosa beat former health minister Zweli Mkhize in a ballot at a party gathering in Johannesburg, securing a second five-year term as ANC leader and suggesting continuity in economic policy.

Ramaphosa won around 57 per cent of the votes against Mkhize's 43%, while Ramaphosa's allies also took the top seats in the party leadership.



Newly re-elected African National Congress (ANC) President Cyril Ramaphosa congratulates Gwen Ramokgopa, newly elected ANC Treasurer General, in Johannesburg on Monday. — Reuters

The announcement of Ramaphosa's victory was greeted by wild cheers from his supporters in the large conference hall who were clad in ANC-branded tracksuits, T-shirts, caps and jackets in the party's black, green and gold colours.

South Africa's rand, banking stocks and local sovereign bonds also made gains after Ramaphosa's win.

Ramaphosa and Mkhize shook hands on stage after the results were announced, as delegates sang, danced and whistled to

celebrate the result.

Mkhize was health minister during the COVID-19 pandemic, until Ramaphosa put him on special leave last year over after allegations his department irregularly awarded contracts to a communications company controlled by his former associates.

Mkhize has denied wrongdoing over the contracts.

In other ballots, ANC chairman Gwede Mantashe retained his position while Fikile Mbalula was elected secretary-general, the

official in charge of the day-to-day running of the party.

The "Top 7" group of the ANC's most senior officials is now more staunchly pro-Ramaphosa than the group that emerged from the 2017 conference where Ramaphosa won the top job for the first time.

Ramaphosa's only overt opponent in the Top 7 is first deputy secretary-general Nomvula Mokonyane.

But her influence will be limited by the fact that the secretary-general and second deputy secretary-general are Ramaphosa backers.

"The outcome of the 2022 conference has broken the political impasse that arose in the 2017 conference and signals a near obliteration of internal opposition to the ... agenda that President Cyril Ramaphosa has been championing," said Ongama Mtimka, lecturer and political analyst at Nelson Mandela University.

South Africa's next general election is due in 2024, following which parliament will choose the president. The ANC has won majority of seats at every vote since multi-racial elections began in 1994. — Reuters

Netherlands says sorry for slavery past

The Hague: Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte on Monday officially apologised for 250 years of the Netherlands' involvement in slavery, calling it a crime against humanity.

"Today on behalf of the Dutch government, I apologise for the past actions of the Dutch state," Rutte said in a speech in The Hague. Dutch ministers are travelling to seven former colonies in South America and the Caribbean for the event.

Sigrid Kaag, the Dutch finance minister and deputy prime minister, said on an official visit to Suriname last week that a "process" would begin leading up to "another incredibly important moment on July 1 next year".

Descendants of Dutch slavery will then celebrate 150 years of liberation from slavery in an annual celebration called "Keti Koti" (Breaking the Chains) in Surinamese.

But the plan has caused controversy, with groups and some of the affected countries criticising the move as rushed, and saying the lack of consultation by the Netherlands smacked of a still-colonial attitude.

As a result, Rutte has still not yet confirmed he will actually apologise, saying last week that details of his speech are "something that I would really like to keep under wraps until Monday". Local media said "everything points to the fact that he will indeed apologise" for the Dutch role in a trade that caused centuries of untold misery, but it remained unsure. — AFP



Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte responds to recommendations from a panel of experts to accept the role of the Netherlands in the history of slavery and its current consequences in The Hague on Monday. — Reuters

Scientists freeze Great Barrier Reef coral

SYDNEY: Scientists working on Australia's Great Barrier Reef have successfully trialled a new method for freezing and storing coral larvae they say could eventually help rewild reefs threatened by climate change.

Scientists are scrambling to protect coral reefs as rising ocean temperatures destabilise delicate ecosystems. The Great Barrier Reef has suffered four bleaching events in the last seven years including the first ever bleach during a La Nina phenomenon, which typically brings cooler temperatures.

Cryogenically frozen coral can be stored and later reintroduced to the wild but the current process requires sophisticated equipment including lasers. Scientists say a new lightweight "cryomesh" can be manufactured cheaply and better preserves coral. In a December



Research volunteers collect coral spawn from Great Barrier Reef coral, at the Australian Institute Of Marine Science, Sea Simulator in Townsville, Australia. — Reuters

lab trial, the world's first with Great Barrier Reef coral, scientists used the cryomesh to freeze coral larvae at the Australian Institute of Marine Sciences (AIMS). The coral had been collected from the reef for the trial, which coincided with the brief annual spawning window.

"If we can secure the biodiversity of coral ... then we'll have tools for the future to really help restore the reefs and this technology for coral reefs in the future is a real game-changer," Mary Hagedorn, Senior Research Scientist at Smithsonian National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute told Reuters from the AIMS lab.

The cryomesh was previously trialled on smaller and larger varieties of Hawaiian corals.

— Reuters

Will Artificial Intelligence kill creativity?



Sandhya Rao Mehta

The writer is Associate Professor, Dept of English Language and Literature Sultan Qaboos University

You may have seen online pictures of how celebrities who died prematurely would have looked in old age. Think Lady Diana, Heath Ledger or Michael Jackson. One such site belongs to Turkish photographer Alper Yesiltas whose project is called ‘As if nothing happened’. He uses AI photo enhancers as well as easily and freely available software.

There are also commercially available products which promise just the right picture for the message you want – just put in a one-word prompt. As one such photo provider says, “Finally, you’ll have the perfect picture to match your message. No more hunting for stock images...”. In fact, Lensa AI is currently

the most downloaded app on the iPhone. It takes your selfies and produces computer generated pictures – of you as space travellers or Renaissance type figures, or whatever key words you may have put in.

Generative AI works through a process of diffusion. This means that large datasets are put together to train the AI which is then able to devise new content which may resemble the input data, but is not identical to it.

Similarly, AI is used in advertising by putting in large amounts of emotive words to write a copy and headlines.

We may balk at such reduction of human creativity. After all, photographers spend hours

AI CAN’T HANDLE CONCEPTS: EMOTIONS, CONNECTIONS, MEMORY OR DREAMS ARE ALL HUMAN QUALITIES THAT MAKE A WORK OF ART MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY PICTURE

getting the right shot and writers have spent hours and days to get across just the right idea, moment or emotion. What hope is there from a picture generated within minutes? The concerns are real. Concept artist and illustrator RJ Palmer said, “The main concern for me is what this does to the future

of not just my industry, but creative human industries in general. Artwork such as illustration for articles, books or album covers may soon face competition from AI, undermining a thriving area of commercial art.” Can AI actually replace human creativity? The jury is still out on this. On the one hand, AI generated content is becoming popular because it is a new trend, but also because it is cost effective. It is better to download software than to have to employ designers or copywriters. It is also less stressful as the machines will not argue, or care about long work hours.

However, all may not yet be lost. When all is said and done, AI still has its limitations. This is best described by a designer who

explains that the keywords ‘man as astronaut’ and ‘astronaut as man’ generate exactly the same visuals – because AI cannot really distinguish the changed focus of the relationship between the two.

Further, AI can’t handle concepts: emotions, connections, memory or dreams are all human qualities that make a work of art more than just a pretty picture. Similarly, AI cannot really confront ethical issues or consider what is appropriate.

Most importantly, people breathe passion into a project. This is more important than a random use of metadata to create the most common impression. As of now, AI is still a few steps behind the human mind.

Japan to overhaul defence policy to take on China

SARA HUSSEIN

Japan is expected to announce its biggest defence overhaul in decades this week, hiking spending, reshaping its military command and acquiring new missiles to tackle the threat from China.

The policies, to be outlined in three defence and security documents as soon as Friday, will reshape the defence landscape in a country whose post-war constitution does not even officially recognise the military.

“Fundamentally strengthening our defence capabilities is the most urgent challenge in this severe security environment,” Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said at the weekend.

“We will urgently ramp up our defence capabilities over the next five years.”

The shift is the result of Tokyo’s fears about China’s growing military strength and regional posturing, as well as threats ranging from North Korean missile launches to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Key among the new policies is a pledge to boost spending to two percent of GDP by 2027 to bring Japan in line with NATO members.

That marks a significant increase from historic spending of around one per cent, and has sparked criticism over how it will be financed.

The money will fund projects including the acquisition of what Japan calls “counterstrike capacity” — the ability to hit launch sites that threaten the country, even preemptively.

Japan has previously shied away from acquiring that ability over disputes on whether it could violate the constitution’s limit on self-defence.

In a nod to the controversy, the policy documents will reportedly insist that Japan remains committed to a “self-defence-oriented security policy” and will “not become a military power”.

Part of that capacity will come from up to 500 US-made Tomahawk cruise missiles Japan is reportedly considering purchasing as a backstop while it develops longer-range missiles domestically.

Japan has also announced plans to develop a next-generation fighter jet with Italy and Britain, and is reportedly planning to build new ammunition depots and launch satellites to help guide potential counterstrikes.

The changes will also affect military organisation, with the Nikkei newspaper reporting that all three branches of the Self-Defense Forces will be brought under a single command within five years.

The SDF presence on Japan’s southernmost islands will be increased — including a tripling of units with ballistic missile interception capacity, according to local media. — AFP

Emperor of luxury world’s richest

KATELL PRIGENT

Bernard Arnault — who with his family now tops the wealth of Elon Musk — gradually built LVMH into a global luxury empire by buying up iconic brands, sealing his reputation as a formidable and insatiable businessman.

With \$184 billion on Thursday, the 73-year-old Frenchman and his family moved to the top of Forbes’ billionaire list, knocking the Tesla, SpaceX and Twitter boss off the top spot.

LVMH — the world’s leading luxury group — boasts more than 75 brands, acquired over time.

They include some of the most recognisable names in fashion and prestige goods, from Louis Vuitton and Kenzo to Moet Hennessy and Tiffany.

“An essential quality in our family is patience,” Arnault acknowledged in a 2012 TV profile of him.

A decade later — by which time LVMH’s annual sales had more than doubled to over 64 billion euros (\$68 billion) — he told France’s Radio Classique: “We can continue to progress — but let’s be patient.

“No rush,” he said. The businessman has also invested in the French media, a move he described during a Senate hearing in January 2022 as “more on the patronage side”.

During a hearing in the French Senate earlier this year Arnault said he had intervened to stop LVMH advertising in the Liberation newspaper, after it irked him with a front-page article.

Arnault was born in the northern French city of Roubaix on March 5, 1949 and joined his father’s public works building company at the age of 22.

He had just left the elite Ecole Polytechnique and convinced his father to transform the construction business into real-estate development instead.

In 1981, after socialist Francois Mitterrand was elected president, Arnault left France for the United States.

On his return three years later, he bought the debt-ridden textiles company Boussac, prevailing against several serious competitors with a promise to save jobs.

However, he embarked on a drastic reorganisation of the firm, only retaining some of its businesses,



When the use of private jets by celebrities was being tracked on social media earlier this year, Arnault sold the LVMH jet. “The upshot now is that no one else can know where I’m going because I lease planes,” he said.

WITH \$184 BILLION ON THURSDAY, THE 73-YEAR-OLD BERNARD ARNAULT AND HIS FAMILY MOVED TO THE TOP OF FORBES’ BILLIONAIRE LIST, KNOCKING THE TESLA, SPACEX AND TWITTER BOSS OFF THE TOP SPOT

including the fashion house Christian Dior.

By then, Arnault was 35 years old. “My father was surprised when I went to see him saying: ‘We’re going to redirect the family group and try to invest in something more promising, Christian Dior,” the businessman recalled recently on Radio Classique.

It would be the foundation stone for his luxury empire.

LVMH was born out of the merger in 1987 of trunk-maker Louis Vuitton and the wines and spirits group Moet Hennessy.

Rivalry between the families owning the two companies aided Arnault’s ascendancy and he took control of the group in 1989 after no fewer than 17 legal proceedings.

“He’s a tough negotiator but unmatched, a visionary who knows how to surround himself with good people and who in the end always gets his way one way or another,” Arnaud Cadart, portfolio manager at financial

services firm Flornoy, said.

Arnault’s rise, however, has not been without some failures.

He lost Italian fashion and leather goods house Gucci to his French rival Francois Pinault, head of the PPR group, in 1999.

Arnault also tried in vain to take over Hermes, known for its silk scarves and leather handbags, by secretly building up a stake in the firm.

He rarely speaks publicly and does not like the limelight.

When the use of private jets by celebrities was being tracked on social media earlier this year, Arnault sold the LVMH jet.

“The upshot now is that no one else can know where I’m going because I lease planes,” he said on Radio Classique.

“It’s the French businessman’s lot to embody — sometimes in a totally unjustified way — the criticisms of the day since the mindset has for a few years now been a bit anti-corporate,” he lamented on France 2 in 2016.

That same year he was skewered in a satirical documentary entitled “Merci Patron!” (Thank you Boss!) by filmmaker and now politician Francois Ruffin, who often has Arnault in his crosshairs.

Last year, LVMH paid a 10-million-euro fine to settle a case as part of a probe into spying.

Arnault abandoned his bid to secure Belgian nationality in 2013 issuing a mea culpa after it whipped up a storm of controversy which rumbled on for months amid public debate over the tax arrangements of the wealthy.

In 2011, he was received at the White House by president Barack Obama; Russian President Vladimir Putin welcomed him to Moscow five years later; former French president Francois Hollande cut the ribbon on his Louis Vuitton Foundation, while Donald Trump did the same for a Vuitton workshop in Texas.

And when the historic Samaritaine department store, owned by LVMH, reopened last year, French President Emmanuel Macron was a guest at the inauguration.

In Japan, China and the Middle East, the luxury mogul has access to top leaders.

Arnault has five children, all of whom work for LVMH, but shows little sign of slowing down — or handing over the reins just yet. — AFP

Connect to your authentic self

Being genuine to who you are at the core and abiding by your “gut feeling” is living your truth. The main responsibility of your intuition and inner wisdom are to guide you along the path of happiness and contentment.

When we acknowledge our inner power which flourishes from the innate part of our being that merely wants the best for us, this will simultaneously direct our minds to attract experiences to connect authentically with.

Living from an authentic place is when you are truly living life in veritable connection to your essence, accompanied with all your values, your purpose, priorities and needs. It means living in congruence, in harmony and in alignment.

From this place, your energy is so much more inclined to pursue positive outcomes.

In order to connect more to your authentic self, here are some tips to work on daily:

1. Journaling:
It doesn't have to be written linearly, simply get your thoughts on paper. Allow a stream of consciousness to flow. Recording voice notes is another great way to get in touch with your sentiments and feelings.

2. Solo time:
Spend time meditating, in nature and being in solitude. Replenish your self-care energy with the self-love activities that bring you joy. Delve deep into a hobby, be creative and adventurous. Connect more to your passions. Pay attention to your physical body and mental well-being.

3. Values work:
Understanding your values is vital to your happiness.



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

THE MAIN RESPONSIBILITY OF YOUR INTUITION AND INNER WISDOM ARE TO GUIDE YOU ALONG THE PATH OF HAPPINESS AND CONTENTMENT

Knowing what they are will aid you to constantly and consistently move in the right direction towards your goals and dreams. Your values are what drive you.

4. Ignore the “should’s” and focus on the “can’s”.

Say “no” more to others and “yes” more to yourself.

Move away from trying to please everyone, focus on pleasing yourself and those who bring joy to your life.

5. Explore your purpose:
Make intentional time to ponder on the meaning of Your life and what true happiness means to you, minus all the distractions and temptations.

6. Mindfulness:
Focus on your internal state, your thoughts, feelings and emotions.

Get good at mastering your breath so as to move out of your head and connect to your body more.

This will bring you more cognizance of your overall well-being.

When we live life authentically, this means having a keen awareness of who we are and what we stand for.

Being true to who we are on the inside and expressing it on the outside takes courage and compassion.

With kindness and patience we can all manage to climb the levels required in order to shine authentically, from a grounded place of utmost self-worth, self-assuredness and self-respect.

True authenticity will illuminate the path forward to derive the life you want. The clarity gained will allow you to make more informed and well-versed decisions that will further align with your identity and core values.

From here on forth, the unshakable foundation you construct will undoubtedly bring more meaning and joy to your life.

WINTER WEAR OFF TAILS



A Turkish Airlines passenger aircraft undergoes de-icing before takeoff from Frankfurt airport, Germany, on Monday. – Reuters

What would Plato say about ChatGPT?

Plato mourned the invention of the alphabet, worried that the use of text would threaten traditional memory-based arts of rhetoric. In his “Dialogues,” arguing through the voice of Thamus, the Egyptian king of the gods, Plato claimed the use of this more modern technology would create “forgetfulness in the learners’ souls, because they will not use their memories,” that it would impart “not truth but only the semblance of truth” and that those who adopt it would “appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing,” with “the show of wisdom without the reality.”

If Plato were alive today, would he say similar things about ChatGPT?

ChatGPT, a conversational artificial intelligence programme released recently by OpenAI, isn't just another entry in the artificial intelligence hype cycle. It's a significant advancement that can produce articles in response to open-ended questions that are comparable to good high school essays.

It is in high schools and even college where some of ChatGPT's most interesting and troubling aspects will become clear.

Essay writing is most often assigned not because the result has much value — proud parents putting good grades on the fridge aside — but because the process teaches crucial skills: researching a topic, judging claims, synthesising knowledge and expressing it in a clear, coherent and persuasive manner. Those skills will be even more important because of advances in AI.

When I asked ChatGPT a range of questions — about the ethical



Zeynep Tufekci

RATHER THAN LISTEN TO A LECTURE IN CLASS AND THEN GO HOME TO RESEARCH AND WRITE AN ESSAY, STUDENTS LISTEN TO RECORDED LECTURES AND DO RESEARCH AT HOME, THEN WRITE ESSAYS IN CLASS, WITH SUPERVISION, EVEN COLLABORATION WITH PEERS AND TEACHERS.

challenges faced by journalists who work with hacked materials, the necessity of cryptocurrency regulation, the possibility of democratic backsliding in the United States — the answers were cogent, well reasoned and clear. It's also interactive: I could ask for more details or request changes.

But then, on trickier topics or more complicated concepts, ChatGPT sometimes gave highly plausible answers that were flat-out wrong — something its creators warn about in their disclaimers.

Unless you already knew the answer or were an expert in the field, you could be subjected to a high-quality intellectual snow job.

You would face, as Plato predicted, “the show of wisdom without the reality.”

All this, however, doesn't mean ChatGPT — or similar tools, because it's not the only one of its kind — can't be a useful tool in education.

Schools have already been dealing with the internet's wealth of knowledge, along with its lies, misleading claims and essay mills.

One way has been to change how they teach. Rather than listen to a lecture in class and then go home to research and write an essay, students listen to recorded lectures and do research at home, then write essays in class, with supervision, even collaboration with peers and teachers. This approach is called flipping the classroom.

In flipped classrooms,

students wouldn't use ChatGPT to conjure up a whole essay. Instead, they'd use it as a tool to generate critically examined building blocks of essays. It would be similar to how students in advanced math classes are allowed to use calculators to solve complex equations without replicating tedious, previously mastered steps.

Teachers could assign a complicated topic and allow students to use such tools as part of their research. Assessing the veracity and reliability of these AI-generated notes and using them to create an essay would be done in the classroom, with guidance and instruction from teachers. The goal would be to increase the quality and the complexity of the argument.

This would require more teachers to provide detailed feedback. Unless sufficient resources are provided equitably, adapting to conversational AI in flipped classrooms could exacerbate inequalities.

In schools with fewer resources, some students may end up turning in AI-produced essays without obtaining useful skills or really knowing what they have written. “Not truth but only the semblance of truth,” as Plato said.

Some school officials may treat this as a problem of merely plagiarism detection and expand the use of draconian surveillance systems. During the pandemic, many students were forced to take tests or write essays under the

gaze of an automated eye-tracking system or on a locked-down computer to prevent cheating.

In a fruitless arms race against conversational AI, automated plagiarism software may become supercharged, making school more punitive for monitored students. Worse, such systems will inevitably produce some false accusations, which damage trust and may even stymie the prospects of promising students.

Educational approaches that treat students like enemies may teach students to hate or subvert the controls. That's not a recipe for human betterment.

While some students lag, advanced AI will create a demand for other advanced skills. Nobel laureate Herbert Simon noted in 1971 that as information became overwhelming, the value of our attention grew. “A wealth of information creates a poverty of attention,” as he put it. Similarly, the ability to discern truth from the glut of plausible-sounding but profoundly incorrect answers will be precious.

Already, Stack Overflow, a widely used website where programmers ask one another coding-related questions, banned ChatGPT answers because too many of them were hard-to-spot nonsense.

Why rely on it at all, then?

At a minimum, because it will soon transform many occupations. The right approach when faced with transformative technologies is to figure out how

to use them for the betterment of humanity.

Betterment has been a goal of public education for at least the past 150 years. But while a high school diploma once led to a better job, in the past few decades, the wages of high school graduates have greatly lagged those of college graduates, fostering inequality.

If AI enhances the value of education for some while degrading the education of others, the promise of betterment will be broken.

Plato erred by thinking that memory itself is a goal, rather than a means for people to have facts at their call so they can make better analyses and arguments. The Greeks developed many techniques to memorise poems like the “Odyssey,” with its more than 12,000 lines. Why bother to force this if you can have it all written down in books?

As Plato was wrong to fear the written word as the enemy, we would be wrong to think we should resist a process that allows us to gather information more easily.

As societies responded to previous technological advances, like mechanisation, by eventually enacting a public safety net, a shorter workweek and a minimum wage, we will also need policies that allow more people to live with dignity as a basic right, even if their skills have been superseded.

— The New York Times.

sport

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In this aerial view, fans of Argentina celebrate winning the Qatar 2022 World Cup final against France at the Obelisk in Buenos Aires. — AFP

Messi and Argentina the toast of world media

DOHA: Legendary, greatest, immortal: News media across the planet ran out of superlatives after Lionel Messi led Argentina to victory in one of the most dramatic World Cup finals ever. The thrilling penalty shoot-out win over France gave La Albiceleste their first World Cup since national hero Diego Maradona guided them to the 1986 title.

And it sparked an explosion of joy in Argentina, where the media saluted the nation's latest generation of World Cup heroes, and their talisman Messi.

Images of him holding the trophy aloft and the team's celebrations adorned news websites and social media feeds in Argentina.

Messi's Argentina had won "the greatest final in history", said the daily *La Nacion*, while *Clarín* described it as an "unforgettable" match.

The sports daily *Ole's* homepage was splashed with "We are world champions!"

The final was billed as a titanic showdown between Messi and French superstar Kylian Mbappe, and it did not disappoint the neutrals.

While Messi scored from the spot twice to put Argentina in the lead, Mbappe inspired the French fightback with a hat-trick to take the final to penalties.

"Head held high," read the headline on the front page of



Argentina captain Lionel Messi lifts the World Cup trophy after Argentina won the Qatar 2022 World Cup final match against France at Lusail Stadium, near Doha. — AFP

French sports daily *L'Equipe*, the text imposed on an image of Mbappe holding his Golden Boot prize as he walked past the World Cup trophy.

"Legendary," said the front page of the daily *Liberation*, with

photos of both Messi and Mbappe, while *Le Figaro* described the French star's efforts as "heroic".

IN THE HAND OF GOD

Messi had cemented his place long ago among the greatest of

all time, but the football world was abuzz ahead of the final with the prospect of the fleet-footed magician crowning his glittering career with the World Cup — the one major trophy he had never won.

And with Argentina's win on Sunday, the debate about his stature in the history of the sport was settled for most.

In Britain, *The Times* said on its front page that Messi had won the "battle of modern maestros in

greatest final". On the front page of its sports section, it described him as, simply, "The Greatest".

The Mirror called him the GOAT — "greatest of all time" — while *The Sun* said the World Cup was "In the Hand of God", a cheeky reference to Maradona's infamous goal against England in the 1986 tournament.

THE FOOT OF GOD

In Germany, the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* also played on that reference with the headline "The foot of God" for Messi.

It called the Argentina-France showdown "the most exciting final" in World Cup history, while the daily *Tagesspiegel* said it showcased "two exceptional talents".

Even in Brazil — an intense rival — the *O Globo* newspaper paid tribute to Messi, saying football had "paid its debt" to its biggest star.

In the United States, which will host the next World Cup with Canada and Mexico, a report in *The Washington Post* said Messi was finally rewarded in an "immortal" final.

Spain's *El Pais* newspaper said Messi had been "crowned in the final of finals". And in Asia, where Messi has legions of fans, Indian newspaper *The Hindu* said his Argentina team had kept their "date with destiny", while South Korean daily *Hankook Ilbo* called him a "god of football". — AFP

Dalic dedicates bronze to Modric



ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
DOHA, DEC 19

Croatia manager Zlatko Dalic dedicated his World Cup third-place bronze medal to midfield maestro Luka Modric after Croatia edged Morocco 2-1 in the play-off at the Khalifa International Stadium on Saturday night.

Modric said he intends to play on with Croatia after the World Cup and confirmed his availability for the Nations League matches next year.

"About my future, I don't know if I will be [playing] until the [2024] Euro in Germany, we will see," he said. "I need to go step by step.

I'm enjoying the national team, I feel happy, I still think I can perform on a high level and I want to continue until at least the Nations League," the Real Madrid star said.

"After that, there will be more time to think about the Euro — but now, it's go step by step and continue until at least the Nations League, and after we will see."

The head coach also hinted that the captain may stay on to help his country qualify and try to win Euro 2024 in Germany.

The Real Madrid midfielder is 37 but still playing at the highest level, and when Dalic was asked about him staying on he replied: "Yes, I hope so.

"Some people might think it is the end for him but I

think Luka Modric will stay with us for a long time.

"He's our captain, he's our boss, our leader and everybody follows him. He played fantastically well in this tournament. He's 37 years old but played like a 25-year-old. I'm very happy with him, and this trophy is also for him."

Croatia assistant coach Ivica Olcic also said he was "100 per cent sure" Modric would be in the squad if fit.

CROATIA 2-1 MOROCCO: STATS OF THE DAY

Josko Gvardiol has become the youngest-ever goalscorer for Croatia in the Fifa World Cup at the age of 20 years and 328 days. Ivica Olcic had previously been the youngest at the age of 22 years and 267 days (vs Italy in 2002).

At the age of 37 years and 99 days, Luka Modric is the oldest player to have played for Croatia in the Fifa World Cup.

Croatia are unbeaten in their four Fifa World Cup matches against African nations (W3 D1).

Croatia have lost only two of their last 23 international matches (W13 D8).

A European nation has finished third at each of the last 11 Fifa World Cup final competitions. The last non-European team to finish third was Brazil in 1978.

Hakim Ziyech and Achraf Hakimi are the first Moroccan players to reach ten Fifa World Cup appearances.



Oman Club lead first division volleyball league, Seeb second

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, DEC 19

Oman Club are leading the volleyball first division league for 2022-23 season after completion of second round matches. The Muscat-based team are topping the group with full mark as they have six points from two victories while Seeb Club are positioned in the second place with three points.

Suhar are in third place with

the same credit of three points besides Al Bashayer and Majees in the fourth and fifth places respectively. Seeb and Suhar have played one match till now in the league. Seven teams are taking part in this edition of the league including Bahla, Saham, Majees, Al Bashayer, Suhar, Seeb and Oman Club.

Oman Club opened their campaign in the top domestic volleyball league with a 3-0 win over

Majees. The score of the three sets ended at 25-21, 24-26 and 25-17.

In the following match, Oman Club blanked Al Bashayer 3-0 as the first set finished 25-17 while in the second set the gap was only two points at 25-23. The Oman Club spikers confirmed their victory in the final set as they scored 25-21. Oman Club featured top players from the national team including Saud al Mamari and Ibrahim al Mazaeni.

Seeb, coached by national coach Jamal al Mamari, managed to earn their first victory in the league as they beat Bahla 3-0 in their opening match with scores of 25-11, 25-15 and 25-10. Majees snatched a 3-0 win against Saham. Seeb opened the new season by lifting the Super Cup after they had defeated Oman Club 3-0 in the final in November end. The sets of the Super Cup match ended at 25-12, 25-14 and 25-22.

Oman Stallions cruise past Yalla Shabab

MUSCAT: Oman Stallions edged past Yalla Shabab by 3 wickets and Muscat CT beat AER Bin Ali by 7 wickets in the Premier Division League Season 2022-23 powered by Muscat Pharmacy.

On Friday, Oman Stallions put Yalla Shabab to bat first. Openers Mujibur Ali and Hannan Rizwan gave them a cruising start stitching a 73 runs partnership. Although, the spin trio of Jiten Ramanandi (2-20), Mohit Patel (2-32) and Karan Sonavale (3-45) did not allow any batsman of Yalla Shabab to capitalise and kept taking wickets at regular intervals to bundle them to just 199.

In response, Yalla Shabab picked 2 early wickets in the powerplay. Sankata Prasad (60 of 95) and Yasir Ali's grit and determination to stitch a 75-run partnership for the fifth wicket made a difference and put Oman Stallions close to victory.

Jiten Ramanandi's quick fire 30 ensured the Stallions got to the mark to register their second win of the league. Kaleemullah was the lone armer for Yalla Shabab bagging 4 wickets.



(From left) Oman Stallions' Jiten Ramanandi, Sankata Prasad and Karan Sonavale.

SHOAIB POWERS MUSCAT CT

Skipper Jatinder Singh of Muscat CT elected to bowl first in the Saturday's match. Debutant Akash Mohit and campaigner Munis Ansari fired in all cylinders at the AER batsman picking three of them in the powerplay.

A steady partnership between skipper Aamir Kaleem and his deputy Zeeshan Siddiqui

allowed AER breathing space. Although, wickets kept falling at regular intervals creating voids to enable them reach a respectable score. AER were bundled out for 160 in 47.1 overs. Munis Ansari ended with 4 wickets and Akash Mohit bagged 2 as well. In response, Muscat CT started off with Jatinder Singh and Shoaib Khan stitching a 60-run opening partnership for the powerplay. Shoaib Khan continued his brilliant form with an unbeaten 83 runs and ensuring Muscat CT claim 2 points of the contest.

BRIEF SCORES: Yalla Shabab 199 all out in 43.3 overs (Hannan Rizwan 32 (26b, 4x4, 1x6), Mujibur Ali 32 (50b, 6x4); Karan Sonavale 3-45, Jiten Ramanandi 2-20, Mohit Patel 2-32) lost to Oman Stallions 202-7 in 48.2 overs (Sankata Prasad 60 (95b, 4x4, 1x6), Jiten Ramanandi 30 (29b, 2x4, 1x6); Kaleemullah 4-21) by 3 wickets.

AER Bin Ali 160 all out in 47.1 overs (Aamir Kaleem 33 (40b, 4x4); Munis Ansari 4-31, Akash Mohit 2-44) lost to Muscat CT 161-3 in 30.4 overs (Shoaib Khan 83 (98b, 12x4); Mohd Hashim Syed 1-25) by 7 wickets.

ISC annual tennis tournament concludes

MUSCAT: The ISC Annual Tennis Tournament in association with Queen Topaz LLC concluded in style at the ISC courts on December 16.

Top seed Shanawas KK defeated talented youngster Abbas Haider in a tie-break 2-6, 6-2, 13-11 to clinch the men's singles title on the concluding day of the tournament. This match lasted for 1 hour 40 minutes. Abbas displayed a brilliant game in the first set and took the first set in his favour whereas in the second set, Shanwas broke Abbas serve in the very first game and took the lead by holding his own serve. Shanwas maintained his lead and took the second set in his favour.

In the final set, both the players displayed a spirited game holding their serve and the match went to a tie-break. In the tie-break, Shanawas broke Abbas' serve in the first game and took a 3-1



lead while maintaining his own serve. Shanawas then maintained his dominance and won the final deciding set to clinch the title. Shanawas also won against Sharif al Bakri in the men's B category in

the recently concluded RAHRC tournament.

Coach Sivan G along with the organising team comprising Suhail Khan, Girish KK, James Lawrence, Shanawas and Arun took all

initiatives to conduct the event in a systematic and professional manner. The tournament saw various events for boys, girls, men's as well as veterans in the three week-long event.

The awarding and closing ceremony were held right after the men's singles final, making a perfect end of the ISC Annual Tennis Tournament 2022. Sports Secretary Saji Abraham thanked

all the officials, tournament committee, staff, coach and parents for their support and dedication in conducting the tournament successfully.

ISC Vice-Chairman Karanjeet Singh appreciated the efforts of organising committee and extended all the support to forthcoming ISC Open tennis tournament which will be held in February 2023. Babu Rajendran, General Secretary, congratulated all the winners and appreciated the efforts of ISC in organising such a successful tournament.

Chief Guest Noushith Tanoli, Managing Director of Queen Topaz LLC, along with Karanjeet Singh and Babu Rajendran distributed the trophies to the winners. Executive committee members Suhail Khan, Coach Sivan Govind and Tennis Committee member KK Girish were also present.



**In association with Harvard Business Publishing
'Ruwad Alizz' has been widely praised by the
industry for its innovative approach.**

Muscat – Sultanate of Oman

Participants in the first batch of 'Ruwad Alizz' the flagship Talent and Leadership Development Program of Alizz Islamic Bank expressed their gratitude for the opportunity offered to them by The Bank in joining the Program which is run in collaboration with Harvard Business Publishing, a wholly owned subsidiary of the globally recognised Harvard University, and with The Performance Factory – the training partner for the project. The Program included both government and private sector participants in addition to Alizz Islamic Bank employees. The brain child of the Chief Executive Officer of the bank Mr Sulaiman Al-Harthi, this six month long learning journey is aimed at the development of 60 delegates per annum in two batches. The delegates of the Program's first batch praised the skills they acquired through a variety of learning interventions apart from web and classroom based activities. The Program included multiple interactive Leadership Exchange sessions with Oman's revered CEOs, and leaders from various institutions. By far the field visits to multiple industries have been identified as the most beneficial learning activity by the delegates.



MOHAMED AL-BALUSHI

The mid-level leadership development strategy is aligned to oman vision 2040

«In any development intervention, facilitating the learner to experience the connection (and the disconnect) between theory and application makes it a whole and practical learning activity. As in the case of the 'Ruwad Alizz' program, we sought to produce the aforementioned wholesome learning experience by employing a widely blended approach that even included mentoring sessions. On the otherhand, our intention is to contribute towards the progress of our beloved Oman, by developing the mid-level leadership to be aligned to Oman Vision 2040.» said Mohammed Al-Balushi, the Chief Human Resources Officer.

Al Balushi added "The Program's first batch was facilitated with the best of opportunities during this learning journey and we expect to witness the results of the programme in the near future with these delegates turning out to be exceptional contributors to their organisations, and effective leaders in the community."

Further, Dr. Aju Samuel representing The Performance Factory said "The Ruwad Alizz initiative is strategic in nature and is curated with a lot of thought and effort. It involves learning from the best resources globally, brainstorming on practical implications of global best practices within the organization and the country, reflecting on business journeys of successful leaders, visualizing operational nuances of Oman's top companies and bringing it all together to develop and

lead new strategic goals for the bank and the nation. This amalgamation of multi-skill immersion builds leaders and develops a long lasting bond among peers."



SAYYID ASA'AD AL-BUSAIDI

Oman's future is secure in the presence of young leaders

The 'Ruwad Alizz' program is organised in association with Harvard Business Publishing and The Performance Factory, and is an integrated program that shows you how institutions operate in their respective contexts, and amidst multiple challenges by strategizing and managing their people constructively. It is one of the first integrated, high-quality leadership development programs, during which it enables us to experience theory and practice at the same time and avail yourself of the expertise of experienced people. It provided me with the prospects to meet with influential and inspirational leaders that had, in their own words – "Started from scratch to reach to the highest of positions", that included CEOs, board members as well as chairpersons, which offered an invaluable opportunity to grasp the leadership concepts applied in real life. A leader does not necessarily mean a holder of a leading position but could be an employee anywhere at work assuming a leadership role. Management should be a profession rather than a routine job. The Program develops skills and opens delegates up to new horizons and instills the belief that nothing is impossible. Man should arm one's self with such knowledge and a culture that serves the entity he or she works for. Relationship building is also undoubtedly an important addition at any workplace and Ruwad Alizz opened us up to many situations to improve our

network." said Sayyid Asa'ad Al-Busaidi, an OIA employee and a Program delegate.

"The Program puts aside the age differences and allowed delegates to benefit from participants of all ages on an equal footing for the main objective is to exchange knowledge and experience. The Program also motivated us to constantly think. I am pretty certain that Oman's future is secure in the presence of these young leaders" he added.



HAITHAM AL-HADHRAMI

Field visits were one of the most important learning activities of the program

"I joined this Program, having an unclear understanding of what the meaning of a leader is, who a leader is and what his or her role is. The Program identified how a leader should look and be. For example, most of us believed that the leader's role is operational as opposed to the leader's role being more a far-reaching one. For example, his or her role is to develop the employees, draw up growth, development and progress strategies and know how to use emotional intelligence to manage his or her teams," commented Haitham Al-Hadhrami, an Alizz Islamic Bank employee and a program participant.

"This Program develops and adds many leadership skills to your repertoire. Direct engagement by the Chief Executive Officer of Alizz Islamic Bank was one of the most important factors that heightened our sense of responsibility to take advantage of every word said and the way in which the Program and its results should look like. In addition, the field visits were one of the most important components of

development. This is what we saw when we met the highly professional Omani leaders and cadres. For example, we are only used to coming into contact with the banking sector personnel, while there are other sectors that have well-qualified & well-trained leaders that may add to our development in terms of skills and various approaches to leadership, excellence, and decision-making. We understood what the management values are and how to hold a sensitive leading position and to always think about how to have balanced decisions and relations. Each leader has a certain management style. There is no standard style that can be called the right style. What matters to us is the results that achieve progress no matter how different methods and styles may be," he noted.

"The Program was not limited to Alizz Islamic Bank staff, but also granted us the opportunity to meet other government and private-sector employees at middle management, which stimulated enriching discussions and improved our thinking ability. For example, the same decision could be made by Alizz Islamic Bank and another institution but in through two different ways; hence the utilization of others' experiences. There may be systems which we thought right when we applied them, but this conception may differ when you see another person that applies the same systems but in another easy and flexible manner," he indicated.



ASMA AL-BALUSHI

Progress is achieved by what one practices and acquires, rather than learn

"This Program leads us to think about how to build the right career, think differently and have more duties and responsibilities.

Progress is achieved by what we acquire and put to practice rather than just what we learn," said Asma Al-Balushi, an Alizz Islamic Bank employee.

"The Program is layered and added several new ways of thinking, reading and analyzing situations differently especially in my area of work. I have been able to develop myself in ways which I never thought were possible. It enhances our leadership and entrepreneurship skills. At the institutions we visited, we met CEOs that shared their experience and helped us think differently, and in such a way that maximizes the benefit to such an extent that it is reflected in everything at the workplace. Any leader should be a constant learner as he who stops learning stops living," she added.



HAJER AL-FARSI

Straight roads do not make skillful drivers

"The field visits we paid granted us an infinite horizon of knowledge as each institution has its unique system to operate and manage especially the practices enforced to confront and overcome challenges. They have been truly tried and tested especially during the recent Coronavirus pandemic and thus the ensuing changes in such institutions which can now be called a true 'quantum leap' in terms of their evolution. Businessmen and CEOs came and delivered inspirational discussions and shared their experience. Having listened to them, we realized that a lot of things are 'easy come, easy go' and the things that are harder to acquire hold a longer life. It is experience that enables a person

to overcome challenges. As they say "Straight Roads do not Make Skillful Drivers." A true leader is the one that always accepts challenges," said Hajer Al-Farsi, an Alizz Islamic Bank employee.

"The case studies added to our knowledge. For example, we had a case study of a banking institution that had poor performance in their 2004 results, but in 2022 it is the second ranking banking institution locally in terms of results and assets due to the bold and comprehensive changes made to its management and operations. The Ruwad Alizz Program helps you learn and acquire skills for you to be a leader. However, all of those skills depend on the how the delegate would apply it in person and within the work environment," she added



AHMED AL-MUSAWI

The program is exceptional

"Those who joined this Program got an exceptional opportunity. We only see or hear of such programs in the media without having details. This Program allowed us to get to know some young leaders and how they balance their work life with their family life as well as how they overcome the difficulties and challenges they face. Experience is sometimes shared by a leader in several ways including books, direct meetings etc. Indeed, this Program achieves its mission in developing people who can lead staff. I have already started to apply some things I learnt within my work environment" said Ahmed Al-Musawi, a CSEPF employee.



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Elon Musk poll shows 57.5% want him to step down as Twitter chief



Elon Musk’s Twitter account is seen in this image. – Reuters

WASHINGTON: Twitter users voted in a poll for Elon Musk to step down as chief executive of the social media platform, in a backlash against the billionaire less than two months after he took over.

About 57.5% votes were for “Yes”, while 42.5% were against the idea of Musk stepping down as the head of Twitter, according to the poll the billionaire launched on Sunday. Over 17.5 million people took part in the vote.

Musk said on Sunday he will abide by the results of the poll, but did not give details on when he would step down if results said he should. Shares of Tesla Inc, the electric-car maker Musk heads, were up about 5% in premarket trading.

Musk, who lost his title as the world’s richest person earlier this month, also founded tunnelling enterprise Boring Company, backs medical device company Neuralink and heads rocket company SpaceX.

Tesla investors have been concerned Musk has been spreading himself too thin following the Twitter deal.

Tesla shares have already lost nearly 60% of their value this year, as, like other carmakers, it battles supply chain issues and increasing competition in the EV space.

“It appears Musk’s reign as CEO of Twitter will come to an end and thus be a major positive for Tesla’s stock, starting to slowly remove this albatross from the story,” Wedbush analyst Dan Ives said in a note.

“Musk is Tesla and Tesla is Musk.” Tesla is ranked among one of the top automakers in the world, delivering roughly about a million cars every year. But recent logistical challenges, pandemic-related lockdowns in China, higher borrowing costs and a dull outlook for global economic growth have raised concerns.

Last month, Musk told a Delaware court that he would reduce his time at Twitter and eventually find a new leader to run the social media company.

Replying to one Twitter user’s comment on a possible change in CEO, Musk said on Sunday “There is no successor”. — **Reuters**

UK Export Finance pledges support for Oman’s green energy goals

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, DEC 19

UK Export Finance (UKEF), the export credit agency (ECA) of the United Kingdom, has vowed to extend financing support to help the Sultanate of Oman achieve its ambitions to develop a domestic green hydrogen-based industry.

The pledge was made by a top official of the London-based international ECA during the Green Hydrogen Summit Oman Conference & Exhibition, which was held in Muscat recently.

“In terms of Oman’s green hydrogen ambitions, we are extraordinarily interested in this sector,” said Daniel Rathwell, Head of UKEF for Oman and Qatar.

“We’re very active. We are scoping a number of the developments here. We recognise Oman’s ideal position in the market and we are building on an incredibly strong bilateral relationship, which is very long-standing indeed.”



Addressing a gathering of green energy professionals, Rathwell said that UKEF aims to build and leverage on its “strong track record” in Oman, citing in this regard the ECA’s participation in refinery and petrochemical projects, as well as defence projects in the country.

“We know this market well and we know fantastic organisations like OQ very well indeed, and we can build on that as we move forward,” he remarked.

A number of international ECAs, including UKEF, are taking strong steps to support the global green

energy transition, said Rathwell.

“This is where ECA financing can play a really critical role because of our role in de-risking projects; We’re not dominated by a profit objective. We, in fact, have quite significant policy objectives that we’re trying to integrate into our product range.

And we step in a very patient and considered way. And in guaranteeing projects and in guaranteeing bank loans into those projects, we can draw in others to catalyse both equity financing but also other forms of debt financing as well.”

UKEF AIMS TO BUILD AND LEVERAGE ON ITS “STRONG TRACK RECORD” IN OMAN, CITING IN THIS REGARD THE ECA’S PARTICIPATION IN REFINERY AND PETROCHEMICAL PROJECTS, AS WELL AS DEFENCE PROJECTS IN THE COUNTRY

UKEF’s support for clean energy projects has been notable, says Rathwell. “Our clean growth story so far is essentially one of significant transformation over the past couple of years. Like many ECAs, we used to be dominated by fossil fuels. We used to be dominated by defence and civilian aerospace.

We have totally changed the way that we work as an organisation from ending our support to fossil fuels almost a couple of years to now financing quite significant flagship clean growth projects around the world,” he added.

Oil bounces as demand hopes offset recession fears

LONDON: Oil rose on Monday after tumbling by more than \$2 a barrel in the previous session as optimism over the Chinese economy outweighed concern over a global recession.

China, the world’s top crude oil importer, is experiencing its first of three expected waves of Covid-19 cases after Beijing relaxed mobility restrictions but plans to step up support for the economy in 2023.

“There is no doubt that demand is being adversely influenced,” said Naeem Aslam, analyst at brokerage Avatrade.

“However, not everything is so negative as China has vowed to fight all pessimism about its economy, and it will do what it takes to boost economic growth.”

Brent crude gained 37 cents,



A worker checks the pressure of pumps at an oil-pumping station in the Uzen oil and gas field in the Mangistau Region of Kazakhstan. – Reuters

or 0.5%, to \$79.41 a barrel by 1100 GMT while US West Texas Intermediate crude rose 30 cents, or 0.4%, to \$74.59.

Oil surged towards its record high of \$147 a barrel earlier in the year after Russia invaded Ukraine. It has since unwound most of this year’s

gains as supply concerns were edged out by recession fears, which remain a drag on prices.

The US Federal Reserve and European Central Bank raised interest rates last week and promised more. The Bank of Japan, meanwhile, could shift its ultra-dovish stance when it meets on Monday and Tuesday.

“The prospect of further rate rises will hit economic growth in the new year and in doing so curb demand for oil,” said Stephen Brennock of oil broker PVM.

Oil was supported by the US Energy Department saying on Friday that it will begin repurchasing crude for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve — the first purchases since releasing a record 180 million barrels from the reserve this year. — **Reuters**

EU makes final push for gas price cap deal this year

BRUSSELS: European Union nations’ energy ministers were struggling on Monday to agree a cap on gas prices, an emergency measure that has split opinion across the bloc as it seeks to tame the energy crisis.

National leaders last week urged their ministers to approve the cap on Monday to finalise a policy that has been debated for months without agreement despite two emergency meetings.

After two rounds of discussions on Monday, ministers paused talks and planned to reconvene again.

EU officials said Germany, Europe’s biggest economy and gas market, and other countries sceptical of price caps, had not backed the latest compromise, but that pro-cap countries appeared to have enough support to approve it anyway.

“Nobody in Germany is against low gas prices, but we know we have to be very careful not to wish for the good but to do bad,” said German economy minister Robert Habeck on Monday, ahead of the meeting.

If the EU were to agree the price



cap without Germany’s support, “we’d have to live with it,” Habeck said.

To pass, the proposal requires

support from a reinforced majority of 15 countries representing at least 65 per cent of the EU population.

“There are enough votes to outvote them,” one EU diplomat said. “But Germany will be at the heart of this new system, so it would be way better to have them on board.”

Countries were considering a compromise proposed on Monday by the Czech Republic, which holds the EU’s rotating presidency.

In the draft proposal, a cap would be triggered if prices on

the Dutch Title Transfer Facility (TTF) gas hub’s front-month contract exceed 180 euros per megawatt hour for three days - far lower than the 275 eur/MWh originally proposed by the European Commission last month.

Roughly a dozen countries, including Belgium, Poland and Greece, have demanded a cap below 200 eur/MWh to tackle the high gas prices that have inflated citizens’ energy bills and stoked record-high inflation this year after Russia cut off most of its gas

deliveries to Europe.

“This is about our energy future. It’s about energy security. It’s about how we have affordable prices, that we avoid de-industrialisation,” said Belgian energy minister Tinne Van der Straeten.

Germany, the Netherlands and Austria fear the cap could disrupt Europe’s energy markets and divert much-needed gas cargoes away from the EU. They have sought tighter conditions, such as an automatic suspension of the cap if it has unintended negative consequences. — **Reuters**

Jindal Shadeed’s ‘The Steel of Oman’ film crosses 4 million views



MUSCAT: A community-centric organisation that acknowledges the country’s fervent passion for football, Jindal Shadeed — the largest low-carbon-intensity steel producer in the country — launched ‘The Steel of Oman’ campaign with an inspirational film at an exclusive event last month.

With a foot-tapping song as the background, the #yallahyallah film was incredibly well-received by the community and has garnered over 4 million views on YouTube. A truly heart-warming, visually artistic, musical film that took viewers on a journey across Oman and its beautiful culture and people, it highlighted how the spirit of football unites the nation.

In addition, its background score, ‘Yallah Yallah’ has also gained increased popularity due to its cheerful, rousing, and upbeat rhythm that mirrors the authenticity of the Omani people. Cementing its commitment

to promoting football, Jindal Shadeed has also signed an MOU with Oman Football Association for opening nine under-14 training centres and launched a collaboration with Ali al Habsi’s Academy for Football via the Jindal Shadeed-HFA campaign, therefore, taking a more holistic approach to promoting inclusivity in the field and making football accessible to all.

Commenting on the success of the film, Harssha Shetty, CEO of Jindal Shadeed Iron and Steel, said, “Paying tribute to the country’s love for football and in celebration of the ongoing Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022, our ‘The Steel of Oman’ campaign film has evoked strong emotions across the country. Riding on the current football fever in the GCC, it appealed to the people because it had the country’s most loved sport at the epicentre, and it also showcased the rich culture and traditions of the country in the backdrop of marvellous scenic views from across the country.”

MHD ACERE Auto Expert opens new branch in Dhofar

MUSCAT: Oman’s leading automotive business entity MHD ACERE inaugurated a second branch of Auto Expert in the Dhofar Governorate, its third one in Oman. MHD ACERE Auto Expert is a trusted name in vehicle care for offering advanced technology in auto diagnostics and services with a team of highly-trained technicians and dedicated customer-care personnel.

The well-stocked service centres also feature an extensive range of global brands, in car care and off-road accessories. MHD ACERE Auto Expert’s other branches are in Salalah and Azaiba (Muscat).

People desire more from their vehicle, be it improved look or performance. Auto Expert is well-equipped to handle the demands and challenges when it comes to meeting customer expectations, both individual and fleet customers. Assuring quality services at cost-effective prices, the facility offers customisation, smart repairs, accident repairs, periodic maintenance and service.

Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, expressed his views on the occasion, “When a nation is growing exponentially, the infrastructure follows suit resulting in an overall spike in the needs of the transportation, be it personal or public.

Auto Expert was born to address the rising demands of quality vehicle care and thorough maintenance – with a state-of-



the-art facility for diagnosis, an array of global products and top-notch service offered by expert, dedicated staff. We believe the second branch in Dhofar would enable us to focus and serve the region even better. Our timely investment in technology and a trained team would prove to be an opportunity to deliver affordable vehicle care, be it on road or off the road, to our customers beyond their expectations.”

Uncompromised performance that boosts the power of a car often comes with an understanding of the right part. At Auto Expert, the technicians will hand-pick the air intake and exhaust systems, body kits, tuners, superchargers, etc. The Car Care

division offers full-house car care solutions like a wash, polishing and professional detailing for car owners, enthusiasts and fleets. Tinting and paint protection is a must with the scorching summers in the region. Low-quality tinting jobs can interfere with a vehicle’s navigation and tend to bubble or change colour within a few months, causing damage to the glass surface.

The Paint Protection services use the top-quality international brand Chameleon, professionally applied by paint protection film experts at Auto Expert. This protects the paint from rocks, bugs, stones, sand, harsh weather, keys, salt, rings and other elements. An automotive workshop

is where magic can happen if it is in the right hands. Auto Expert mechanics are extremely experienced in the areas of modifications and auto engineering including electrical, software, and safety systems. The off-road parts business is a booming industry by itself, the world over.

This is also an area of speciality at the Auto Expert. Beginners in off-road adventures to seasoned auto enthusiasts seek quality and affordable high-end products or even an upgrade of their 4x4 vehicle. With the right modifications, 4x4 vehicles can go beyond terrain supremacy and offer the utmost performance, comfort and reliability.

Omantel seals deal with Salam Air to distribute co-branded Tourist SIM cards on flight

MUSCAT: Omantel, the leading provider of integrated telecommunication and technology solutions in the Sultanate of Oman, has partnered with Salam Air to provide Tourist SIM cards to tourists travelling on the airline’s international and domestic flights.

Salam Air’s unique flight coverage offers a different demographic and target area that is of a huge benefit to Omantel. This stems from being one of Oman’s national flights carrier that reach countries and cities constantly on demand. The 1-year partnership, which aligns with Omantel’s digital transformation strategy, is focused



on providing a hassle-free SIM connectivity through the Omantel application; Hence contributing to enhancing the travel experience for visitors, through allowing them to experience the widest 5G network in town and benefit from the unique services it offers.

Omantel’s CCO, Eng Aladdin Baitfadhil, said, “We are glad about our partnership with Salam Air as it will enable us to expand our customer base by tapping the right target audience. Providing tourist SIM cards during inbound flights will offer the visitors seamless

connectivity even before setting foot on land, sparing them time and effort upon arrival”.

Salam Air’s CEO, Captain Mohamed Ahmed, said, “Salam Air is always looking out for partnerships that will boost tourism in our beautiful country. We share Omantel’s passion for providing easy connectivity solutions, especially for visitors who find a trouble-free communication vital for making their stay comfortable. Oman is a constant hub for tourists throughout a year, in addition to the travellers who stop in Oman for a transit flight throughout the year. These tourist SIM cards will make life a lot easier for them.”

MUC celebrates 26th graduation ceremony

MUSCAT: On December 14, Majan University College (MUC) celebrated its 26th graduation ceremony, featuring 1101 graduates from the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. The ceremony took place under the auspices of Shaikh Nasr bin Amer al Hosni, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour for Labour.

The graduation ceremony included 574 Bachelors (with Honours), 138 Diplomates in Higher Education, and 389 Master graduates.

The ceremony began with the academic staff procession led by the Dean of the College, Dr Maha Kobeil, and the Pro-Vice

Chancellor (International) of the University of Bedfordshire, Adrian Dutch. Dr Kobeil then welcomed the patron of the ceremony, guests, and representatives of the University of Bedfordshire, and congratulated the graduates.

Dr Maha stressed that the College constantly reviews its programmes to meet the requirements of Oman Vision 2040 and the needs of industry. The Dean also highlighted the new Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) programme which will be launched in September 2023, in collaboration with Bradford University.

Bank Muscat offers 40% discount on home insurance covers

MUSCAT: Homes and their contents are the most valuable possessions most people own in their lifetimes. Hence, getting quality home insurance might be your best choice to protect your home and everything under its roof against damage or destruction caused by natural disasters or accidents.

In an effort to provide maximum protection to its customers, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, had earlier tied up with GIG Gulf, the number 1 regional insurer to offer comprehensive protection through GIG Home Insurance.

Recently on the occasion of the bank’s 40th Anniversary, Bank Muscat announced

that a 40 per cent discount would be available to customers on home contents and personal belongings insurance cover during a special promotional period, which ends on December 31, 2022.

Speaking on the occasion, Abdullah Tamman al Maashani, General Manager - Products at Bank Muscat, said, “The bank is delighted to join hands with GIG Gulf, the number 1 regional insurer, to provide an innovative home insurance plan for the benefit of all its customers.

This partnership has not only delivered excellent value but has also played a key role in enhancing our value proposition to our customers. In line with the valuable feedback received on our bancassurance



plans, Bank Muscat is pleased to offer coverage at significantly reduced rates to celebrate the bank’s 40th anniversary.”

Abdullah al Maashani also took the opportunity to thank customers for their confidence and trust in Bank Muscat. Mehdi al Harthy, General Manager & Head of Partnerships — Oman, GIG

Gulf, commented on this occasion, “We are proud to have worked with Bank Muscat over the years to deliver a range of distinctive and value-added insurance plans for our customers.

GIG Home Insurance plan is the ideal solution for protection against unexpected events that might take away the possessions you value the most. We encourage all Bank Muscat customers to take full advantage of the highly discounted rates on the home contents and personal belongings covers during the bank’s 40th-anniversary offer.

As GIG Gulf, we have proudly served over 200,000 Bank Muscat customers since 2016, where we developed personalised, top-notch products that enhance and

complement Bank Muscat products. Today, we provide various insurance solutions such as Life, Saving, Health, and Motor, to serve and cater to all customers’ needs.”

GIG’s Home Insurance plan offers exceptional value to both homeowners and tenants. It protects the building and its contents against fire, explosion, lightning, earthquakes, accidental damage, fixture breakage, and the like. It also offers worldwide personal belongings coverage for valuables such as passports, driver’s licenses, legal documents, jewellery, watches, music, sports and portable equipment, laptops, or any other items that customers may carry outside their homes.

Traders will anxiously watch the Bank of Japan

Shorting the Bank of Japan is the trade of 2023. Gyration in Japanese bond yields resulting from an abrupt increase in benchmark interest rates could force indebted domestic entities to dump overseas assets, roiling global markets.

Portfolio rebalancing is already underway, but it will take a lot of really good news inside Japan for the shift to be bad news elsewhere.

The question on traders' collective mind is what happens when the central bank finally adjusts its "yield-curve control" policy, or YCC, which has held down government bond yields for more than six years.

The country is the single largest holder of US Treasury bonds, and cross-border claims on Japan stood at \$4.2 trillion at the end of June, according to the Bank for International Settlements, three times more than liabilities.

Nomura estimates Japanese entities own \$6 trillion in overseas assets, half of that unhedged.

When the US Federal Reserve began hiking interest rates in 2022 the BOJ declined to follow: Japanese inflation excluding food and energy remains below its 2% target.

The spread between yields on 10-year US Treasury bonds and equivalent Japanese government securities widened, the yen plunged, and sceptical bond traders tested the 0.25% 10-year yield that the central bank pledged to defend.

The yen's slide pushed up hedging costs, forcing Japanese firms, insurers in particular, to unwind offshore positions.

YCC is the brainchild of BOJ Governor Haruhiko Kuroda, who is set to retire in April. His successor may feel freer to tweak the regime, especially if prices excluding food and energy keep rising.

A higher-than-expected wage hike resulting from springtime negotiations could persuade officials that salaries are offsetting higher prices, bolstering the case for normalising interest rates. If government bond prices fall, investors who collateralised offshore loans with local debt securities could be in trouble.

A messy unwind remains unlikely, though.
— Reuters

The question on traders' collective mind is what happens when the central bank finally adjusts its "yield-curve control" policy.



PORSCHE ADDED TO GERMANY'S LEADING MARKET INDEX

BERLIN: Sports carmaker Porsche officially became part of the DAX index on Monday. Chief executive Oliver Blume said the entry into the DAX made the company "happy and proud," and that it showed that investors around the world were convinced by the company's business model. The DAX is made up of the top 40 German blue chip companies trading on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange. The Volkswagen subsidiary, which is based in Stuttgart, went public at the end of September. After years of speculation and months of scrutiny, Volkswagen raised almost \$9.95 billion with the initial public offering. — AFP

The myth of income stagnation



MICHAEL R STRAIN
The writer is Director of Economic Policy Studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

According to the conventional wisdom, income stagnation and inequality are large and growing threats to broad-based prosperity in the United States.

Many economists, journalists, business leaders, and elected leaders (from both parties) believe that for a large share of households, real (inflation-adjusted) income has not increased for decades, and that income inequality – the gap between higher- and lower-income households – has grown substantially in recent years.

Casual observation might make the claim that incomes have been stagnant for decades seem implausible. After all, just look at what a typical household consumes in 2022 compared to, say, 1992.

Advances in medical care, safer automobiles, the spread of smartphones, video conferencing with friends and family, and higher-quality home appliances are just a few examples of the significant consumption gains over those decades. Could this material progress really have coincided with stagnating incomes?

Relying on anecdotes and intuition to compute economic trends can work sometimes, but it can just as easily lead one astray.

Fortunately, we can find clarity in statistics released last month by the non-

partisan Congressional Budget Office – the referee in US economic policy debates – which confirm that the conventional wisdom is off-base.

According to the CBO, median household income from market activities – labour, business, and capital income, as well as retirement income from past services – was not stagnant from 1990 to 2019. Instead, after adjusting for inflation, it grew by 26%. This is in line with wage growth. By my calculations using Bureau of Labour Statistics (BLS) data, inflation-adjusted average wages for non-supervisory workers grew by around one-third over this period.

Moreover, a more comprehensive measure of the flow of financial resources available to households for consumption and savings helps to account for the non-market income they received and for the taxes they paid.

After factoring in social insurance benefits (from Social Security and unemployment insurance, for example), government safety-net benefits (such as food stamps), and federal taxes, the CBO finds that median household income increased by 55% from 1990 to 2019, which is significantly faster than wage growth and certainly not stagnate.

The bottom 20% of households enjoyed even greater gains, with market income growth of 51% and after-tax-and-transfer

income growth of 74%.

What about inequality? Here, the CBO computes the size of the gap between higher- and lower-income households using a standard statistical measure that accounts for the entire distribution of income (the "Gini coefficient"). While inequality of post-tax-and-transfer income did rise by 7% from 1990 to 2019, all the increase occurred between 1990 and 2007, before the explosion of political and media interest in inequality.

Since 2007, inequality has fallen by 5%. Why is there such a wide gap between the data and the conventional wisdom? For starters, commentators often confound income growth in the 1970s and 1980s with the decades that followed.

Incomes were indeed stagnant during that earlier period.

The annual rate of growth for real median household post-tax-and-transfer income was over three times faster from 1990 to 2019 than it was from 1979, the year CBO's data begin, to 1990.

The BLS's wage data go back further. They show that consumer prices grew faster than wages from 1973 until 1976 – owing largely to the 1973 oil crisis – and from 1979 to 1981. Real wages for typical workers continued to decline throughout the 1980s.

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Russia keeps interest rate steady amid worries of inflation



IVAN NECHEPURENKO

The writer has been a reporter with The New York Times since 2015, covering politics, economics, sports, and culture in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and other former Soviet republics.

Russia's central bank kept its key interest rate at 7.5% on Friday, citing risks of increased inflation and restrained consumer demand as economists warned that the war in Ukraine and Western sanctions were continuing to sap productivity.

The Bank of Russia said in a statement that "the external conditions for the Russian economy remain complicated and significantly limit economic activity." It said consumer prices rose at an annual rate of 12% last month, pushed by a tight labour market that was accelerating wage growth.

The Russian economy has come under severe international sanctions in response to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, but it has defied expectations of a collapse unseen since the painful post-Soviet transformation in the early

1990s.

On Thursday, President Vladimir Putin radiated confidence at a meeting with top government ministers in which he said the Russian economy would contract 2.5% this year, which is somewhat more optimistic than the International Monetary Fund's estimate of a 3.5% shrinkage. Accusing the West of waging "an economic war" against Moscow and praising his government's "responsible financial policy," Putin said the country's economy had avoided an outright collapse.

Still, some Russian economists predicted that the worst is yet to come. Yevgeny Nadorshin, the chief economist at the PF Capital consulting company in Moscow, warned that the Russian economy could now enter a deeper downturn that cannot be cushioned by increased government spending as before.

The mobilisation of recruits

to help fight in Ukraine, and an exodus of some highly skilled upper-middle-class workers, would have a negative effect on productivity, he said. In addition, the government's increased focus on military spending will make the economy less productive. "We are doomed to deal with a tough deficit of highly effective labour while sanctions limit our way to compensate for this in terms of imports of high-end technology," Nadorshin said in a telephone interview.

In late February, after Putin's decision to send troops to Ukraine, inflation surged in Russia, and the central bank more than doubled its benchmark interest rate, to 20%. Since then, it has cut the rate six times as inflation has eased and the bank tried to stimulate an economy dealing with increased isolation.

The central bank projected that annual inflation would decline to

as low as 5% in 2023 and 4% in 2024. Dmitry Polevoy, the chief strategist at Locko Invest, an asset management company in Moscow, said that sanctions would have a prolonged effect on Russia's economy and that it was no longer important how much it will contract this year. "What is interesting is how much deeper will the contraction be next year than what the government expects," he said, noting that the widening budget deficit was turning into "the main headache" for the central bank.

Indeed, the Bank of Russia said on Friday that the budget deficit might force it to tighten its policy to control inflation. For years, the Russian economy, and its tax revenues, relied on huge exports of fossil fuels.

But the country's energy industry has been upended by the war in Ukraine, most recently by a European Union embargo

on Russian oil and the Group of 7's price cap on Russian crude, both of which took effect Dec 5. Last week, Russia's finance minister said the country's budget deficit will reach 2% of economic output this year, up from earlier predictions of 0.9%, according to TASS, a state news agency.

The central bank noted that unemployment in Russia had dropped to a record low, partly because the mobilisation of troops to join fighting in Ukraine had reduced the supply of available workers. In its Friday statement, the central bank warned that the conscription effort had forced employers to increase salaries.

Outside Russia, the effects of the war in Ukraine have manifested in soaring energy and food prices, pushing inflation in Europe, the United States and elsewhere far above levels that policymakers try to maintain.

— The New York Times



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A graphic of a smartphone screen with a light beige background featuring faint icons of various communication tools. At the top, a dark grey banner contains the text "Now get news on the go" in bold blue font. The screen displays the WhatsApp logo (a green speech bubble with a white telephone handset) in the center. Below the logo, the text "To receive news updates from OMAN OBSERVER," is written in blue. Further down, the text "WhatsApp" is in bold black, followed by "<your name> to" in bold blue. The phone number "96473232" is displayed in large, bold blue digits. At the bottom of the screen, a dark grey bar contains the website "omanobserver.om", a row of social media icons (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Telegram, and WhatsApp), and the email address "@omanobserver.om".

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An advertisement for property rental. It features a 3D orange humanoid figure on the left, holding a blue and white megaphone. The background is white with a red banner at the top that says "HAVE A PROPERTY" in white. Below this, a red banner with a white border says "FOR RENT?" in yellow. To the right of the figure, the text "Advertise with us." is written in black. At the bottom, a red banner with a white border says "Contact us on:" in white, followed by the large yellow number "99639264".

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ROYAL CAMELS SHOWSTOPPERS in SAUDI, Qatar

This event held in coincidence with the World Cup was a great opportunity to introduce this sport to the audience... **P20**

Anna Karenina explores the struggle of a female

BY ZUWAINA AL SULIMANI

Leo Tolstoy, a prominent figure in realistic fiction, has succeeded in creating realistic and universal situations and characters by transcending his thoughts into actions in Anna Karenina. He has exceeded the boundaries of time and class by providing a universal approach to the question of women in

the nineteenth century. Anna Karenina readily entered the canon of world literature by highlighting universal themes, characters, and situations and exploring universal truths. Although he was an opponent of the emancipation of women, he has created sympathetic female characters who were restricted by social expectations that assert his polarising view on the question of women uncovering the truthfulness of the soul.

The struggle of the heroine, the female protagonist Anna is represented in the novel as a natural human struggle against the unjust social restrictions towards women in society. She was not condemned by Tolstoy because of her suicide, since it was the only way for her to find herself and seek the truth. She was excluded from society drowning in isolation which led mainly to her downfall. Anna a beautiful woman who has been ill-matched to Alexey, a twenty years older than her, is separated from him emotionally and physically due to the lack of intimacy and love.

Their marriage has failed because Anna has got her freedom with no kind of direction from her husband who was focusing only on his work. They carry a formal relationship with each other in which readers were introduced to the intimate relationship between Anna and Vronsky, her lover, before her relationship with her husband. She was rejected by society, yet she was true to herself in that she did not hide her affair with Vronsky from her husband or society. The fall of Anna in the novel is the main reason that causes the failure of her family. According to Boyd (1972), Anna's "fall into depravity must be convincing. For that

to occur, she must fall from something, from somewhere, and a sufficient fall does not merely constitute a superficial fall from the pretentious wife to the lying lover but must include a moral decline, a battle of the spirit and will, so that the only possible solution would be suicide; precisely because society lacks the ability to rescue her." (p.94), the reason behind her moral decline which led to the fall of her family is her longing for and "latent desires for companionship, affection, and love since her earliest union with a man". (Boyd, 1972).

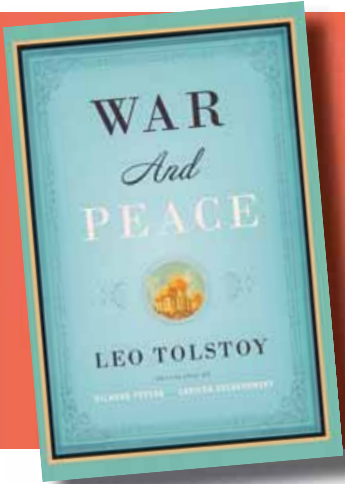
She thinks after talking with Vronsky that "Though she could not remember neither his nor her own words, she instinctively felt that that momentary conversation had drawn them terribly near to one another, and this both frightened her and made her happy" (95). She gratifies the flesh more to be content and find her kind of truth. She does not hide her affair with Vronsky, yet she embraces it publicly and this is what saves her in the eyes of readers, but destroys her in the eyes of society. Her relationship with her son is exceptionally fascinating.



READ

WAR AND PEACE BY LEO TOLSTOY

It broadly focuses on Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812 and follows three of the most well-known characters in literature



FASHION

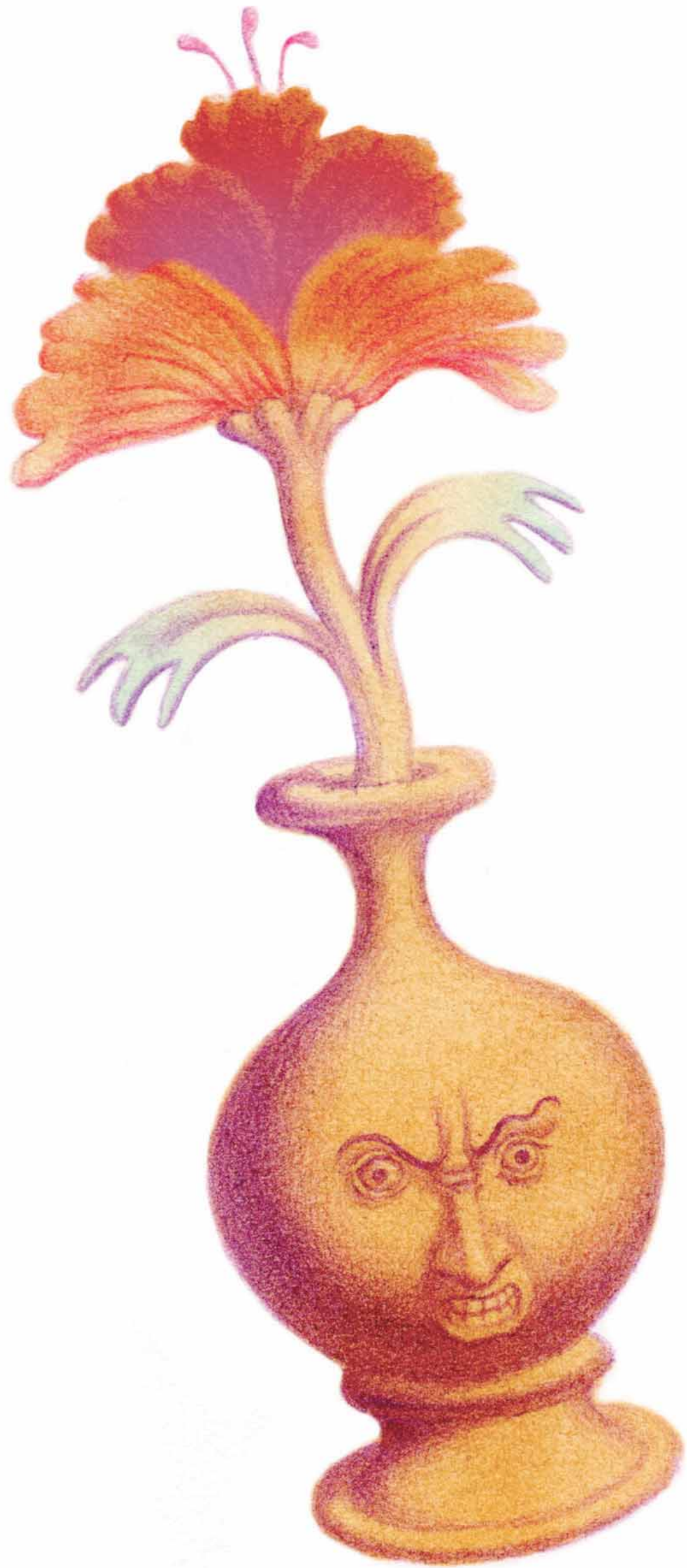
A model presents a creation by fashion designer Sheeba Kapadia at the 20th edition of the Pantene HUM Bridal Couture Week in Lahore — **AFP**



WEATHER

Commuters' cross railway tracks amid foggy conditions on a wintry morning near a railway station in Amritsar on December 19 — **AFP**





HOW ANGER AFFECTS THE BODY

IF YOUR CHILL was nowhere to be found this year, you're not alone. Public life and personal hardships provided ample fodder for flare-ups, which, in addition to costing your cool, can also take a more serious toll: According to scientists, prolonged and extreme anger can also exacerbate existing health problems, as well as affect the way we react to certain issues.

"Throughout the day and throughout the week and throughout the month, we're activating these systems during times of frustration, anger or rage that in the short run might help you in an emergency situation," said Dr. Ilan Shor Wittstein, a cardiologist at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. "But in the long run, it might be quite detrimental to how these neurohormonal systems are activated as often as they are for those cases."

Anger responses can cause a ripple effect throughout the body. From the cardiovascular system to your nervous system, it's all fair game. These are just some of the main organ systems it can play havoc with.

THE HEART

According to Wittstein, an expert in stress cardiomyopathy, one way to think about the heart is to imagine a house: There can be issues with the pipes, doors or the electrical system, but the house itself might seem fine.

"Rage can have effects on the arteries that supply blood on the heart, it can have an effect on the electrical system specifically that tells the heart when to beat, and it can have an effect specifically on the heart muscle itself," he said.

If you already have conditions that affect the cardiovascular system, moments of anger may leave you more vulnerable. When you're enraged, Wittstein offered as an example, blood pressure can increase, blood vessels can constrict and inflammatory cells are released. This can lead to the rupturing of plaque inside a coronary artery. If that plaque forms a clot, blood supply in that portion of the heart can be cut off. "And that can either cause a heart attack that lands a person in the hospital, or a person can even drop dead of a sudden heart attack," he said.

THE BRAIN

In a sense, anger can have a positive physical effect in that it can help motivate you to do something. When we're angry and aroused, our brains are primed for fast reactions. If danger or a social threat triggers an angry state, we are more likely to act on it: the fight-or-flight response.

One trade-off: In that agitated state, we're less likely to make good judgments, to listen and to be attuned to other motivations that are important, like values, said Dr. Royce Lee, a professor of psychiatry and behavioural neuroscience at the University of Chicago.

"You might often hear a person in an angry state say or do something that they don't really like," Lee said. "And when they're not angry they will regret it."

Dr. Orli Etingin, an internist at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell hospital, said that anger and chronic stress also affect memory. "Forget about the fact that you're probably sleep deprived too," she said, "but you definitely cannot pay good attention to things."

THE GUT

You might have heard about the "gut-brain connection," the much-discussed link between emotions and our stomachs. Like other feelings, rage can trigger discomfort, malabsorption of food and loss of appetite.

"The GI tract is made up of muscle tissue, and it's innervated by nerves. So if you have a very high adrenaline output, the stomach and the intestines are going to have a hypermobility," Etingin said. "You're going to have cramps, you're going to have diarrhoea, because the muscles there are being over activated."

Dr William Burg, a clinical psychologist and professor at the Yale School of Medicine, said that small changes in your routine can help. "Meditation, breath work, fitness and getting a full night's rest are all helpful ways to manage anger," he said.

A LOOK AT THE ACADEME



By: Dr. Zainab Al-Ajmi
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Finding Hope at the Examination Times: Hopeful Thinking

"I HOPE I GET an 'A' on this test!" How many times have teachers heard these exact words from their students? Goodness knows, most teachers would certainly love for their students to get an A, too!" (Zakrzewski, 2016). Several research results show that hope can be cultivated as a measurable, learnable skill — and to feel hopeful, students and teachers need to work at it (Fleming, 2021). In addition, hope research has consistently shown a positive correlation between hope and student success with a 12% increase in academic outcomes (Lopez, 2014). Hope has been defined by Snyder (2002) as "refers to one's belief in the ability to pursue goals". Individuals with high levels of hope establish further goals and develop many effective pathways for reaching desired goals. Researchers have also identified hope as a coping strategy associated with resilience, less tendency to procrastinate, and higher chances of achieving favourable outcomes in competitive or stressful situations (Drysdale& Mcbeath, 2014).

Despite hope seems like a simple skill, Fleming (2021) suggests methods that might support and develop hope in students fall into four topics: visioning the future, developing goals, building agency, and learning pathways. On the other hand, (Zakrzewski, 2016) presents five guidelines for educators who need to build hopeful thinking in their students as follows: 1. Identify and prioritise students' top goals, from macro to micro. Start by having students create a major picture list of what's important to them, such as friends, family, sports, or career. considering goals that students want, not what their parents or schools want. Otherwise, they will quickly lose their interest and/or motivation, especially as they come up against obstacles. Next, using this list, teach students how to create goals that are both specific and positive, for instance, "I want to play on the basketball team" is a quite motivating goal than "I will stop eating too much chocolate".

2. Part out the goals, especially long-term ones into small steps. Research has suggested that students with low hope frequently think goals should be accomplished all at once. Teaching them how to visualise and accomplish their goals as a series of steps keeps students motivated and maintains their hope. 3. Teach students that there's more than one way to reach a goal. Studies show that one of the greatest challenges for students with low hope is their inability to move obstacles, causing them to abandon their quest for achieving goals. So, teaching them different paths to reach goals will help them beyond insurmountable barriers. Importantly, teachers need to ensure that students need to be reminded that under any circumstances they'll face obstacles. 4. Tell stories of success. Scientists have found that hopeful students draw on memories of other successes when they face an obstacle; however, students with low hope often don't have these kinds of memories. That's why it's vital for teachers to read books or share stories of other people who have overcome adversity to reach their goals. 5. It's important to teach students to enjoy the process of attaining their goals, even to laugh at themselves when they make mistakes. Research has found that students who use positive self-talk, rather than beating themselves up for mistakes, are more likely to reach their goals.

In summary, at certain times students lose hope in specific circumstances for instance, a difficult economy, or family circumstances which require should help students get more hope. Research revealed a positive relationship between hopeful thinking and students' academic success, suggesting the need to consider improving their performance of hopeful thinking at hard times.



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AROUND THE WORLD

FILM

'Avatar' sequel earns film critics' praise for visual spectacle



THE LONG-AWAITED sequel to ground-breaking movie "Avatar" won praise on Tuesday from movie critics who said they were awed again by director James Cameron's visual artistry.

"Avatar: The Way of Water" opens in theaters on Friday, 13 years after the first film wowed audiences with pioneering 3D technology and became the highest-grossing movie of all time with \$2.9 billion in ticket sales.

The sequel offers more advanced 3D images, showcasing aquatic creatures on the lush moon of Pandora.

As of Tuesday afternoon, 85% of 107 reviews collected on the Rotten Tomatoes website had applauded the new installment.

"Avatar: The Way of Water" is such a screen-popping visual feast it earns the 3-hour, 12-minute running time," said Richard Roeper of the Chicago Sun-Times.

Some also lauded the story about the tall, blue Na'vi people, who are forced to flee from the forest to the ocean.

"The 3-D special effects remain exceptional, but the screenplay is better this time, with a storyline more emotionally engaging than in the original," said Randy Myers of the San Jose Mercury News.

Leah Greenblatt of Entertainment Weekly called the movie "a meticulous world-building as astonishing and enveloping as anything we've ever seen on screen."

Hollywood's big question is whether "The Way of Water" can recoup its massive production and marketing costs. Studios split ticket sales with theaters, and Cameron told *GQ* magazine that "The Way of Water" will need to make \$2 billion just to break even.

Shawn Robbins, chief analyst at Box Office Pro, projects the movie will open with at least \$150 million in ticket sales in the United States and Canada during its first weekend. Walt Disney Co is distributing the film.

Critics were not universally impressed with "The Way of Water." Some objected to the long running time or said they were not drawn in by the story.

"Watching the film (feels) like being water-boarded with turquoise cement," said Robbie Collin of the *Daily Telegraph*. — **Reuters**

HISTORY

From battlefield to glampsite: the story of Saudi's Khaybar



LAST MONTH, Saudi Arabia inaugurated a new visitors' centre in Khaybar, which takes a longer view of the area's history by highlighting references in ancient texts to its conquest by Babylonian-era King Nabonidus.

At the centre, displays avoid mentioning the seventh-century battle and tourists can arrange hikes to nearby volcanoes, strolls through lush palm springs or helicopter tours over ancient tombs and desert kites, which are dry stone walls that served as animal traps.

The project is part of a broader push in the conservative Sunni Muslim country, which only began issuing tourism visas in 2019, to attract some 30 million foreign visitors annually by the end of the decade, up from four million last year.

Khaybar tour guide Enass al-Sharif said it was important to shine a light on features of the area that go beyond its significance to Islam.

"Khaybar has a strong relationship with religion and it has a close relationship with the Prophet," she told.

However, "it also has a strong relationship with history and civilisation. All these things were collected in one place, which is why it is attracting many tourists."

QUANTUM LEAP Archaeologists believe Khaybar has been inhabited for over 200,000 years, and it once served as a vital stop along the so-called Incense Route that linked it to Medina to the south, and the desert city of Al-Ula to the north.

But in the 1970s, the Saudi government began pushing residents to leave the old settlements for new structures with modern plumbing and electricity.

"We wanted some civilisation and development... so we left," recalled Saifi al-Shilali, a Khaybar native who was in his early 20s when his family moved away.

Since then, the old settlements have been abandoned, and Shilali, now in his 60s, is among those who have been agitating for a revival.

The transformation of Khaybar into a potential tourism draw "is something we have been waiting for for a long time," he told.

"With my interest in research in Khaybar and in tourism... we have been waiting for this moment, so we consider it a quantum leap."

Like other Saudi attractions such as Al-Ula, a budding arts hub located among ancient Nabataean tombs, Khaybar is largely geared towards well-heeled travellers.

The Khaybar Volcano

Camp promises an "exclusive stay" that "takes glamping to another level", with 10 rooms surrounded by imposing mountains.

The focus lies squarely on the setting rather than the historical events that took place there.

The camp even features a reiki energy healing master named Chamuel who conducts sound meditation sessions, inviting guests to enter "your own magical garden, a place beyond time and space".

UNSOLVED MYSTERIES All the while, an archaeological survey and excavation project continues to unearth new details about human activity in the area as well as how its climate has evolved.

The project, backed by the French government and expected to last through the end of 2024, has already yielded a deeper understanding of neolithic campsites, canals and rock art.

Among the most intriguing finds are the "pendant tombs", rock formations that when viewed from above resemble a pendant hanging from a chain.

The story behind them "remains a mystery", according to the visitors' centre, though archaeologists believe they date back 5,000 years.

— **AFP**

A WINDOW INTO CONTEMPORARY OMANI LITERATURE



Dr Khalid Mohammed al Balushi
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An Army Man but in a Different Form (2)

THE FOLLOWING IS my English translation of excerpts from "A Soldier from Oman, Memory's Nectar" by (ret.) Inspector-General Said bin Rashid Al Kalbani.

We began to train in our respective fields. The training period continued for about a month, and then the team was posted to the Capital Police Station. During the period we trained that platoon, Maj. Hockett commissioned Lieut. Hassan Al Balushi and Warrant Officer Salim Al Sobhi to interview those who were in the Capital Police Station in order to select a group to work in Ghala.

Capt. Lashkran, Srg. Rajab bin Khamis, Corp. Shalan bin Amir were excluded for their family circumstances and old age. Others were laid off as they were unable to stand training or continue as policemen. 36 were chosen to be trained in Ghala, just as their predecessors.

We trained that group for about a month, after which they returned to the Capital Police Station. We, the trainers, also moved with them to the station early in 1969. The sub-commissioned officers were provided quarters in Anabir, situated close the Grand Gate, and the officers were accommodated in the Shebili House, near the Small Gate. In that period a new complex began to be constructed near the Small Gate. Once the construction was completed, both the officers and the non-commissioned officers moved to their respective quarters.

When the training centre shifted from Ghala to Muscat in the beginning of 1969, Capt. Lashkran was replaced by William Hockett as the new commander. At the same time, the official name was changed from the Capital Police to the Muscat Police. The new commander put forward the plan for building quarters both for officers and non-commissioned officers in Muscat, the Muttrah Police Station, a new office for the headquarters in Ruwi and a school for training in Wadi Kabeer. Work on these projects began in the chosen locations.

In 1969 the police force made an agreement with four foreign experts: two British, Capt. Galland and Capt. Phelix De Silva (of Sri Lankan origin) and two Indians: Dominique D'Souza and Ranjin Barar. The four experts arrived in April 1969. In the same year I was promoted to the rank of lieutenant. The number I was given was 908. A point to be noted is that number 90 was used just as camouflage, the real number was 8, the actual number of the officers then. Salim Al Sobhi was promoted to lieutenant, and so, too, was Abdullah bin Qambar Al Lawati, who was promoted in the army and transferred to the police force to administer its financial affairs.

art & life

Local Scene

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TUESDAY | DECEMBER 20 | 2022

ROYAL CAMELS SHOWSTOPPERS IN SAUDI, QATAR



ROYAL Camel Corps (RCC) concluded its participation in the Camel and World Cup 2022 held at the Camel Racecourse in AlShahaniya in Qatar. It also participated continues in the seventh edition of the King Abdulaziz Camel Festival in Al Sayahed, in Riyadh where both skills of dealing with camels and the traditional Omani arts related to camels were displayed.

The participation of the Royal Camel in this event came in response to the invitation of the Arab Federation for Camel Racing (Mahari), which coincided with the Fifa World Cup, with the aim of introducing camel sports to visitors and residents of Qatar.

On the first day, Royal Camel Corps presented a number of skills, including a display of camels standing and on knee while using ropes. Camels chariots displayed the flags of the countries participating in the World Cup, and the flags of the member states of the Arab Federation for Camel Racing.

The second day witnessed the presentation of Al Ardha, which is an authentic Omani heritage registered in the UNESCO Intangible World Heritage List for Humanity.

Members of the RCC also presented various skills in camel riding.

On the last day of the event, the RCC presented a variety of skills including



putting camels to sleep, and showing riding skills.

Najeeb al Balushi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Qatar attended the festival with Hilal al Waeli, Head of Horse and Camel Affairs,

Royal Farms and Gardens.

The event witnessed staging of the first camel handball tournament, which was won by Qatar.

On the sidelines of the event, the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies

and the Arab Union for Camel Racing have signed a MoU to set an International Academy for Camel.

The organisers, who had helped in making the event successful, were honoured on the closing day along with the three teams that won the top places of the competition.

Hilal said that the participation of the Royal Camels Corps reflects its high levels of skills.

Speaking about the significance of the event, Abdullah al Khawwari, President of the Arab Union for Camel Racing (Mahari), said that holding this event in coincidence with the Qatar World Cup was a great opportunity to introduce this sport to the audience.

Dr Hizam al Maqarih, Secretary-General of the Arab Union for Camel Racing, expressed his happiness with the success of the event as attracted good turnout. He praised Royal Camel Corps for its distinguished performances and skills.

Heads of camel racing federations, praised the Sultanate of Oman's distinct role in reviving the camel racing sports, and commended outstanding shows performed by the Royal Camel Corps.

The RCC also took part at the King Abdulaziz Camel Festival held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.