

Oman, Iran to boost trade

The Joint Oman-Iran Business Forum explored ways to boost trade exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The forum also looked at consolidating bilateral business relations, conducting strategic partnerships to augment the volume of investments and business activity and accessing new economic fields. Several B2B meetings were held during the forum between Omani and Iranian businesspeople. **DETAILS ON P4**



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ALCARAZ BATTLES PAST STRUFF TO RETAIN MADRID TITLE



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JAZEERA STEEL PLANS STEEL UNIT IN UAE



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LET ME TAKE YOU DOWN... TO LIVERPOOL FOR EUROVISION



MUSCAT

HOTEL REVENUES EXCEED RO 73M

The revenues of 3-5 star hotels in the Sultanate of Oman recorded a rise by 49.9 per cent at the end of March 2023 to reach RO 73.319 million compared to the corresponding period in 2022, according to the latest data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). The number of 3-5 star hotels' guests stood at 522,753, comprising an increase by 25.6 per cent till the end of March 2023 compared to 416,287 guests during the same period in 2022. Occupancy rate stood at 56.4 per cent. **DETAILS ON P4**

UNICEF OFFICIAL HAILS EDUCATION SYSTEM



Adele Khodr, Unicef Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, was briefed about the Sultanate of Oman's experience in the field of education. The official started her two-day visit to Oman by touring Madinat Sultan Qaboos School, which implements Unicef programmes. She took note of classroom activities, the use of technology in the field of education, teaching methods and various educational strategies. **DETAILS ON P5**

CRUDE PRICE AT \$76.10 A BARREL

Oman oil price for July delivery on Monday reached \$76.10, comprising a rise by \$2.86 from the price of last Friday, which was \$73.24. The average price of Oman oil for May delivery has stabilised at \$78.49 per barrel, thus \$3.74 per barrel lower than April delivery. World oil prices rose 2.2 per cent to \$76.97 a barrel. Brent crude futures have lost 10 per cent in value so far this year, as concern bubbles about the outlook for global energy demand if the economy tilts towards recession.

Sudanese pin hopes on Jeddah talks

KHARTOUM: Sudanese are pinning their hopes on talks in Saudi Arabia between envoys of warring factions to end bloodshed that has killed hundreds and triggered a mass exodus, but there is no sign lasting relief will come anytime soon. There has been no word on the progress of the talks which began on Saturday between the army and the rival paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in the Saudi Red Sea city of Jeddah. The combatants have said they would only try to tackle humanitarian issues like safe passage, not an end to the war. Numerous ceasefires have been violated since conflict erupted on April 15. The sound of air strikes and clashes echoed anew across

the capital Khartoum on Monday, witnesses said. "If the Jeddah negotiations fail to stop the war this would mean that we won't be able to return to our homes and our lives," said Tamader Ibrahim, a 35-year-old government employee in Bahri, across the Blue Nile river from Khartoum. "We're waiting on these negotiations because they're our only hope." Mahjoub Salah, a 28-year-old doctor, said the areas of the capital hit by violence changed from day to day. Salah witnessed heavy fighting and a neighbour getting shot in the abdomen in his central Khartoum district of Al Amarat last month, before renting a flat for his family in the south of the capital. **SEE P6**

STORIES FROM FROZEN MOMENTS



The eighth Qomra Photography Week titled 'Story' organised by the National University of Science and Technology is an important annual artistic event which brings together photographers and enthusiasts from the Sultanate of Oman and abroad under one roof and aims to showcase talents, and contribute in the development of the art scene. The theme of this year was 'Story', which serves as a metaphor for the images as frozen moments and stories that photographers tell from their unique perspectives. **DETAILS ON P20**

Higher Education Law sets best standards for regulating sector

MUSCAT: Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, has said that the Higher Education Law constitutes one of the most important mechanisms and tools to regulate higher education in the Sultanate of Oman. This applies to all academic, vocational, technical and professional tracks in line with the National Qualifications Framework, she added. The minister said, "The Higher Education Law corresponds to the future goals of Oman Vision 2040 and supports its implementation. It figures high among the top priorities of Oman Vision 2040, which views education, research and development of national competencies as pillars for the development of individuals



DR RAHMA BINT IBRAHIM AL MAHROUQIYAH

and society. This approach is undertaken within a strategic plan designed to implement a comprehensive and sustainable system of education, learning and research that leads to the realisation of a knowledge-based society".

Dr Rahma pointed out that the law deals with everything that could regulate the functions of higher education institutions in terms of establishment, specialisations, programmes, quality, scholarships and other mechanisms aimed at consolidating the higher education system in Oman. The minister said that the law was drafted after consulting laws and regulations in Oman, as well as models of such statutes applied in other countries. When the Higher Education Law was being drafted, emphasis was laid on its sustainability and its ability to accommodate all related provisions cited in executive and organisational regulations/bylaws, the minister pointed out. — ONA **SEE ALSO P3**

US officials appreciate Oman on human rights

WASHINGTON: A number of human rights officials from the United States expressed appreciation for the efforts exerted by the Sultanate of Oman in human rights field. This came during a meeting between a delegation from Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) which is currently visiting the United States of America and several officials responsible with human rights files in the US State Department and the House of Representatives. The OHRC delegation visited civil society institutions, figures from various research centres and American civil society organisations. An event on human rights was held at Sultan Qaboos Cultural Centre (SQCC) at Washington DC. This event was aimed at introducing the role, work and responsibilities of OHRC. The delegation, headed by Shaikh Abdullah bin Shuwain al Hosni, Chairman of OHRC, held separate meetings with Cindy Dyer, Head of the US State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, Scott Turner, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Population, Migration, and Refugees, Rashad Hussain, Head of the Office of International Religious Freedom, Christopher Le Mon, Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, Daniel Benaim, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Arabian Peninsula Affairs and Thea Lee, Deputy Under-Secretary

The delegation highlighted mechanisms and steps taken by the OHRC in response to these reports, the extent of attention accorded to their details, as well as responses, on a fact-based manner after coordinating with the authorities concerned

SHAIKH ABDULLAH AL HOSNI
Chairman of OHRC

for Labour Affairs. The delegation discussed the annual reports issued by the US Department of State that are related to human rights and freedoms in the world. The delegation highlighted mechanisms and steps taken by the OHRC in response to these reports, the extent of attention accorded to their details, as well as responses, on a fact-based manner and after coordinating with the authorities concerned in the Sultanate of Oman. The delegation explained that the OHRC conducts field visits in various governorates and wilayats, including the Central Prison, detention centres, workplaces and workers' residences, as well as field visits paid in response to reports raised by individuals. — ONA

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UK CORONATION PARTY DRAWS TO CLOSE WITH VOLUNTEER DRIVE

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US human rights officials appreciates Oman's efforts



The meeting of the OHRC's delegation with Christopher Le Mon, Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour at the US Department of State.



The meeting of the OHRC's delegation with Scott Turner, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Population, Migration, and Refugees.



The Chairman of OHRC presents the commission's shield to Cindy Dyer, Director of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons at the US State Department.



The Chairman of OHRC presents a memorial gift to Daniel Benaim, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Arabian Peninsula Affairs in the Near East Bureau at the US Department of State.



The Chairman of OHRC presents the commission's shield to Thea Lee, Deputy Under-Secretary of Labour.

A DELEGATION from the Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) chaired by Chairman, Shaikh Dr Abdullah bin Shuwain al Hosni, visited Washington within the framework of the commission's efforts to introduce its work and responsibilities and clarify the human rights situation in the Sultanate of Oman.

The programme of the visit included meetings and events related to human rights, including meetings with officials responsible for human rights files at the US State Department and the US House of Representatives and researchers representing civil society organisations. Besides, the delegation members held a human rights event at the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Centre (SQCC) in Washington. The programme of the visit began with separate meetings with a number of US State Department officials in charge of following up on labour rights, freedom of religion, combating human trafficking, immigrants, women's and children's rights and other vulnerable groups entitled to attention in accordance with the United Nations classifications of human rights.

The OHRC's delegation met with Cindy Dyer, Director of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons at the US State Department, and Scott Turner, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Population, Migration, and Refugees, Rashad Hussain, US Ambassador-at-large for International Religious Freedom, Christopher Le Mon, Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour at the US Department of State, Daniel Benaim, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Arabian Peninsula Affairs in the Near East Bureau at the US Department of State and Thea Lee, Deputy Under-Secretary of Labour.

During those meetings that took place at the US State Department, the members of the OHRC's delegation discussed topics included in the annual reports issued by the US State Department and related to human rights and freedoms in the world.

MODERN LAWS

They reviewed the mechanisms and steps taken by the OHRC towards these reports and the extent of attention to the details contained therein after coordinating with the competent authorities in the Sultanate of Oman. During the meetings, the OHRC's delegation explained the steps the government is currently taking to modernise legislation and laws related to human rights most notably the issuance by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of Royal Decree No 57/2022 on the reorganisation of Oman Human Rights Commission as a national mechanism concerned with the protection and promotion of human rights and granting it complete autonomy to perform its work in accordance with the local legislation in light of the Paris Principles Relating to the Status of National Human Rights Institutions. The delegation also visited some American research centres and civil society organisations and held an open meeting with the director and members of the Center for Middle East Policy. They expressed their appreciation for the efforts being made to serve human rights in the Sultanate of Oman.

WORK MECHANISM

During the meetings, the delegation presented an illustration of the national work mechanisms and responsibilities to protect and preserve human rights and the role of the OHRC in monitoring and receiving human rights reports and its contribution to finding appropriate solutions and settling them in cooperation with the concerned authorities and institutions in addition to providing legal and human rights consultations to individuals who get in touch with the OHRC.

Regarding the field visits, the delegation explained that the OHRC was enabled to carry out field visits in various governorates and wlayats which included the central prison, detention centres, workplaces in addition to field visits that are conducted after receiving reports from individuals. As for the US reports issued annually and deal with the human rights situation in various countries of the world including the Sultanate of Oman, the delegation explained to the concerned authorities on the US side that these reports receive special attention by reviewing their contents, studying the topics contained therein and responding to them after verifying the facts and information by the competent authorities in a manner that achieves the OHRC's commitment to the basic principles and the international laws in the field of human rights.

ENHANCE COOPERATION

The delegation also assured the American side of the OHRC's constant readiness and welcome to undertake any efforts that would enhance cooperation, develop communication and coordination between the two sides in all that serves human rights issues. On the other side, the delegation held a human rights event at the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Centre in the presence of Moosa bin Hamdan al Tai, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the USA, that was attended by more than 70 politicians and



The chairman of OHRC delivers a speech at the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Centre in Washington.

human rights workers stakeholders in the USA. The event began with a speech delivered by Shaikh Dr Abdullah bin Shuwain al Hosni, Chairman of OHRC, in which he pointed to the main objective of the delegation's visit to Washington namely to meet with officials in the US Department of State and the Congress and other institutions concerned with human to review aspects of cooperation and coordination in the field of human rights. In his speech, the Chairman of the OHRC emphasised the importance of strengthening efforts and measures pertaining to the protection of human rights particularly the issues concerning women, children, the disabled, the elderly, combating human trafficking and protecting the rights of workers, migrants and refugees.

The chairman of the OHRC said that the human rights basics can be achieved only by guaranteeing security and peace, justice and equality, freedom of expression, and combating human trafficking. He explained that these principles and basic pillars of human rights are witnessing continuous development and permanent reinforcement by the government of the Sultanate of Oman to ensure protection of human rights and preservation of human dignity.

The chairman of the OHRC concluded his speech by expressing the delegation's happiness over the visit to Washington during which, he said, the delegation held crucial discussions with human rights officials, advocates and stakeholders and exchanged proposals with them to enhance communication and cooperation in the human rights field.

RAISING AWARENESS

A film was screened which explained the OHRC's working mechanism, the programmes and visits it conducts, its role in raising awareness of human rights, its communication with regional and international organisations and its membership in the relevant committees.

Shatha bint Abdulmajeed al Zadjalayah, Director of Organisations and International Relations at OHRC, delivered a visual display through which she explained that the new system of the commission stipulates its formation from experts and persons interested in human rights and representatives of relevant government departments. The aim is to achieve the principle of pluralism in the formation of the commission in accordance with the Paris Principles. In the first meeting, the members of the commission elect the chairman and vice-chairman who should not be representatives of government departments. The commission's decisions are issued by representatives of the civil society to ensure independence.

The presentation explained the terms of reference of the committee in developing a national strategy for human rights, monitoring abuses, receiving complaints, conducting field visits to examine human the rights situation, raising public awareness by holding conferences, courses and seminars, cooperating with the international mechanisms related to human rights, preparing reports and participating in meetings at the regional and international levels.

The director of organisations and international relations at OHRC, concluded the lecture by explaining that the commission is in the process of submitting its file to the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) for re-accreditation in category A after it has met all the required conditions in accordance with the Paris Principles in March 2024.

After that, the door was opened for discussion with the audience and the delegation members answered all the questions raised regarding issues related to human rights in the Sultanate of Oman and questions related to the commission, its terms of reference and responsibilities and clarified the efforts and steps that are being taken to serve and protect human rights.

Also clarified was the importance of cooperation and coordination with the competent authorities on the US side on all common issues related to human rights.



The OHRC's delegation at the premises of the US State Department.



A group photo of the OHRC's delegation with members of Washington-based Center for Middle East Policy.



Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the USA and attendees at the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Centre in Washington.



Part of the attendees of an event held at the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Centre in Washington.



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HH Sayyid Shihab receives Iranian military official



MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Monday Maj Gen Mohammed Bagheri, Chief of General

Staff of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The two sides reviewed bilateral relations and exchanged views on several matters of common interest.

The meeting was attended by Vice

Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), the Iranian Ambassador to Oman and the Military Attaché at the Iranian Embassy in Muscat. — ONA

Numani receives Pakistani Army Chief of Staff

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received in his office here on Monday Gen Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Staff of the Army of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. During the meeting, the two sides exchanged cordial conversation and discussed various matters of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by the Commander of the Royal Army of Oman and the Ambassador of Pakistan to Oman. — ONA



Oman hosts meet to promote 'One Health' programme implementation

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Health, on Monday hosted a regional meeting to accelerate the implementation of the "One Health" programme in the Eastern Mediterranean (EMED) Region. The 4-day meeting has been organised in cooperation with the World Health Organisation (WHO)'s Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and WHO's European Regional Office.

The meeting reviews regional and global progress made in the field of One Health, exchanging of the best practices to implement the 'One Health' initiative within countries of the EMED and other measures.

It considers introducing a unified framework for the 'One Health' framework programme. It also explores ways to adapt the programme at country-level, the training of participants and the establishment of a regional 'One Health' network to facilitate the implementation of national One-Health plans.

The meeting also seeks ways to identify needs for additional support and to form a Quartet One-Health Working Group.

The opening of the meeting was held under the auspices of Dr Said bin Harib al Lamki, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs. Speaking at the opening ceremony, Al Lamki said that disease outbreaks and public health risks that threaten humanity are often



unpredictable and require rapid response before they propagate across countries. In this context, global health preparedness assumes great significance, he added.

Al Lamki pointed out that the One-Health system approach seeks to achieve sustainable balance and improve the health of humans, livestock, plants and ecosystems. "We realise that the health of human beings, domestic and wild animals, plants and the environment are closely linked to each other," he observed.

Meanwhile, Dr John Jabbour, Representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) in the Sultanate of Oman, said that Oman already started to apply and implement the One Health concept which, he affirmed, boosts global interest in this issue.

Jabbour stressed that this meeting reflects the efforts of Oman and the

participating countries to implement the One Health programme.

Dr Ahmed bin Salim al Mandhari, WHO's Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, said that Covid-19 pandemic focused on the links between our health, the health of animals, and the environment.

This pandemic demonstrated the need for cooperation in controlling interaction among humans, animals and the environment to prevent further national and international health contingencies, he noted.

The regional quartet meeting is attended by 22 countries from the Eastern Mediterranean region. It brings together a large number of specialists and decision-makers in the human health sector, the animal health sector, the environment sector and the municipality sector. — ONA

Higher Education Law offers incentives for private sector

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Higher Education Law (Royal Decree 27/2023) issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq on Thursday seeks to build specialised national competencies with globally competitive skills and capabilities that meet the needs of development plans and labour market requirements.

The law offers several incentives to private high educational institutions as per the new law, which was published in the official gazette on Sunday.

Article 2 of the decree states that the Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation shall issue the executive by law/regulation of the attached law, as well as the decisions necessary for the implementation of its provisions, within one year from the date of its publishing in the official gazette.

Till such time, the existing regulations and decisions shall continue to be enforced without prejudice to the provisions of the attached law or its provisions.

The law states the Arabic language is an official language in higher education institutions, and after the approval of the ministry, it is permitted to teach in other languages.

The law allows a foreign higher education institution to open one or more branches in the Sultanate of Oman, after the approval of the Council of Ministers and in accordance with the standards and requirements set forth in the regulations.

Anyone wishing to establish a non-governmental higher education institution must apply to the ministry in accordance with the conditions and procedures indicated in the regulations, and a licence is issued to establish the institution after the approval of the Council of Ministers.

Non-governmental higher education institutions must obtain the approval of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation in case of modifying its legal form, modifying



partners' stakes, selling or ceding them, merger, division, acquisition, entry of new partners, or transfer of ownership, in accordance with the controls indicated by the regulations.

A non-governmental higher education institution shall provide or construct buildings, facilities, and installations, in accordance with the standards and requirements indicated by the regulations, within a period of not exceeding five years from the date of licensing its establishment. The ministry may extend this period up to two years as a maximum.

The non-governmental higher education institution determines its financial and tuition fees as indicated in the regulation.

The ministry may authorise the establishment or merger of branches of a non-governmental higher education institution or change its classification in accordance with the standards and requirements set forth in the regulations.

A non-governmental higher education institution may not stop its activities except after obtaining written approval from the ministry in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth in the regulations.

The non-governmental institution of higher education shall be exempted from paying all taxes for a period of five years from the date of starting the activity, renewable for a similar period.

The law permits the provision of study programmes through the blended education system or the distance learning system, or through other educational methods, in accordance with the standards and requirements set forth in the regulations.



Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

ANNOUNCEMENT

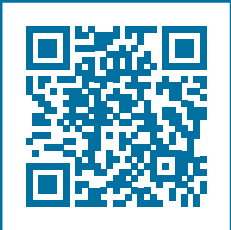
Sultan Qaboos University Hospital announces their desire to sell used furniture and their in sealed envelopes. Those wishing to enter the auction must adhere to the following conditions:

- Interested parties can view used furniture in auction stores and receive the bidding on Sunday and Monday 14-15/05/2023 from 03:00 pm to 06:00 pm.
- Deposit of (200) Omani riyals in cash as an insurance. This amount will be refunded to the unsuccessful bidders.
- Submitting the offer in a sealed envelope after viewing the used furniture, entitled by the name of the head of the committee for selling used furniture, and put the envelope in bid box.
- The presented offer is binding on its owner if it is placed on it, and in the event that the buyer does not pay the purchase price on time, the insurance amount will be forfeited, and the sale will be awarded to another applicant.
- Those who win the bidding will be contacted. They must pay the remaining sum, and they are responsible for moving their items on Tuesday and Wednesday 16-17/05/2023 from 09:00 am to 04:00 pm.
- The used furniture are sold in their current condition and SQUH is not responsible for any loss or damage to the sold material if the moving is not completed after the end of the sale (10) Omani riyals will be imposed for each day after 18/05/2023.

Notes:

- Prices are sorted according to groups and the higher price is taken.
- Funds will be collected electronically through visa cards.
- Entering the auction stores through Gate No. (2).
- For more information, please contact 99469639 - 99337363 - 99697385





RNO HOLDS JOINT NAVAL DRILL



Activities of the annual naval drill, 'Sharp Dagger', conducted by the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), began on Monday at Al Batinah maritime zone. The drill, conducted with the support of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) jets, runs till May 11, with the participation of a group of military ships belonging to the navies of many countries. — ONA

Oman-Iran forum explores investment partnerships



TEHRAN: The Joint Oman-Iran Business Forum was held here on Monday in a bid to boost trade exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The forum also aimed at consolidating bilateral business relations, conducting strategic partnerships to augment the volume of investments and business activity and accessing new economic fields.

Several B2B meetings were held during the forum between Omani and Iranian business people. Those meetings targeted striking business and investment deals. As many as 250 Iranian firms took part in the event. The forum was attended by members of the Joint Oman-Iran Business Council and the delegation that is taking part at Iran Expo 2023.

— ONA

BADRIYA AL BALUSHI
MANAH, MAY 8

The 20th Students' Forum titled 'Digital Horizons' opened at the Oman Across Ages Museum in the Wilayat of Manah on Monday. Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, declared open the event at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS).

Dr Said al Rubaie, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, senior UTAS officials and Dr Faisal al Zidi, Wali of Manah, attended the ceremony. Academics, dignitaries from Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, and deans of UTAS branches were present.

Dr Said highlighted the University's role in preparing students capable of investing in modern digital technologies, employing them to hone their capabilities, and providing them with future skills that will enable them to contribute to rapid developments in technology and communication.

He also emphasised the role in fuelling the spirit of competition among students and qualifying them to participate in local,



regional, and international competitions. The Forum also includes fields on religion, literary, scientific, technical, and media, with more than 20 competitions branching out from these fields.

Khamis al Khusaibi, an Information Technology Specialist from UTAS Nizwa, delivered a presentation on the electronic system of the Students' Forum of UTAS that was implemented for the first time in this year's version. He explained about the website launched to simplify the

tasks of the participants in various competitions.

Dr Said al Saqri along with the delegates and attendees listened to the outstanding participation of the students from various branches of UTAS.

The participants explained the projects and works part of the exhibition. Ibtihal al Habsi from UTAS Salalah, explained her participation in the competition with a painting expressing the Omani features through the 'Barqa'a' as a symbol of cover and decency in Omani culture.

Students Ahlam al Obaidani and Maithaa al Sharqi from UTAS Ibra presented a creative project titled 'e Aitaisal'. They came up with the idea of establishing an application for the alumni of UTAS who need training and job opportunities. The application displays available opportunity for graduates of UTAS branches in which they can apply, and more updates of the application e Aitaisal will be implemented later.

The Forum's opening ceremony concluded with the Hackathon programme' Digital Horizons'.

APRICOT HARVEST BEGINS IN AL AWABI



AL AWABI: The village of Halhal in Wadi Bani Kharous, Wilayat of Al Awabi in Al Batinah South Governorate, has begun the apricot harvest season. The harvest is expected to continue until the middle of May, and the apricots will be sold in local markets as well as neighbouring wilayats of Al Batinah South Governorate. Ahmed bin Saeed al Halhali, a resident of Halhal village, said the apricot crop is sold in the market of Wilayat of Al Awabi, and is popular with citizens who are looking for its nutritional value. The daily production ranges from about 50 kilogrammes, and the price per kilogramme ranges between RO 2 to 3. — ONA

Hotel revenues exceed RO 73m

MUSCAT: The revenues of 3-5 star hotels in the Sultanate of Oman recorded a rise by 49.9 per cent at the end of March 2023 to reach RO 73.319 million compared to the corresponding period in 2022, according to the latest data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The number of 3-5 star hotels' guests stood at 522,753, comprising an increase by 25.6 per cent till the end of March 2023 compared to 416,287 guests during the same period in 2022. Occupancy rate stood at 56.4 per cent.

The number of guests from

Oceania recorded a significant surge by 210.2 per cent from 4,049 guests by the end of March 2022 to 12,558 guests by the end of March 2023. Asian guests also recorded a rise of 53.4 per cent, going from 42,157 guests by the end of March 2022 to 64,686 guests by the end of March 2023. Guests from the African continent stood at 2,899 guests, constituting a rise by 43.5 per cent compared to March 2022.

The number of European guests stood at 169,334 guests by the end of March 2023, comprising a rise by 41.8 per cent compared to March 2022.

Moreover, the number of Arab

and other guests by the end of March 2023 stood at 21,639, comprising a rise by 38.1 per cent compared to March 2022. A rise of 30.9 per cent was recorded by the GCC guests, whose number jumped from 25,228 by the end of March 2022 to 33,021 by the end of March 2023.

Further, American guests stood at 17,053, going up by 6.4 per cent compared to the same period in 2022. Meanwhile, the number of Omani guests declined by 1.5 per cent from 184,060 by the end of March 2022 to 181,369 guests by the end of March 2023.

— ONA

Military relations discussed with Pakistani Army Chief

MUSCAT: Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Za'abi, Secretary-General at the Ministry of Defence, received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa here on Monday Gen Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Staff of the Army of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The meeting discussed military topics of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), the Ambassador of Pakistan to Oman and the Military Attaché at the Pakistani Embassy in Muscat.

Meanwhile, Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), also received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa Gen Syed Asim Munir. During the meeting, the two sides exchanged viewpoints and discussed various military topics of mutual interest.



The meeting was attended by a number of senior RAO officers.

Meanwhile, Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), also received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa Gen Syed Asim Munir. During the

meeting, the two sides exchanged viewpoints and discussed various military matters of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO) and Commodore Issa bin Salim al Owaisi, SAF



Assistant Chief of Staff for Administration and Supply. It was also attended by the Ambassador of Pakistan to Oman and the Military Attaché at the Pakistani Embassy in Muscat.

VISITS MSC: Gen Syed Asim Munir and his accompanying

delegation also visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC). The guest was accompanied by Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, RAO Commander.

Upon the guest's arrival at the MSC, he was received by Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi,

Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) and the Acting Head of the MSC.

The guest and his accompanying delegation were briefed on the tactical roles of the centre in the safety of the maritime environment. They was also briefed on the roles and tasks carried out by the centre within its national duties.

VISITS SAF MUSEUM: Gen Syed Asim Munir and the military delegation accompanying him also visited the Sultan's Armed Forces Museum. Upon their arrival at the Museum, they were greeted by Brigadier Salim bin Saif al Hosni, Senior Staff Officer at the RAO Command, commander of SAF Museum. The guests were briefed on the march of SAF's development. They also toured various sections of the museum and viewed its glorious military heritage. — ONA



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Visiting Unicef director learns about education strategies

MUSCAT: Adele Khodr, Unicef Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, was briefed about the Sultanate of Oman's experience in the field of education.

The Unicef official started her two-day visit to Oman by touring Madinat Sultan Qaboos School, which implements Unicef programmes. She took note of classroom activities, the use of technology in the field of education, teaching methods and various educational strategies.

During her first ever visit to Oman, Adele expressed satisfaction with the method of



education in Oman. She noted that a number of schools in Oman have implemented

the organisation's programmes, including the Child-Friendly Education initiative being developed by the Unicef for years to help boost the quality of school education, which relies heavily on a teacher's ability to motivate and guide students.

Earlier, Dr Khalifa bin Abdullah al Barwani, CEO, National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) received in his office Adele Khodr. The meeting reviewed areas of cooperation between the two sides on Childhood Data Development. — ONA

Registration open for Holy Quran contest

MUSCAT: The Sultan Qaboos Higher Center for Culture and Science at the Diwan of Royal Court announced the opening of registration for those wishing to participate in the Sultan Qaboos Holy Quran Competition for its 31st session of 2023, through the competition website (www.quran.gov.om), starting from May 9 to July 16.

The competition includes 7 levels. The first level has memorising the entire Holy Quran, the second level has memorising 24 consecutive parts, the third level has memorising 18 consecutive parts, and the fourth level memorising 12 consecutive parts..

The applicants are required to be born in 1998 and after, and the fifth level (memorising 6 consecutive parts and it is required that he be born in 2009 and after.

The competition which started in 1991 with three levels, has over the successive sessions witnessed many developments and modernisation. The competition is now on seven levels, and the previous 30th session in 2022 saw the participation of 2,881 contestants. — ONA

4,677 children get admission in Indian schools

MUSCAT: Like in the past years, the Indian School Board provided a seat to every child who applied for admission.

"A total of 4,677 children applied for admission in schools in the capital area, and all of them have been allotted seats. The numbers account for admission from KG 1 to Class IX standards," said a release from the Board of Directors of Indian Schools.

"The centralised admission system with online registration introduced by the Board has facilitated the entire admission process, making it convenient for parents and schools to take care of the rush for admissions," said Dr Sivakumar Manickam, Chairman, Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman. "The Board is committed to ensuring that no child would be deprived of admission in our schools," he added.

The online registration for admissions in Indian Schools in the capital area is open for new applicants. For admissions in the international wing of Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir and Indian School Al Ghubra, parents can approach these schools directly.

Admissions for children with special needs are open at Care and Special Education (CSE), which is located on the Indian School Muscat premises. Parents can approach the CSE administration directly for admission (www.cseoman.com).



اس ام ان باور القابضة ش.م.ع.ع
SMN POWER HOLDING SAOG

Tender Announcement Sale of All Plant Equipment at AL-Rusail Power Plant Site

Al Rusail Power Company SAOC invites interested parties to purchase all or any power equipment located at the Al Rusail Power Plant site located in the Sultanate of Oman. All equipment will be sold on an "as is where is" basis to the highest bidder and the Company invites both local and international parties interested in purchasing all or specific item (s) of equipment. As shown in Figure 1, the power assets include eight (8) Gas Turbine Units.

Al Rusail Power Company SAOC, a closed joint stock company was incorporated under the Laws of Sultanate of Oman. The Company was established to build and operate a 665 MW power plant at PO Box 121, Postal Code 134, Jawharat A'Shatti, Sultanate of Oman.

Bids must be submitted on or before close of business (05 pm GST) on **26th June 2023**. Tender documents which include further detailed information and data about Al Rusail Power Plant can be obtained by downloading the Tender Document from the Company's website at: <https://www.smnpower.com/tenders.php>

The bid price for the any Plant Equipment shall be submitted in a sealed envelope addressed to:
Al Rusail Power Company SAOC
Qurum Building, Building No.1022, 1st Floor, Office No.15,Way No.1013,
Al Qurum - Muscat, Sultanate of Oman



Figure 1 Al Rusail Power Plant

Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

TENDER NOTICE

The Tenders committee of Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tender:-

Tender No.	Description	Tender Documents Price (R.O)	Class	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Last Date for Submission of Documents
331/2023/MAFWR/HQ-25	Supply and Installation Furniture at the Ministry's Main Building in Al Khuwair	25/-	Excellent	Tuesday 23/05/2023	Monday 12/06/2023

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration issued by Bidders in the Sultanate of Oman (as required in the tender), and addressed to the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources, And the bidders can contact the Esnad technical support team at the number listed below to find out how to request Bid Commitment Declaration .
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24402200 or etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

MOORE STEPHENS LLC NOTICE ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF LIQUIDATION OF MAKHAZEN LOGISTICS LLC (AS APPEARED IN OFFICIAL GAZETTE NO 1492)

Moore Stephens LLC announces the liquidation process of Makhazen Logistics LLC, bearing commercial registration number 1180309, in accordance with the decision taken by the Company's Members on 18 April 2023. The liquidators alone have the right to represent the Company under liquidation before third parties, and all parties are to confirm with the liquidator for all matters concerning the company's business at the following address:

Office No. 41, 4th Floor, Building No. 1022, Way No. 1013;
Al Walaj Street, Al Qurum
P O Box 933, Ruwi, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24061000, Email: info@moore-oman.com

By this announcement, the liquidator calls the company's creditors to submit their claims against the company, together with the supporting documents, to the above address within six months from the date of publishing this announcement for the first time, and any debtors should settle the company's rights with the liquidator on the address above.

Moore Stephens LLC
Official Liquidators of Makhazen Logistics LLC
(Under voluntary liquidation)



Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtaining of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)
113/2023	Supply of machinery and equipment Vocational training workshops affiliated to the Vocational Assessment and Rehabilitation Center in Al Khoud	Companies specialized in the field of supplying electrical, mechanical and industrial machinery and equipment and spare parts and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board with the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Sunday 28-5-2023 02:00 PM	Sunday 18-6-2023 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

- ❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at theTender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) , On Tuesday 9/5/2023.
- ❖ 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



Smoke billows in Khartoum amid ongoing fighting between the forces of two rival generals. – AFP

Airstrikes rock Sudan as truce talks yield no breakthrough

KHARTOUM: Air strikes again shook Sudan’s capital on Monday while the latest truce talks in Jeddah have yielded no progress, with a Saudi diplomat saying both sides consider themselves “capable of winning the battle”.

The battles have killed hundreds, wounded thousands and left millions barricaded inside their homes amid dire shortages of water, food and basic supplies.

The feuding generals have sent representatives to Saudi Arabia for talks on establishing a humanitarian truce in an effort also backed by the United States, but to no avail so far.

By Monday, the talks had yielded “no major progress”, a Saudi diplomat said speaking on

condition of anonymity.

“A permanent ceasefire isn’t on the table... Every side believes it is capable of winning the battle,” the diplomat added.

In Khartoum, a city of five million, terrified residents reported more combat, now in its fourth week, as they hid out in their homes amid power outages and sweltering heat.

A southern Khartoum resident said that the family could hear “the sound of airstrikes which appeared to come from near a market in central Khartoum”.

The fighting has sparked a mass exodus of foreigners and of Sudanese, in both air and sea evacuations and arduous overland journeys to Egypt, Chad, South

Sudan and other neighbouring countries.

“It’s very dangerous everywhere,” said Rawaa Hamad, who escaped from Port Sudan on an evacuation flight to Qatar on Monday carrying 71 people.

In Sudan, she said, there is “no safety now, unfortunately”, with its people enduring “a lack of everything — a lack of water, lack of fuel, lack of medicine, lack of even hospitals and doctors”.

The United Nations has warned of a widening humanitarian crisis after fighting has already displaced 335,000 people and created 117,000 refugees.

The UN top humanitarian official, Martin Griffiths, has travelled to the Saudi coastal

city of Jeddah, the site of what Washington and Riyadh have labelled “pre-negotiation talks”.

Saudi Arabia is pushing for “a timetable for expanded negotiations to reach a permanent cessation of hostilities”, its foreign ministry said.

The Jeddah talks, which are set to continue “in the following days”, aim to reach “an effective short-term halt” to the fighting, facilitating aid delivery and restoring basic services, it added.

A major breakthrough would be to secure humanitarian corridors to allow aid through Port Sudan on the Red Sea coast to Khartoum and to the strife-torn Darfur region bordering Chad. — AFP

Congo flood victims buried en masse as death toll rises above 400

KINSHASA: Dead bodies were still being recovered on Monday from two villages in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo where floods killed more than 400 people last week in one of the country’s deadliest disasters in recent history.

Survivors looked on as humanitarian workers piled corpses into freshly dug mass graves over the weekend, in videos posted online.

The workers have spent days recovering mud-caked bodies from the villages of Bushushu and Nyamukubi, both in South Kivu province, where days of torrential rain triggered landslides and caused rivers to break their banks.

“We left everything behind,” said Bushushu resident Bahati Kabanga, 32, who managed to rescue his only child but lost his aunt, nephews and a sister.

“We felt a tremor while it was raining and decided to flee after seeing houses collapse in the distance,” he said.

Kabanga and his remaining relatives have taken shelter in a

Catholic school.

Just over 400 people are now confirmed dead, South Kivu governor Theo Ngwabidje Kasi said earlier on Monday, more than doubling the toll since Friday.

Civil society sources on the ground expect it to rise further as bodies were still floating in rivers and buried under wreckage. Hundreds of people remain unaccounted for, according to the United Nations.

The Congolese Red Cross said that 274 people had been buried so far, including 98 women and 82 children.

Over 8,800 others have been impacted by the floods, which swept away homes and schools and cut off roads, it said. Destroyed sewage systems and bodies lying in debris are raising concerns about sanitation, it said.

Families have been separated and traumatised survivors are taking refuge in other people’s homes, the Red Cross added.

The central government in Kinshasa has not yet issued a death toll. — Reuters



Congolese civilians gather after the death of their family members following rains that destroyed building in the village of Nyamukubi. – Reuters

China and US see need to stabilise relations

BEIJING: China’s Foreign Minister Qin Gang said on Monday it is imperative to stabilise Sino-US relations after a series of “erroneous words and deeds” threw ties back into a deep freeze.

The relationship between the world’s two biggest economies sank to a low last year.

Beijing severed formal communications channels with the United States including one between their militaries.

“The top priority is to stabilise Sino-US relations, avoid a downward spiral and prevent any accidents between China and the United States,” Qin told Burns, the Chinese foreign ministry said

in a statement.

The tension between the two superpowers had eased last November when USF and Chinese leaders Joe Biden and Xi Jinping met at a G20 summit in Indonesia and pledged more frequent dialogue.

“A series of erroneous words and deeds by the United States since then have undermined the hard-won positive momentum of Sino-US relations,” Qin said.

“The agenda of dialogue and cooperation agreed by the two sides has been disrupted, and the relationship between the two countries has once again encountered cold ice.”



Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang attends the “Lanting Forum” to deliver a keynote speech in Beijing. – Reuters file photo

Burns, in a post on Twitter about his talks with Qin, also spoke of the need to bring stability to the relationship.

“We discussed challenges in the US-China relationship and the necessity of stabilising ties and expanding high-level communication,” Burns said.

Last week, Blinken appeared to offer hope of a visit, telling the Washington Post that it was important to re-establish regular lines of communication at all levels. Also last week, US climate envoy John Kerry said China had invited him to visit “in the near term” for talks on averting a global climate crisis, further raising hope of resetting one of the world’s most important state-to-state

relationships.

Meanwhile, Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang will visit Europe this week, Beijing said on Monday, as China pushes to act as a mediator in the Ukraine conflict.

Qin will hold meetings with counterparts from Germany, France and Norway from Monday to Friday, foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said, without giving further details of his itinerary.

Beijing says it is neutral in the Ukraine conflict.

The Chinese leader has come under increased pressure from Western nations to step in. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

BEIRUT

Air strike kills major drug trafficker

An air strike killed a major drug smuggler in southern Syria on Monday, a war monitor said. Drug dealer “Marai al-Ramthan, was killed” in the eastern countryside of the Sweida province, near the Syrian-Jordanian border, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

“Ramthan is considered to be the most prominent drug trafficker in the region, and the number one smuggler of drugs, including captagon, into Jordan”, said the Observatory, which



relies on a wide network of sources inside Syria.

An activist in Sweida province with knowledge of the local drug trade said that “we expect to see a noticeable impact on smuggling operations from Sweida after the strike.” — AFP

SINGAPORE

Extensive law to fight online crime

A bill which will allow Singapore authorities to remove apps was introduced in parliament on Monday to provide police with broad powers to combat malicious online crime and scams.

The “Online Criminal Harms Bill” could be among other things require app stores to remove an app from Singapore storefronts as well as demand online service providers to disable specified content. Such orders could be given “when there is reasonable



suspicion that an online activity is being carried out to commit a crime,” the ministry of home affairs said in a statement.

It added that a “proactive approach” was needed to fight the scale and speed of criminals. — AFP

MALAPPURAM

At least 22 dead after boat capsizes

At least 22 people died when a tourist boat capsized in India, officials said on Monday, with many of those on board thought to be children.

It was not clear why the double-decker boat carrying at least 30 people tipped over in the southern state of Kerala’s Malappuram district late on Sunday.

Dozens of people searched for survivors in and around the stricken vessel all night, which was partially submerged.



Local publication Onmanorama reported that 11 people from one family, including three children, had died in the accident.

A case has been registered against the boat’s owner for alleged culpable homicide, media reports said. — AFP



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In brief

■ COPENHAGEN



OIL TANKER CREW KIDNAPPED OFF W.AFRICA RESCUED

Six crew members kidnapped by pirates last month from a Danish oil tanker off Congo have been rescued from Nigeria, the ship's owner said on Monday.

The Liberian-flagged Monjasa Reformer had 16 sailors on board when it was attacked by pirates on March 25. Despite being owned by a Danish company, none of the crew were Danish.

When the 135-metre-long tanker was found by the French navy the following week off the coast of Sao Tome and Principe in the Gulf of Guinea.

"All six crew members who were kidnapped from the oil tanker, Monjasa Reformer, are now safely recovered from an undisclosed location in Nigeria," Monjasa said. — **AFP**

■ TOKYO



FOUR HELD AFTER FAILED HEIST IN SWANKY DISTRICT

Four people were detained in Tokyo on Monday after they smashed their way into a luxury watch shop and stole items worth over \$740,000, local media said. The robbery in the upscale Ginza district was an unusual attempted heist in a country with famously low levels of crime. Three people entered the shop with their faces covered and armed with crowbars which they used to destroy glass cases and snatch more than 30 items worth over 100 million yen, local media said.

Public broadcaster NHK said four people were taken into police custody, and another suspected member of the gang was still at large. — **AFP**

■ TASHKENT



UZBEK LEADER CALLS EARLY ELECTION AFTER REFERENDUM

Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev on Monday called an early presidential election for July, his office said, after a referendum allowing him to remain in power for two more terms.

In late April, the Central Asian country approved constitutional changes allowing Mirziyoyev, 65, to extend his hold on power in a tightly controlled referendum slammed by international observers as flawed.

Mirziyoyev set the early election for July 9, according to a decree released by the presidential administration.

— **AFP**

Russia attacks Ukraine with huge drone swarm ahead of Victory Day

KYIV: Russia launched its biggest swarm of drones for months against Ukraine on Monday, the eve of Russia's May 9 holiday celebrating the defeat of Nazi Germany, which Kyiv marked a day earlier in a symbolic new break with Moscow.

Kyiv's mayor said Russia had fired 60 drones at Ukrainian targets, including 36 at the capital, all of which had been shot down. Debris hit apartments and other buildings, injuring at least five people in the capital.

A food warehouse was set ablaze by a missile in the Black Sea city of Odesa, where officials reported three people were injured.

It was the biggest drone swarm yet in a renewed Russian air campaign unleashed 10 days ago after a lull since early March.

Kyiv said Moscow was also making a final push to try to capture the ruined eastern city of Bakhmut in time for Victory Day.

In a new break with Russia, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy marked Victory Day on Monday rather than Tuesday, announcing that he had signed a decree to change the date of the holiday in line with the practice of Western allies.

"Recalling the heroism of millions of Ukrainians, we see the same heroism in the actions of our soldiers today," said Zelenskiy, who addressed the



Smoke erupts following a shell explosion, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Bakhmut, Donetsk region. — **Reuters**

nation from a hilltop overlooking Kyiv.

Russia foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that by changing the date, Zelenskiy had betrayed the memory of Ukrainians who fought in the war.

On the day of Russia's parade, Zelenskiy will underscore

Ukraine's ambition to join the West by receiving European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, according to the EU which took the unusual step of announcing her war zone visit a day in advance.

Brussels marks May 9 as "Europe Day", honouring a 1950 French declaration that led to the

founding of the body that became the EU.

Russia has cancelled or curtailed some of the huge military parades that normally accompany Victory Day.

Western countries say this decision arose in part out of security concerns and in part because

Separately, Russian forces shelled eight spots in Sumy in northeastern Ukraine on Sunday, the regional military administration said.

Strikes have also intensified in the past two weeks on Russian-held targets, especially in Crimea. Ukraine does not confirm any role in such attacks. — **Reuters**

UK coronation party draws to close with volunteer drive

LONDON: People across Britain were on Monday asked to do their duty as the celebrations for King Charles III's coronation drew to a close with a massive volunteering drive.

After the pomp and majesty of Saturday's service, and the concert and street party fun of Sunday, Britons were urged to join in the "Big Help Out", billed as a lasting volunteering legacy to mark Charles's crowning.

The coalition of volunteer and faith groups organising the initiative hope that hundreds of thousands of people will join in, with more than 1,500 charities involved.

While Charles will take a break from the public glare on Monday, his son William will take part in a puppy class at the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association Training Centre as part of the volunteer

programme. Meanwhile, William's children George, Charlotte and Louis got busy on a building site, renovating a scout hut in Slough, west of London.

The king was the guest of honour at Sunday's star-studded Coronation Concert, watched by 20,000 people at Windsor Castle and millions more across the country and around the world.

Charles, 74, and Queen Camilla, 75, watched on from a royal box in the grounds of the castle west of London, as Lionel Richie, Katy Perry and the British band Take That topped the bill of performers.

Screens erected nationwide broadcast the televised event to communities, while organisers said it would also be seen in over 100 countries.

Amid the music and video message tributes from an array

of public figures, Prince William took to the stage to pay tribute to his father the day after Charles was formally crowned king.

William said his late grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II, was "up there, fondly keeping an eye on us", adding she would be "a very proud mother".

Charles's coronation Saturday as monarch of the United Kingdom and 14 Commonwealth countries was the first in Britain in seven decades.

The glittering Westminster Abbey ceremony, steeped in 1,000 years of tradition and ritual, was attended by global royalty and world leaders as well as hundreds of UK community and charity representatives.

Thanking all those involved, Buckingham Palace said Charles and Camilla had been "deeply touched" by it. — **AFP**



Britain's royals pose for a group pictures with volunteers as the celebrations came to a close on Monday. — **AFP**

Macron to make rare Germany state visit amid friction

BERLIN: French President Emmanuel Macron will make his first state visit to Germany in July, the two countries said on Monday, amid persistent tensions on issues ranging from energy policy to China.

Macron will visit Germany from July 2 to 4 at the invitation of President Frank-Walter Steinmeier "to honour the close friendship of the two countries in the 60th year of the Elysee Treaty" on bilateral relations.

It will be the first state visit by a French president in 23 years, Steinmeier's office said.

Macron will visit "several regions of Germany" with Steinmeier to "underline the unique ties between our states, our citizens and particularly German and French youth".

"This special event marks the beginning of a new chapter in the decades-old friendship of the two countries," Berlin said, "as well as the close personal ties" between Steinmeier and Macron.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock will travel to Paris this week to prepare the visit, meeting her French counterpart Catherine Colonna on Tuesday and joining a cabinet meeting at the Elysee Palace on Wednesday, Macron's office said. Colonna is expected in Berlin on Thursday for talks with the foreign ministers of Germany, Jordan and Egypt on the situation in the Middle East.

Macron will then travel to Potsdam outside Berlin to meet



French President Emmanuel Macron

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on June 6 ahead of a series of key events, including the conference for a new global financial pact and a European Union summit in late June, and a Nato summit in July.

The French presidency also announced a meeting of the two governments in the autumn to foster "ever closer cooperation between the two countries".

The stepped-up diplomacy comes amid friction on a range of issues central to both governments.

Germany's phase-out of nuclear power as France pursues new construction of reactors has proved contentious in recent months, as have a reform of the EU's stability and growth pact and major defence acquisition programmes.

Macron meanwhile sparked controversy last month after a visit to China, by saying that Europe should not be a "follower" of either Washington or Beijing. — **AFP**

How to be poor...

A young friend sat for a conversation and he said I should write about how to be poor.

Why would that be interesting, I asked him.

He said that there are certain reasons why people remain poor.

Being Millennial is a whole different game. There is a rush to see a new direction because they want to be different from all other generations. It is not that they want, they are different.

The baby boomers are still active in many ways even while some might be thinking of retiring and they have been comfortable. The general consensus is that the younger generation have not been able to be as comfortable as the baby boomers.

So, my friend who is a millennial continued, some people spend the whole salary the same month and wait for next month's salary with zero balance and anxious for the next salary. They live from one month to another month. There is no space for saving.

He said this lifestyle can make you poor. First of all you have to separate the needs and the desires. Food, medicine, needs of the child and there are basic necessities to be met with such as water and electricity, and these are the needs. The desire list has eating out, cinema, travelling, catching up with trends and fashion and so on. Once we separate this and finish the list of needs we can think of desires, he said. But the most important aspect is not to finish all the salary.

At least saving 20 per cent of the salary is a need so that you can invest or save. Whether you are getting RO 1,000 and another has RO 5,000 but if both parties are spending without saving, by the end of the month they are in the same boat.

If we don't have savings we can get caught dry and end up asking other people's help. Instead experts say we must have at least six months salary in savings so it would take care of us during the lean days. On the other hand if the job security is on then this is the amount to invest.

Conspicuous consumption, he said,



Lakshmi Kothaneth
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The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

IF WE DON'T HAVE SAVINGS WE CAN GET CAUGHT DRY AND END UP ASKING OTHER PEOPLE'S HELP

is on the rise and it is just to impress others. It has always been there to an extend I interrupted, but maybe more now, I reflected.

The current generation is consumption oriented because you take them to the mall to buy them something new they are excited but are not the same if you take them to visit someone such as their grandmother, he noted. Maybe it is time to look for experiences. The feeling of retail therapy is short lived.

It is not easy to be wealthy, he noted. But experts also say it is not about just keeping money saved. The best situation is when money is making money. And for that we need to invest.

He said he does not advise to do investment unless they have a talent for it, and if you are going to leave it for others to do it, you will end up losing it.

I took a moment to reflect as it is the same case with young entrepreneurs too. We fail to take a salary and before we know we are too burned out. Because by nature we want something in return and especially financial independence.

Family businesses are good in the sense because there are group of people who can share the responsibilities.

Working for someone or an organisation guarantee salaries and provides a sense of security.

As for being an entrepreneur, he said, not everyone is meant for it as there are risks involved.

End of the day one has to know what they want out of their life. An education would mean learning to observe all these factors too.

Sometimes it is okay to be calculating in life because living is not just about moments but also about counting. On the other hand it is important to create memories other than gathering collectibles. The long lasting memories are the ones with best of experiences. Most important experiences are with people. It need not be in the fanciest coffee shops but just at home. Time does not wait, when they are gone they are gone.

If you know how to be poor then you would know how to avoid it.

TAKING THE AIM...



Britain's Prince Louis of Wales tries his hand at archery while taking part in the Big Help Out, during a visit to the 3rd Upton Scouts Hut in Slough, west of London on Monday, where the family joined volunteers helping to renovate and improve the building. People across Britain were asked to do their duty as the celebrations for King Charles III's coronation drew to a close with a massive volunteering drive. – AFP

Washington's new narrative for the global economy

Two competing agendas are currently vying to shape the United States' domestic and foreign economic policies.

One agenda is inward-looking, focusing on the creation of an inclusive, resilient, prosperous, and sustainable American economy. The other focuses on geopolitics and on maintaining US primacy over China. The future of the world economy depends on the outcome of this conflict and whether these opposing priorities can coexist.

US President Joe Biden's administration represents a radical departure from previous Democratic administrations, pursuing ambitious industrial policies to revive domestic manufacturing and facilitate the green transition. It has also adopted a tougher stance on China than any previous administration, including former President Donald Trump's, treating the Chinese regime as an adversary and imposing export and investment controls on critical technologies.

Until recently, however, the Biden administration did not articulate a coherent vision that combines these various elements and reassures other countries, including China, that its economic strategy is not



Dani Rodrik

The writer is Professor of International Political Economy at Harvard Kennedy School

WHILE THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION'S ECONOMIC AGENDA REPRESENTS A WELCOME DEPARTURE FROM PAST DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENCIES, ITS LATEST ACTIONS AGAINST CHINA HAVE RAISED CONCERNS ABOUT PROTECTIONISM

centred on confrontation, unilateralism, and protectionism. But recent remarks by US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan indicate that the administration is now taking steps to address this issue, potentially signalling the emergence of a new Washington Consensus.

The administration's approach to the world economy reflects a broader intellectual shift. Senior US policymakers now believe that the post-1990 model of globalisation, which prioritised free trade and free markets over national security, climate change, and the economic security of the middle class, has undermined the socioeconomic foundations of healthy democracies.

In his remarks, Sullivan laid out the five pillars of the administration's international economic agenda, which he called "a foreign policy for the middle class." The first pillar is a "modern American industrial strategy" that aims to catalyse private investment in sectors deemed critical to US prosperity and security. The second involves working with other developed

democracies and developing countries to ensure that US allies adopt similar policies to improve "capacity, resilience, and inclusiveness." Third, the US will move away from traditional trade deals that focus on market access and embrace "new international economic partnerships" that address global challenges such as climate change, digital security, job creation, and corporate tax competition. And the US will seek to generate trillions of dollars in investments in emerging economies and provide aid to countries facing



US President Joe Biden's administration represents a radical departure from previous Democratic administrations.

debt distress. While each of these areas presents unique challenges, some are particularly contentious, because other countries view some policies, such as the administration's "Buy American" requirements, as protectionist. But Sullivan's fifth pillar, which focuses on "protecting our foundational technologies," could have the greatest impact on the future of the global economy. The Biden administration's sweeping export controls, designed to prevent China from accessing advanced semiconductors, are the most explicit manifestation of this

pillar. And the administration is reportedly planning additional restrictions on US investments in Chinese tech firms, particularly in strategically important sectors like microchips.

Chinese officials, including President Xi Jinping, have accused the US of imposing a "technological blockade" on the country. Financial Times columnist Edward Luce concurs: by isolating China's tech sector, the US is engaging in a "full-blown economic war."

But Sullivan offered a different perspective. Likening the policy to "a small yard and a high fence," he described the administration's measures as "carefully tailored restrictions" motivated by national-security concerns and aimed at "a narrow slice" of advanced technologies.

Yellen's speech, delivered at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in late April, anticipated Sullivan's message a week later. The export controls, she argued, are meant to address national-security concerns and will remain "narrowly scoped and targeted."

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ALCARAZ BATTLES PAST STRUFF TO KEEP MADRID CROWN

MADRID: World number two Carlos Alcaraz defended his Madrid Open title with a hard-fought 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 win over Jan-Lennard Struff on Sunday.

The US Open champion earned his 10th career title and can reclaim the world top ranking from Novak Djokovic simply by playing a single match at the Rome Masters next week, before the French Open.

Alcaraz continued his Roland Garros build-up by adding the Madrid trophy to victories in Barcelona, Buenos Aires and Indian Wells this year, although he was below his vibrant best against lucky loser Struff, the world number 65.

The 20-year-old was given a tricky time by his German opponent but eventually became the youngest player since Rafael Nadal in 2006 to defend an ATP Masters 1000 title.

“Today I enjoyed it in parts, in other parts I suffered more than I enjoyed it, but it’s what you have to live with,” said Alcaraz.

“Nerves come into play and it’s difficult, but I think I enjoyed it more than I suffered today.”

Despite being 13 years Alcaraz’s senior, Struff showed nerves in the first game and conceded a break when he double faulted and then sent a volley too long.

It was only his second tour-

level final and he was aiming to be the first lucky loser ever to win a title at this level. Struff could also have become the oldest first-time Masters 1000 winner. Alcaraz consolidated for a 2-0 lead under pressure, surviving a break point as Struff found his range.

The German broke to love for 2-2 as he showed Alcaraz he would be no pushover, despite the strong home support and their disparity in ranking, and then won a third consecutive game.

However Alcaraz broke again for a 4-3 lead when Struff committed another double fault and he survived a triple break point to win the first set, pulling off a fine drop shot and lob combination.

Alcaraz’s speed in defence helped him against Struff’s power game, which created plenty of problems -- his opponent hit 14 winners in the first set to the Spaniard’s seven, with points split evenly at 35 each.

Honours were even after their two prior meetings, although Alcaraz needed five sets to beat Struff at Wimbledon last year and the veteran showed the same grit again in the Spanish capital to make the youngster sweat.

Dominant at the net, Struff roared into a 3-0 lead in the second set and produced a remarkable hold



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz poses with the trophy after winning the 2023 ATP Tour Madrid Open final against Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff at Caja Magica in Madrid. – AFP

in the 15-minute fifth game for 4-1, saving five break points as Alcaraz’s hitting deserted him.

Struff served it out as Alcaraz dropped only his second set of the tournament and first in a Masters 1000 final. The top seed saved a break point at 1-1 and then broke for a 3-1 lead in the decisive third set when Struff hit a volley long.

Alcaraz forced another break point at 4-1 but Struff stayed resilient until the end and held, with the Spaniard eventually clinching victory when his opponent sent a backhand long.

SABALENKA TAKES REVENGE

On Saturday, world number two Aryna Sabalenka beat top-ranked Iga Swiatek to win the women’s title in the Spanish capital.

Sabalenka played a superb attacking game to beat Swiatek for her first win on clay against her top-ranked rival.

The Belarusian prevailed 6-3,



Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka poses with the winner's trophy after beating Poland's Iga Swiatek in the 2023 WTA Tour Madrid Open final match at Caja Magica. – AFP

3-6, 6-3 to capture the title for the second time. Until Saturday, the 25-year-old had lost all of her three previous meetings with the Pole on clay without even winning a set.

“It’s something unbelievable. I’m really happy that I’m able to fight

against her and I’m able to get this win so it’s not like so super boring for people to watch our matches,” said the champion.

“I really enjoy playing on clay, because I have extra time. It’s not super fast, so I can go for my

powerful shots. There are longer rallies. It’s like not just bomb, bomb.”

The big-hitting Belarusian gained revenge for defeat by her Polish rival in the Stuttgart final a fortnight ago with a thrilling triumph to end Swiatek’s nine-match winning streak ahead of her French Open defence.

Two-time Roland Garros winner Swiatek fought her way back into the match after an explosive start by Sabalenka, but the second seed came back strongly in the third set to win the first WTA 1000 final featuring the top two ranked players since 2014.

Sabalenka earned her 13th career title, and only her second on clay in two hours and 25 minutes, clinching victory on her fourth championship point with a forehand cross-court winner. “I’m just super happy with this win, especially against Iga on the clay, it’s always tough matches against her,” added Sabalenka. — AFP



ISM, ISWK qualify for schools basketball finals

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 8

Indian School Muscat and Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir have both qualified for the finals of the Basketball Championship for Foreign Schools, organised by the Oman Sports Association in collaboration with Azzan Bin Qais International School, Madinat Sultan Qaboos in Bausher.

The Indian School Muscat will compete in the boys section, while the Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir will participate in the girls category. The final qualifiers for the tournament will take place from May 14 to 17 at the Azzan Bin Qais School, Madinat Sultan Qaboos branch.

The teams’ qualification came after they emerged victorious in the preliminary qualifiers, where each school was represented by two teams, male and female. A total of 12 teams from six schools participated in the competition, including Indian School Al Seeb, the International Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir, Indian School Wadi Al Kabir Branch, Indian School Al Ghubra, Indian School Muscat and Indian School Darsait.

Indian School Muscat secured the top spot in



the boys section by defeating Indian School Darsait while Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir qualified at the expense of Indian School Al Ghubra in the girls section.

The preliminary qualifiers witnessed great competition between the teams, displaying their basketball skills and determination to secure a spot in the finals.

The Indian Schools’ success in the competition reflects their commitment to sports and their efforts to promote a healthy and active lifestyle among students.

Pakistan ‘well-placed’ for WC after NZ rout, says Azam



Pakistan players with the winners' trophy at the end of fifth and final ODI match against New Zealand at the National Stadium in Karachi. — AFP

KARACHI: Captain Babar Azam says the “dominant” one-day series win over New Zealand sets Pakistan up nicely for the World Cup, despite doubts over their participation.

The hosts beat a depleted New Zealand 4-1 in the five-match series and on their way briefly reached the top of the one-day rankings for the first time.

Pakistan scored 337 in the second match — their second-highest successful chase in one-day internationals — and Azam became the fastest player to 5,000 ODI runs en route to his 18th century in the format.

Opener Fakhar Zaman meanwhile achieved the distinction of hitting hundreds in three successive ODIs, firmly establishing his place in Pakistan's top three, which also includes opener Imam-ul-Haq.

Uncertainty looms over Pakistan's participation in the World Cup in October-November because of tensions with hosts India. Despite that and defeat in the final match on Sunday, Azam was in buoyant mood.

“Winning the series is great and so is achieving number one ranking that has set us in a good

position for the World Cup,” said the skipper.

Asked if the uncertainty was worrying for the Pakistan team, Azam said: “We can't say anything about that, but wherever we get a chance to play, we will play.”

The stand-off started last year when India announced it would not send a team to Pakistan for the Asia Cup in September, a month before the World Cup.

In response, the Pakistan Cricket Board has threatened to pull out of the World Cup. There are signs of a thaw, however. Last week Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari visited India to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in Goa — the first visit by a senior Pakistani official in years.

NO EASY WIN

Azam refused to accept that in missing eight of their top players — mostly due to Indian Premier League duty — New Zealand were easy to beat. “You don't play an international team thinking that they are a junior team,” said Azam. “You have to give 100 per cent to win against an international team, so we played better and dominated.” — AFP

Samad hits last-ball six after no ball in mega chase

JAIPUR, India: Abdul Samad smashed a last-ball six as Sunrisers Hyderabad chased down 215 to beat Rajasthan Royals by four wickets in a dramatic IPL match on Sunday.

With Hyderabad needing 17 off the final over, Samad was dropped off fast bowler Sandeep Sharma's first ball. Samad was caught off the sixth delivery but it turned out to be a no ball, which abruptly cut short Rajasthan's victory celebrations.

With four needed to win on the final ball, and three to take the game into the super over, Hyderabad had the last laugh as Samad smashed a straight six in his seven-ball 17.

Hyderabad had slipped to 174-5 when New Zealand's Glenn Phillips turned the game on its head with a seven-ball 25 that infused life into the chase.

Phillips smashed left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav for three sixes and a four before he was caught by Shimron Hetmyer off the fifth ball of the penultimate over.

“That was the ball I should have hit the most. I was disappointed the actual slot ball didn't go over the fence,” Phillips said after being named man of the match. “I felt I left a lot out there with 17 needed off the final over, but then Samad did what he did and obviously we got that little bit of luck with the no ball.”

Phillips had come into the Hyderabad team for the under-performing big signing Harry Brook while England's Joe Root played his first game of the season for Rajasthan.

The victory was set up by key knocks from Abhishek Sharma (55), Rahul Tripathi (47) and Heinrich Klaasen (26) as the team made its highest ever run chase. Yuzvendra Chahal's bowling figures of 4-29 went in vain.

Rajasthan posted 214-2 after a destructive second-wicket stand of 138 between Jos Buttler, who smashed 95 off 59 deliveries, and skipper Sanju Samson, who hit a 38-ball 66.

Buttler started slowly with his first 20 coming at a run a ball but changed gears to bring up his fifty.

Seam bowler Bhuvneshwar Kumar denied Buttler a century to get him out lbw. Samson finished off the innings in a 17-run over but it wasn't enough in the end.

“To be honest life is never easy playing this format, especially this tournament,” said Samson. — AFP



Sunrisers Hyderabad's Glenn Phillips plays a shot during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 match between Rajasthan Royals and Sunrisers Hyderabad at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur. — AFP

Mumbai, Bangalore meet in must-win match



What a thriller did we witness in the Sunrisers Hyderabad vs Rajasthan Royals. In the last over, 17 were required and the ball was in Sandeep Sharma's hand and he had the backing of millions of fans to defend it, especially after the way he defended against MS Dhoni.

After conceding 10 runs of the first 3 deliveries, Sandeep came back strong with just singles of the next 2 balls, leaving 5 to win of the last ball. A brilliant block-hole delivery resulted in a dot-ball. Was the game done, NO! umpire signalled a no-ball and the extra delivery was smacked by Abdul Samad for a maximum and SRH won the game by 4 wickets.

This IPL, the difference between the team ranked third and 10th (last) is just 3 points. Hence, literally there are 8 teams fighting for the other two spots, assuming that Gujarat and Chennai would qualify, which is also not sure.

MI VS RCB AT MUMBAI

• **PREVIOUS ENCOUNTER** – Both these teams clashed in the early phase of the tournament, where RCB had the better of MI, in a soul crushing match. Put into bat first, Mumbai on the back of Tilak Varma's sole warrior 84 runs was able to put 171/7 on the Bengaluru track. Chasing a way under par 172 to win, RCB chased the score easily courtesy of Kohli-Du Plessis's 148-run opening stand and final two sixes by Maxwell. RCB chased the score in just 16.2 overs and won the game by 8 wickets.

• **TEAM INFO** – Coming to Wankhede, things between both these teams have got more intense than ever. Bangalore have lost two out of the last three games and they would believe that they are way off track, just at the business end. MI have won two off their last three games. RCB are fifth, while MI are sixth in the points table. Both these teams are only differentiated by NRR, being on equal points. With just 4 games left for each team, every game is almost a must win. Both of these teams are walking into this game with a losing momentum and expect them to put their best foot forward.

• **Head-to-Head** — Played — 31;



Mumbai Indians' Nehal Wadhwa (L) and Tristan Stubbs run between the wickets during the match against Chennai Super Kings in Chennai. — AFP

Won by RCB- 14; Won by MI – 17

• **MI possible 12** – R Sharma, I Kishan, C Green, S Yadav, T Stubb, T David, N Wadhwa, J Archer, P Chawla, A Madhwal, A Khan, R Goyal

• **RCB possible 12** – V Kohli, F D Plessis, A Rawat, G Maxwell, M Lomror, D Karthik, K Jadhav, W Hasaranga, V Vyshak, M Siraj, W Parnell, H Patel

• **Pitch & Weather Report** – The pitch at Wankhede Stadium is a wonderful track to bat on. The batters can hit through the line right from the start of their innings. Short boundaries on either side help the batters

and fans can expect a high-scoring affair on Saturday. The temperature in Mumbai is expected to hover between 28 to 34 degrees Celsius. It will stay humid throughout the day. Toss and dew will be a big deciding factor in this game.

• **Match Prediction** – Off lately, Mumbai have been a very under-confident side with a lot of chopping and changing happening in their side. This is not the best for a team environment and this starts with the poor form of its captain. I feel that, Faf du Plessis has been able to implement the calm environment and

structure, which he has enjoyed at Chennai and that's what has made RCB a much better team. This one should go to the RCB in a close contest.

FAN COMMENTS

• Everything can wait, when Mumbai Indians are clashing against Royal Challengers Bangalore. I have a very special rivalry with a very dear and close friend, who is born on the same day as me. I am sure that friend of mine has predicted that RCB will, but I am writing this comment to remind Pranav Mehta that Mumbai Indians are the best team of IPL and he has to accept that. 'Aamchi Mumbai – Duniya Hila Denge Hum!' – **Aaradhya Borkar, 30, 3D Animator, Indian**

• I have been a big fan of Virat Kohli for years. I totally admire his aggressive and attacking approach. I feel that this is the year, when he will finish the drought of a championship for RCB. 'Ee saala Cup Namde!' Mumbai's ground will really suit their game play and with this important win, they will just need two more to make it to the play-offs. – **Ijaz al Balushi, 40, Driver, Omani**

• Being from Pakistan, I have grown up to be a big-big fan of Kohli and the lifestyle that he has

set for the upcoming generation. The transformation of cricketers being out of shape in 90's, to the newer generation spending hours in the gym to make sure that they are the best brand ambassadors of the game. My entire family wants Kohli to win this year's IPL. Areeeeeeeebeeee!! – **Sana Hameed, 22, Model, Pakistani**

• When I moved to Oman a year back for work, I least expected to play any kid of good quality cricket in Oman. Only later to find out that, cricket is the sport here and every Friday morning there are thousands of people playing on the streets. Although, my wife found it a bit awkward to start with, but once she saw me joining them regularly, she has learnt the game quickly as well. I love the coverage by Oman Observer and I feel you should do the international matches as well. – **George Stephens, 34, Petroleum Sector, British**

• For RCB, this IPL season has been one step forward and one and a half step backwards and thus find themselves in a tight spot. RCB need to apply some common sense to play their bold attitude to win more games. Go RCB Go, you can do it! — **Freddie CL, 54, Sales Manager, OHI Marine, Indian**

VERSTAPPEN LEADS RAMPAGING RED BULLS TO ONE-TWO FINISH IN MIAMI

MIAMI: Max Verstappen won the Miami Grand Prix from ninth on the starting grid with a masterful display of tyre management on Sunday to extend his Formula One championship lead over Red Bull team mate Sergio Perez.

Red Bull's fourth one-two finish in five races dealt a blow to Mexican Perez's hopes of wresting the overall lead from the double world champion in Miami after securing pole position on Saturday.

Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso finished a distant third, for the fourth time this season, after starting on the front row.

Verstappen, six points clear of Perez at the start of the day, is now 14 ahead of him in the championship standings, on 119. Alonso is third on 75.

It was Verstappen's 38th career win tying him with Sebastian Vettel for most victories for Red Bull.

"To be honest with you today, I think with the pace he (Verstappen) had it wouldn't have mattered if he'd started on the soft, the medium or the hard tyre," offered Red Bull team principal Christian Horner. "It made it an interesting race because he had to manage that tyre early on but his pace as it has been all weekend has been just outstanding."

Verstappen, winner of last year's inaugural Miami Grand Prix, suffered a setback in qualifying when Ferrari's Charles Leclerc crashed and denied the Dutchman a final flying lap that almost certainly would have put him on pole after he dominated the practice sessions.

But he was immediately on the charge, moving up into fourth after 10 laps.

Alonso had predicted that Verstappen would be filling his mirrors after 25 laps.

That guess proved wildly wrong as Verstappen blitzed past Alonso's Aston Martin on the 15th to once again leave the fight for top spot on the podium between the two Red Bulls.

Perez was the first to pit, allowing Verstappen to put in an extended run at the front before finally stopping for new tyres with just 11 laps to go and handing back the lead briefly to his Mexican team mate.



Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen celebrates on the podium after the 2023 Miami Formula One Grand Prix at the Miami International Autodrome in Miami Gardens, Florida. — AFP

On fresher rubber, Verstappen was immediately on the prowl and two laps later he was in front of Perez.

From there it was business as usual, with the two Red Bulls easing through the final laps unchallenged for another one-two result.

"Once we pitted I had the fresher tyres to the end," said Verstappen, who completed a superb day by also clocking the day's fastest lap. "Then I had good battle with Chco.

"We were free to race and we had a good go at it but of course most importantly we don't touch but that all worked out really well."

Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff, who on Saturday criticised the German outfit's car as "a nasty

FORMULA 1 5. Miami Grand Prix Miami International Autodrome Circuit

1	Max Verstappen (NED)	1:27:38.241
2	Sergio Pérez (MEX)	at 5.384
3	Fernando Alonso (ESP)	at 26.305
4	George Russell (GBR)	at 33.229
5	Carlos Sainz (ESP)	at 42.511

AFP

Source: formula1.com

Driver standings	
Max Verstappen (NED)	119
Sergio Pérez (MEX)	105
Fernando Alonso (ESP)	75
Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	56
Carlos Sainz (ESP)	44
Teams	
Red Bull	224
Aston Martin	102
Mercedes	96

piece of work", was surely better pleased with the cars' performance on Sunday, with George Russell finishing fourth and seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton coming from 13th to grab sixth. Ferrari's Carlos Sainz was fifth, between the two Britons, while Leclerc was seventh in the other Ferrari.

Logan Sargeant, the only American on the grid, started last and found himself dropping further back after an early incident brought the Williams rookie into the pits for a new front wing. He finished last.

It was also a disappointing day for Haas, the only US-bankrolled outfit, with Kevin Magnussen finishing 10th and Nico Hulkenberg 15th.

Red Bull now lead the constructors' championship with 224 points with Aston Martin second on 102 and Mercedes third on 96.

There was just enough action on the 3.36-mile (5.41-km) temporary street circuit around Hard Rock Stadium to keep fans happy and quieten some of the criticism that Formula One was getting boring.

But as the circuit heads back to Europe for three grand prix in Imola, Monaco and Spain, the Red Bulls remain in a league of their own and Formula One is sure to face more talk of boring racing.

At the next race in two weeks in Imola many teams are expected to introduce upgrades to their cars but Verstappen is not expecting much to change. — Reuters

Harden-led Sixers edge Boston as Suns win despite Jokic's 53

LOS ANGELES: A resurgent James Harden scored 42 points, including a last-gasp three-pointer to lift the Philadelphia 76ers over Boston 116-115 in overtime on Sunday to level their NBA playoff series.

But in Phoenix, not even a career playoff-high 53 points were not enough for Nikola Jokic to spark the Denver Nuggets to a victory over the Suns.

Harden drained a 24-foot corner three with just 19 seconds remaining in overtime at the Wells Fargo Center for a win that leaves the Eastern Conference best-of-seven second round series squared at 2-2. In a nerve-shredding finale, Boston's Marcus Smart nailed a potential buzzer-beating basket but it did not count as he was unable to get the shot off before time expired. That left Philadelphia celebrating a gutsy victory that owed everything to the majestic performance of Harden, who bagged his second 40-point game of the series, which continues on Tuesday at Boston.

"I put the work in and it was all about being aggressive," said Harden afterward. "Tonight it was really do or die. "We found a way to win and that's all that matters in the post-season."

In the Western Conference, two-time NBA Most Valuable Player Jokic's heroics were not enough as Kevin Durant and Devin Booker each scored 36 to lead the Suns over the Nuggets 129-124 to equalise their series at 2-2 with game five on Tuesday at Denver.

"It's our job to protect home court," Booker said. "They say a series doesn't start until someone wins on the road so we're going to try to do that in game five."

Jokic could be looking at a suspension after he was issued a technical foul for shoving a spectator, none other than Suns owner Mat Ishbia, after the ball went into the crowd in the first half. But Booker, who added 12 assists, is fine with Jokic scoring big — if he still loses.

"It's a tough matchup," Booker said.



Philadelphia 76ers guard James Harden (1) shoots game-winning three point basket over Boston Celtics guard Jaylen Brown (7) during overtime of game four of the 2023 NBA play-offs at Wells Fargo Center.

— USA Today Sports

"He's either scoring or getting his teammates involved or doing both. Every possession, just try to make it hard on him. "He can have 50 all he wants as long as we get the win."

Harden's performance was especially sweet as it came in front of John Hao, a Chinese student left paralysed in a mass shooting at Michigan State in February that left three students dead and five others injured.

"He's my good luck charm," said Harden, who has been in regular contact with Hao since the shooting tragedy.

"He just gave me good luck, brought me good vibes, good energy. We knew this game was for him." Harden — who scored just 28 points across games two and three — rediscovered his shooting form just in time. "James was awesome," said Sixers coach Doc Rivers. "For a day and a half, James had to get himself back. No one did that but James."

Harden made 16-of-23 shots from the

floor with six three-pointers. NBA Most Valuable Player Joel Embiid had 34 points. Tyrese Maxey added 14.

Jayson Tatum led Boston with 24 points while Jaylen Brown had 23.

Tatum sank a 27-foot three-pointer for a 115-113 Boston lead late in overtime, a foul going uncalled after he appeared to push off on Maxey.

"That was awful that that wasn't called," Rivers said. "It was a push off. That could have decided the game."

SUNS SIZZLE

The Suns hit 14-of-18 shots in the third quarter, their best-shooting quarter of the season, for a 98-92 edge entering the fourth. A Jokic three-point play and Aaron Gordon's tip-in put the Nuggets within 121-118, but TJ Warren's two free throws gave Phoenix a five-point edge, Jokic missed a lay-up and the Suns, whose reserves outscored Denver's bench 42-11, cruised home. — AFP



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bp Oman’s gas output totals 546.2 bcf in 2022

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MAY 8

Energy giant bp made a significant contribution to Oman’s natural gas production, producing 546.2 billion cubic feet (bcf) of gas in 2022. This achievement was the result of bp’s long-standing commitment to investing in Oman’s energy sector and leveraging its expertise in exploration, production and technology.

In the recently published ‘Socioeconomic Review Oman 2002’, bp said its success in the Sultanate of Oman began back in 2007 when it signed a gas exploration and production agreement for Block 61 with the Omani government.

Since then, bp has been working closely with the government and local partners to develop the country’s natural gas resources and establish a sustainable energy sector.

At present, bp as an operator holds 40 per cent interest in Block 61 while the other partners include OQ (30% interest), PTTEP (20%) and Petronas (10%).



In the review, bp said its production averaged around 1.5 billion cubic feet of gas per day, as well as around 60,000 barrels of condensate. Total gas production for the year amounted to around 546.2 bcf.

In the same year, bp said it incurred a total of \$453 million expenditure (excluding Block 77 which incurred a total expenditure of \$2 million). bp is a 50% partner with Eni at Block 77, where the

exploration phase includes seismic data processing and the drilling of an exploration well.

BP’s success in Oman has not only been driven by its technical expertise but also by its commitment to sustainability and responsible business practices.

The company has implemented a range of measures to minimise its environmental impact, including using advanced technologies to reduce emissions and water usage.

In 2022, bp achieved 67,167 tonnes of equivalent sustainable emission reduction of carbon dioxide. It also signed a Strategic Framework Agreement and a Renewables Data Collection Agreement with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals to support the potential development of a multi-gigawatt, world-class renewable energy and green hydrogen project in Oman.

Additionally, BP has worked

BP SPENT \$247 MILLION WITH OMANI-REGISTERED COMPANIES. THIS COMPRISE AROUND 90% OF BP’S PROCUREMENT SPEND IN 2022. BP HAS ALSO SPENT \$5 MILLION ON SOCIAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMMES IN 2022 WHERE 40,362 PEOPLE BENEFITTED FROM IT

closely with local communities to develop programmes that promote education, health and economic development.

In the same year, bp spent \$247 million with Omani-registered companies. This comprise around 90% of bp’s procurement spend in 2022. bp has also spent \$5 million on social investment programmes in 2022 where 40,362 people benefitted from it.

Moreover, bp launched its first national training programme. In October 2022, it launched the ‘Ruwad’ national training programme in collaboration with Oman’s Energy Association and various oil and gas contractors.

The one-year training programme aims to enhance

nationalisation and present a framework that enables the upskilling of national competencies and their contribution to the market and economic growth.

It aims to equip technical and non-technical bachelor, diploma and general diploma graduates with the skills needed to build a successful career in the local market.

“We have been able to create a positive impact through our social investment programmes that are designed to create value in the country, and innovative solutions and technologies that contribute to the sustainable development of Oman and the transition to a clean energy future.

By leaning on our relationships and strengthening our partnership with Oman, we aim to provide integrated energy and mobility solutions to help the Sultanate of Oman reduce carbon emissions, establish the 2050 net zero pathway and benefit the people of Oman through social, environmental and economic sustainability initiatives,” Yousuf bin Mohammed al Ojaili, bp Oman President, said.

Jazeera Steel plans steel unit in UAE



QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MAY 8

Al Jazeera Steel Products Co, a publicly listed Omani company, has announced that its subsidiary in the United Arab Emirates plans to establish a medium section mill at the Khalifa Economif Zone Abu Dhabi (KEZAD) with a capacity of 450,000 metric tonnes.

Suhar-based Al Jazeera said in a filing to the Muscat Stock Exchange its UAE-subsiidiary Al Jazeera Steel Products Co LLC, has secured a land lease agreement with AD Ports Group in this regard.

Plans for the new mill in Abu Dhabi received shareholder approval during the AGM in February 2022. Registration of Al Jazeera Steel Products Co LLC as a subsidiary in the UAE was successfully completed thereafter.

Al Jazeera Steel is a leading manufacturer of structural steel products with a total capacity of around 600,000 metric tonnes per annum.

The Suhar complex operates a state-of-the-art tube mill (TM) and merchant bar mill (MBM) with a product portfolio spanning across black pipes, galvanised pipes, hollow sections, merchant bar mill products and rebars.

Oman LNG eyes expansion of Qalhat plant capacity to 12 million tonnes per year

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MAY 8

Buoyed by a slew of recent commitments to offtake its LNG output, Oman LNG plans to achieve a further incremental expansion of the capacity of its gas liquefaction complex in Qalhat — a move that also bodes well for its efforts to secure an extension of its concession to operate beyond its current mandate expiring in 2024.

Oman LNG CEO Hamad al Numani said the capacity boost is designed to lift output from the 3-train LNG plant to 12 million tonnes per year (tpy), up from 11.5 million tpy presently.

The uptick will further strengthen the majority government-owned company’s positioning in a global energy market still roiled by the effects of a gas supply crisis triggered by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, he noted.

Significantly, the proposed expansion comes on top of a series of upgrades that have helped bolster plant capacity by around 33 per cent over the past couple of years.

“The total production of LNG from our Qalhat facility grew from 8.6 million tpy in 2017 to 11.5 million tpy in 2022,” he said. “Recently we completed a



debottlenecking project: the target was to increase production by 10 per cent and we have exceeded this target below the budget initially allocated for this growth project, and we were timely in the market. It was a success considering that it came at the right moment given the global energy crisis and we basically had an ‘extra’ 1 million tonnes to leverage,” Al Numani told The Energy Year, a UK-based energy-centric news portal.

Next in its sights is a capacity ramp-up to 12 million tpy of production — a goal Oman LNG seeks to achieve within

a “year or two”, side-by-side with its efforts to secure a government mandate to operate well into the foreseeable future.

“Currently we are working to present to the government and the shareholders a second phase of growth with viable options to continue our success story, and ensure we continue to be a major player in this industry,” the CEO further noted in the interview.

Over the last six months, Oman LNG has signed a succession of offtake agreements with a number of international offtakers, effectively guaranteeing the Qalhat plant a ‘life extension’

beyond 2024. Most of these supply commitments, ranging from 800,000 tpy to 1 million tpy, cover contracts of up to ten years starting from 2025. Offtakers include France’s TotalEnergies, Thailand’s PTTEP, China’s Unipet, Turkey’s Botaş and Shell International Trading Middle East.

Also on board are four key Japanese partners: JERA, Mitsui, Itochu and Kansai Electric, he added. In the Asian region, Oman LNG will remain focused on China, Japan and South Korea as promising markets.

A long-term supply contract



Recently we completed a debottlenecking project: the target was to increase production by 10 per cent and we have exceeded this target below the budget initially allocated for this growth project, and we were timely in the market

HAMAD AL NUMANI
CEO, Oman LNG

with KOGAS of Korea, for a sizable 4.1 million tpy, concludes in 2023, he said.

“India is also a growing market and we have expanded our foothold into Europe, a very interesting structure because of its multiple entry points — through Italy, Turkey or the Netherlands,” the CEO added.

Lulu concludes ‘Shop and Win’ promotion, announces grand winner



MUSCAT: Lulu Oman concluded its Ramadan Shop and Win promotion by handing over RO 100,000 worth cash prizes to the winners of the campaign. The campaign was held from March 1 to April 29, 2023, across all Lulu stores in Oman to coincide with Ramadhan and Eid celebrations.

The distinctive ‘Shop & Win’ promotion gave 281 customers a chance to win cash prizes worth RO 100,000. The prize distribution ceremony was held on May 6, 2023, at Lulu Hypermarket Bausher.

The prizes were distributed to the winners in the presence of well-wishers, families, shoppers, as well as the management and staff of LuLu Hypermarket Oman. Muneer al Balushi was announced as the lucky winner of the Grand Prize of RO 10,000.

Tariq Hamad al Toobi, Manal al Zadjali, Salim bin Abdullah al Muqbali, Abdullah Abdullah, Naresh M, Essam Ali, Ahmed bin Nasar al Habsi and Lavkush Varma were the eight winners of the weekly cash prize of RO 5,000. Other weekly cash prizes of RO 750, RO 500, RO 200 and RO 100 were won by Lulu customers from all over Oman.

Shoppers purchasing for a minimum value of RO 10 at any LuLu Hypermarket in Oman during the promotional period were entitled to register themselves to be part of e-raffle draws held during the entire period. The winners were picked

in eight consecutive draws held during the promotional period.

Expressing happiness over the success of the campaign, Ananth A V, Director of Lulu Hypermarkets Oman & India, said “I would like to congratulate our lucky Grand Prize winner and all other winners of this year’s Shop and Win promotion.

We organise this promotion every year during Ramadhan as a gratitude to our customers for their continuous loyalty and support. Our patrons continue to be at the core of everything we do, and that is why we offer them a unique customer experience like none other, along with a diverse variety of products to suit their needs at all times.

Shabeer K A, Regional Director – Lulu Hypermarkets, Oman, stated, “Lulu constantly strives to bring its customers great value, excellent products, and uncompromised services.

This campaign was an opportunity for shoppers to further enrich their unique shopping experience and win exciting rewards that Lulu offers during Ramadhan and Eid.

Lulu always aim to create promotional campaigns that are beneficial for retailers as well as a rewarding experience for shoppers at the same time. All of the promotion, special deals and offers at Lulu are specially tailored to make a tangible difference each day in the life of consumers.

Bank Muscat wins Best Private Bank Award from EMEA Finance

MUSCAT: In recognition of its excellence in providing diversified and outstanding solutions for wealth management, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, was awarded as the Best Private Bank in Oman by EMEA Finance, the well-known publication specialised in reporting financial and banking developments in Europe and the Middle East.

The award sheds light on the professional standards achieved by the bank, in accordance with international standards and practices. It is an acknowledgment of the effective role and unique services of the bank that provide enriching solutions in the field of private banking.

Bank Muscat offers a wide range of private banking options, exclusive for high net-worth customers including investment offerings that cover global markets and all asset classes, through a robust execution platform administered by experienced and dedicated Relationship Managers.

The offerings also cover stocks, bonds, ETFs and mutual funds across global markets.

Speaking on the occasion, Abdulnasir N al Raisi, General



Manager – Premier Banking, Bank Muscat, said: “We are proud for being recognised again as the Best Private Bank in Oman by EMEA Finance. This reflects Bank Muscat’s entrepreneurship in providing various prominent banking services for its customers, who represent a top priority for the bank. They enjoy an exclusive banking experience starting from investment solutions, wealth management, advisory and other services, which can meet their expectations and deliver excellence in all aspects. The

bank’s efforts to maintain high-level standards of professionalism, wealth management and investment solutions have been applauded by pioneer institutions around the world.”

Bank Muscat offers Private Banking customers a complete suite of services including private equity funds, real estate funds, ETFs, offshore banking and portfolio management through reputed global counterparties.

Bank Muscat Private Banking also sends regular research reports to its customers as part of new

initiatives to improve customer experience.

These reports cover investment ideas, global macroeconomic outlook and updates on key economic and geographic events impacting performance of various asset classes.

The Private banking services include conventional accounts, term deposits, currency exchange, domestic and international transfers, online banking and regular asset monitoring.

Visa Platinum debit card holders enjoy luxury car finance and yacht finance along with competitive rates for deposits, loans and foreign exchange.

At the same time, Private banking Visa Infinite credit cardholders enjoy 1 per cent cashback rewards on all transactions made through the Private banking Visa Infinite credit card.

The card also facilitates exclusive Hilton Honors Gold Membership, unlimited access to 1,000+ airport lounges globally, complimentary chauffeur service to and from Muscat International Airport, special offers at over 900 luxury hotels around the world, multi-trip travel insurance and a Global Concierge Service.

ahlibank’s Al Nukhba customers enjoy exclusive wealth management services

MUSCAT: ahlibank’s Al Nukhba banking facility, classified as an effortless and flexible financial solution, has been transforming the concept of everyday banking for privileged customers, who consciously seek customised products and services. It has, in a very short span of time, augmented its customer base with an impressive service credo and continues to forge ahead with regular upgrades.

Equipped with extensive regional and international experience, ahlibank capitalised on its growing popularity with Al Nukhba banking, which made its mark in the market early on with an impressive 100 million deposit portfolio. It has since grown into a formidable segment, catering to the growing market for wealth banking.

Through this exclusive portfolio, customers are able to manage their wealth in convenient and secured ways, with a host of banking solutions and tailor-made products that suit their investment needs.



Muneer al Balushi, AGM — Head of Retail Distribution, ahlibank, said, “From the very beginning, Al Nukhba has been a major draw among our elite and savvy customers; customers who have clear understanding of global banking standards and seek the same from their local sector — which is exactly what Al Nukhba provides with its array of tailored

products.

It is specifically designed to meet the growing market for wealth management. It is no surprise that this impressive segment has managed to set a new benchmark in banking with its dedicated team of professionals to guide and shape the fortunes of our customers — our most important stakeholders.”

Explaining further, he added: “Al Nukhba banking account is an extension of our customer-centric approach to banking. We understand the changing needs and requirements of our growing customers and, accordingly, update and upgrade our products to match global trends and fit the local demands.

Through Al Nukhba, we have demonstrated our categorical decision to partner with our customers and support their banking agendas through a range of financial and non-financial packages that are aimed at enhancing their wealth.”

Omantel joins hands with industry experts to publish white papers on subsea cable efficiency and resiliency

MUSCAT: Omantel, the leading provider of integrated telecommunication services in the Sultanate of Oman, has strengthened its role as an enabler of innovation in subsea cable technology by participating in two key industry white papers along with Infinera and Jio.

The first white paper details a novel technique known as Automatic Fast System Optimization which demonstrates the ability to recover affected services on a subsea system with multiple branches, when one or more indirect branches experience a

failure.

Since subsea cable faults usually take months to repair, the implemented solution reduces the impact to a very large extent, by limiting the outage to only branches directly related to the fault while services on the indirect branches will be recovered and work as normal.

This innovative solution shall enhance the overall efficiency level of operations and maintain service quality for a major part of the affected subsea cable, leading to better customer experience management.

The second white paper



presents the case study of how modulation formats with wide range and fine granularity can be used in combination with electrical and optical switching techniques to improve the spectral efficiency of multi-branched subsea cable systems.

The study also reveals how the same hardware can be reconfigured to withstand dynamic changes in the traffic demands. It can be concluded from this research that there are cases whereby existing subsea cables can cater for growing traffic demands without having to immediately invest in new subsea systems, which again leads to better utilisation of investments and assets in a rapidly expanding market.

Omantel co-authored the white papers, through its representative Willy George (pictured), Senior Strategist

Wholesale, being the Co-chair of the Technical Working Group for the Asia-Africa-Europe 1 (AAE-1) subsea cable consortium. The collaboration was facilitated by Infinera, a top global provider of optical transmission equipment, with innovative infrastructure solutions that enable carriers, cloud providers and other institutions to scale network bandwidth, accelerate service innovation and automate network operations.

“Omantel has already established its position as a global provider through its Wholesale Business Unit. Now,

we are positioning ourselves as an enabler of innovation, driven by our proven expertise and track record. These studies will have wide ramifications on the industry.

We are among the first operators in the MENA region to contribute directly to the creation of these solutions that help to further enhance and monetise our subsea cable investments.

Additionally, these solutions can be implemented globally and will result in improvements on wholesale service providers in the telecom industry,” commented Willy George.

Opportunity Oman: Suhar



DR YOUSUF BIN HAMED
AL BALUSHI

The author is the founder and CEO of Smart Investment Gateway; email: yousufh@omaninvestgateway.com



THE PORT IS CONNECTED TO MAJOR ROAD NETWORKS, MAKING IT AN IDEAL LOCATION FOR BUSINESSES THAT REQUIRE EASY ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION AND WITH THE UPCOMING DEVELOPMENT OF THE RAILWAY PROJECT CONNECTING OMAN AND UAE THROUGH SUHAR ADDS MORE POTENTIAL AS A PRIME LOGISTIC HUB.

Suhar is a rapidly growing city and an important economic centre in the country. The city is known for its strategic location, world-class infrastructure connecting GCC and other expanding economies as well as its large port.

Suhar was historically the capital of Oman and port of Suhar was the main hub of the region with high traffic.

The city's deep-sea port is one of the largest in the region, capable of handling large cargo vessels.

The port is connected to major road networks, making it an ideal location for businesses that require easy access to transportation and with the upcoming development of the railway project connecting Oman and UAE through Suhar adds more potential as a prime logistic hub.

SOHAR Port, is a key gateway to the Gulf region and beyond having witnessed a significant increase in cargo throughput, flow of trade and foreign investments, this growth trend will continue to increase coupled with major expansions in infrastructures, including the development of a new liquid bulk terminal and a dedicated terminal for handling livestock.

The city's tourism sector is also expected to grow, with plans for the development of several tourist attractions, including the Suhar Corniche and the Suhar Heritage Village.

In addition, it is home to

a range of commercial and residential real estate projects. Suhar has also experienced significant economic growth in recent years, driven by the development of its industrial sector which hosts a range of industries including petrochemicals, metals, and logistics.

The Suhar Industrial Estate, covers an area of 19 million square metres, is a prime location for Local and foreign investors looking to set up manufacturing facilities.

Additionally, SOHAR Freezone is a designated area for international companies to set up their businesses and benefit from various incentives and tax exemptions.

The freezone covers an area of over 4,500 hectares and is home to over 200 companies from 49 countries with more untapped potential.

Potential opportunities in Suhar currently in the following sectors:

■ The logistics sector is a result of the growing surrounding markets of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. With the capacity

of the SOHAR Freezone, opportunities are present in operating warehousing, cold storage units and support services.

With the existing extensive infrastructure facilities, transport activities from Suhar to Muscat and Dubai are of ease.

■ Minerals and Metals provides great access to international markets of Middle East, China, and Europe as a result of its rich resource levels, incentives packages and cost-effective utility prices allowing Suhar to offer competitive pricing to steel, aluminium and iron manufactures.

■ Petrochemical Cluster provides an abundance of resources for use in plastics, cutting costs and saving time for investors. It brings suppliers of raw materials and consumers of the final goods together in one place.

■ Food being an upcoming cluster in SOHAR Freezone with the regions dedicated Agri bulk terminal with integrated facilities for manufacturing and packaging.

A few of the facilities include Sugar Mills, Flour Mills as well as

soya bean-crushing facility.

With the growing population in the country and region this presents immense potential.

■ Renewable Energy: Oman has set a target of producing 30% of its energy from renewable sources by 2030. Suhar has several ongoing renewable energy projects, including solar and Green Energy which will be game changer.

Suhar hence offers a range of investment opportunities for foreign, local, and regional investors.

The city's historically landscape, strategic location, world-class infrastructure, and access to a large port make it an attractive destination for businesses looking to establish a presence in Oman and the wider region.

The government of Oman along with other stake holder OPAZ, OIA & ASYAD has created a favourable investment environment by providing a range of incentives for foreign investors, with initiatives implemented by the OIA and the Omani government to attract investment in the city, Suhar is set to continue its growth trajectory in the coming years.

While the city's industrial sector, real estate, and tourism present opportunities for investors across various sectors.

Tejarah Talks discusses Oman's journey to Net-Zero

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 8



As Oman progresses towards its 2050 Net-Zero target, Tejarah Talks takes a deep dive into what exactly the green transition means for Omani companies and investigates the new commercial opportunities it is opening up for local businesses.

Generously sponsored by Jindal Shadeed; Sustainable City — Yiti; Nortal; Omantel; and OmanFM, Tejarah Talks is an Oman Business Forum initiative organised in association with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP).

The next edition of this popular discussion forum "Oman's Journey to Net-Zero: An Environment for Enterprise?" is scheduled for Wednesday, May 17 at 7:30pm and will be held at Omantel's Head Office in Airports Heights.

Noting that the session will provide a platform for Omani businesses of all sizes to learn more about the latest developments in sustainable practices and climate-related regulations, Maymuna al Adawi (pictured), MoCIIP Director, Public Private Partnerships and organiser of Tejarah Talks said: "Given that SMEs make up 90% of all businesses, employ 70% of the world's workforce and contribute over 50% of global GDP, their role in achieving climate goals is key.

Our SMEs here in Oman are no exception. They have a huge role to play in the collective corporate effort to address climate change and achieve Net-Zero emissions by 2050.

With this Tejarah Talks, we aim not only to inform but also to inspire and empower local SMEs to take meaningful climate action and seize the opportunities this presents."

Al Adawi went on to explain: "The green transition will fundamentally transform every part of Oman's economy. Some of these changes will be visible,

such as renewable energy and electric vehicles, but most will happen behind the scenes in the way organisations operate and manage their relationships.

In fact, Oman's journey towards Net-Zero presents a raft of opportunities for local SMEs to reduce running costs, develop new products, create jobs, attract investment and new customers — ultimately helping them maintain a competitive advantage locally and globally.

Indeed, we believe sustainable development and economic growth can go hand in hand. We encourage business owners to attend this Tejarah Talks session as we make our way towards a greener future."

Internationally recognised as a country with major potential in the green economy, Oman is already home to several large renewable energy initiatives, including the \$400 million 500MW Ibri greenfield solar power project and the 50 MW Dhofar Wind Power Plant — the GCC's first-large-scale wind farm — which are helping reduce reliance on fossil fuels and transition towards cleaner energy sources.

Additionally, Oman's efforts to develop green hydrogen and carbon capture and storage technologies demonstrate its firm commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions while supporting economic growth.

Tejarah Talks "Oman's Journey to Net-Zero: An Environment for Enterprise?" will be moderated by His Highness Sayyid Dr Adham al Said, Co-founder, The Firm.

Leading the way: The Sultanate of Oman's dedication to healthcare investments and economic growth



MUKUND MANOHAR

I recently had the opportunity to visit the Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre (SQCCRC) to accompany a close family member for treatment. From the moment I stepped inside the facility, I was amazed by the world-class facilities, quality of care, and the doctors' expertise.

The centre was on par with any top cancer research centre in the world. I was impressed with how Oman has invested in ensuring its citizens have access

to the best healthcare facilities in Oman, without the need to travel abroad.

This experience highlighted the importance of investing in healthcare infrastructure and its potential to lead to economic growth and prosperity for Oman.

Several countries have already demonstrated the positive impact of investing in healthcare. Japan has a highly developed healthcare infrastructure that has contributed to its rapid economic growth and prosperity.

Singapore has invested heavily in healthcare, and as a result, its healthcare sector has become a major contributor to the country's economy, with an annual growth rate of 10%.

In South Korea, healthcare has become a major export industry, with its medical tourism industry alone generating \$1 billion in revenue annually. These success stories highlight the effective

strategy of investing in healthcare for boosting economic growth.

Oman has made significant progress in its healthcare sector since 1970, with the government's strong presence in the sector making advanced health solutions and patient care services available to all.

Oman encourages private healthcare providers to contribute to transforming Oman into a regional healthcare hub. Several public private partnerships have led to the development of several hospitals, clinics, and health research centres.

According to a report by HSBC, the MENA healthcare market is projected to grow at 11.7 per cent to \$243.6 billion in 2023. Oman's healthcare spending in 2022 was approximately RO 2 billion, with over 70,000 employees in the healthcare sector.

There are several advantages to investing in healthcare

infrastructure for Oman's economy.

One of the benefits is increased productivity, as a healthy workforce is more efficient.

Another advantage is the reduction of the economic burden of non-communicable diseases on government spending. Additionally, investing in healthcare infrastructure can create job opportunities for the Omani workforce.

Finally, it can also attract medical tourism, which brings in foreign exchange and contributes to the country's economic growth.

According to a report by the world's highest-impact medical journal *The Lancet*, investment in health can lead to economic growth, not only through increased labour productivity but also by freeing up household resources for consumption and savings, and by reducing the burden of disease on government

spending.

The WHO stated that Health investments can generate both direct and indirect economic benefits, including increased productivity, reduced healthcare costs, and increased foreign investment.

The IMF has also emphasised the importance of investment in healthcare, stating that healthier populations are more productive, and health investments can improve productivity and stimulate economic growth.

A report by the Harvard Business Review found that countries that invest in healthcare infrastructure and services have experienced significant economic growth, as a result of increased productivity and reduced healthcare costs.

The government's significant investments in the healthcare sector have led to admirable growth in the last few decades.

The focus on public-private partnerships and job creation in the healthcare sector will continue to boost Oman's economy. By allocating a significant portion of the general budget to healthcare, Oman is sending a strong message about the importance of this sector.

The government's focus on healthcare infrastructure will undoubtedly lead to increased productivity, reduced healthcare costs, and a healthier population, positioning Oman as a leader in the region.

The government's efforts in investing in healthcare are truly praiseworthy, and it is heartening to see such dedication to the well-being of the people and the country's future prosperity.

[The writer is a long-time Oman resident and is currently in his Doctoral programme researching the Impact of Oman's Strategy on Economic Diversification]

Classifieds



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A close-up of a hand on a black steering wheel, with a blurred image of a white car with red and black stripes in the background.

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email: ranjithdevan24@
gmail.com

An advertisement for property rental services. It features a 3D orange figure holding a blue and white megaphone. The text is arranged in a dynamic, overlapping layout. At the top, a grey box contains the text 'HAVE A PROPERTY'. Below this, a red banner with white and yellow text reads 'FOR RENT?'. To the right of the figure, the text 'Advertise with us.' is displayed. At the bottom, a red box contains the text 'Contact us on:' followed by the large yellow number '99639264'. The background is white with grey geometric shapes.

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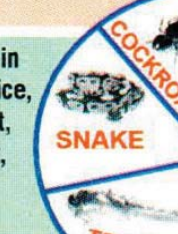
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HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTRATORS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

MUSCAT: Before His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Dr. Ahmad

bin Ahmed al-Hadadi, Chairman of the Supreme Court

Said bin Khalfalla al-Buraishi, and Chairman of Administrative Judiciary Court

bin Abdullah bin Isam al-Hadadi, Chairman of the Supreme Court

UN HAILS OMAN'S SUPPORT FOR PEACE IN UGANDA

NEW YORK: Assistant Secretary-General and the role of the United Nations in supporting peace efforts to establish security and justice in Uganda. In a virtual video call to countries backing the global ceasefire initiative, Customs said that the international community is grateful for the influence of Oman for its crucial role in enhancing efforts to bring lasting peace and security to Uganda. Customs added that the "humanitarian approach" to resolve conflict is a unique model, as only in the Middle East has it been used to end conflict in the world. The strength of the global ceasefire initiative and the role of Oman in supporting peace and security in Uganda.

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FOR THIS MONTH

MUSCAT: To mark the 100th anniversary of the Omani independence and the 50th anniversary of the Omani independence, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) issued a new RO 50 banknote, which will begin circulation in the country. CBO will issue new banknotes for all other denominations during the last quarter of 2020. **FINAN 18**

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

JAMAL BUTTI

MUSCAT: The Omani citizens and beyond, especially in the following social distancing guidelines are following in their daily lives.

As the world around the coronavirus disease and the ongoing social distancing guidelines are following in their daily lives. The Omani citizens and beyond, especially in the following social distancing guidelines are following in their daily lives.

COME PEOPLE! NOW FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING GUIDELINES

As the world around the coronavirus disease and the ongoing social distancing guidelines are following in their daily lives. The Omani citizens and beyond, especially in the following social distancing guidelines are following in their daily lives.

are not. To those critical members of society who are following social distancing guidelines, we should follow the guidelines. The Omani citizens and beyond, especially in the following social distancing guidelines are following in their daily lives.

social distancing guidelines are following in their daily lives. The Omani citizens and beyond, especially in the following social distancing guidelines are following in their daily lives.

social distancing guidelines are following in their daily lives. The Omani citizens and beyond, especially in the following social distancing guidelines are following in their daily lives.

social distancing guidelines are following in their daily lives. The Omani citizens and beyond, especially in the following social distancing guidelines are following in their daily lives.



STORIES EMANATE FROM FROZEN MOMENTS AT QOMRA PHOTOGRAPHY WEEK

The Qomra Photography Group of the National University of Science and Technology organised the opening ceremony of the Eighth Qomra Photography Week titled 'Story' under the auspices of Her Highness Assayidah Mian bint Shihab bin Tarik al Said... **P20**

Superhero fatigue? Not for the third 'Guardians' film

DESPITE TALK OF growing superhero fatigue among moviegoers, Marvel's "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3" opened to a solid \$114 million in ticket sales in North American theaters, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported on Sunday. That estimated total, while well below last year's opening of Marvel's "Doctor Strange and the Multiverse of Madness" — which launched to the tune of \$187 million — was still "an excellent opening for a Marvel episode 3 sequel," said analyst David A.

Gross, adding, "This is strong business." The latest tale of oddball intergalactic mercenaries, human and otherwise, again stars Chris Pratt, Zoe Saldana, Dave Bautista, Bradley Cooper and Vin Diesel — this time on a mission to save comrade Rocket Raccoon from a scientist intent on removing his brain. The "Guardians" finally unseated Universal's "The Super Mario Bros. Movie" from the top spot in its fifth week out. The video game-based film, which has earned



more than a billion dollars globally, took in \$18.6 million for the Friday-through-Sunday period. Warner Bros.' blood-soaked horror film "Evil Dead Rise" dropped one spot to third, taking in \$5.7 million. It has two sisters (Lily

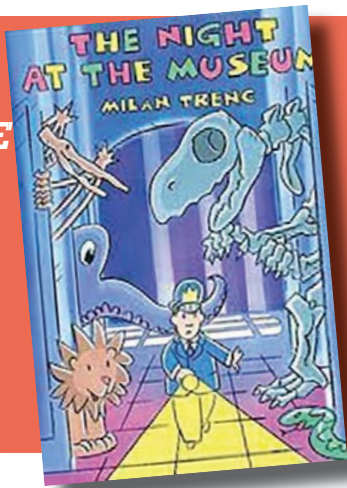
Sullivan and Alyssa Sutherland) battling the demonic Deadites crew. In fourth place, also down one spot, was Lionsgate comedy-drama "Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret," at \$3.4 million. Abby Ryder Fortson plays sixth-grader Margaret Simon as she navigates the challenges of that awkward age. And in fifth spot was new Sony rom-com "Love Again," at \$2.4 million. Priyanka Chopra Jonas plays a young woman trying to cope with the death of her fiancé. Trying to help her do so is journalist and — spoiler alert: eventual love interest — Rob Burns, played by Sam Heughan. Celine Dion plays herself. The film has a paltry 17 per cent positive rating on website Rotten Tomatoes, with one critic calling it "lazy, misguided and uninspired." Rounding out the top 10 were: "John Wick: Chapter 4" (\$2.4 million); "Dungeons & Dragons: Honor Among Thieves" (\$1.5 million); "Air" (\$1.4 million); "Guy Ritchie's The Covenant" (\$1.2 million); "Sisu" (\$1.1 million). — **AFP**

READ

THE NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

BY MILAN TRENC

It is a children's picture book written and illustrated by Croatian illustrator Milan Trench. This book is Trench's best known title, and in 2006 was adapted as a feature film titled Night at the Museum.



TRADITIONS

The colourful folklore of the traditional procession of the Flowers and Palms in honour of the Virgin Mary.

—**AFP**



AUCTION

"Sunrise Ruby" a rare Cartier ruby and diamond ring, which weighs in at 25.59 carats and is expected to fetch at least US\$ 14 Million at the World of Heidi Horten sale in Geneva.

—**AFP**





Young Senegalese revel in graffiti school

PENCIL and rubber in hand, Ibrahima Soumare takes his time as he carefully traces the outline of a handful of letters on a white piece of paper. Dissatisfied, he tosses the effort away and starts again on today's exercise: Draw a piece of graffiti bearing the word "Top". "It's not easy, especially for a newbie such as myself," says Ibrahima with a shy smile. The 26-year-old Senegalese abandoned other studies to register at RBS Akademya, a graffiti school in the Dakar suburb of Guediawaye. In the capital Dakar, graffiti forms part of the urban backdrop, especially along certain major highways through the capital and out into the suburbs where many youngsters have a craze for hip-hop. Graffiti is considered an art form in Senegal, the works often bearing messages on issues such as politics, education, health and the environment. The school, which opened its doors in December 2021, "wants to serve as a meeting place, a place to exchange, to share, one of savoir-faire," says Serigne Mansour Fall. Better known as Madzoo, he is one of a 25-strong founding collective behind the project. The objective, says Madzoo, "is to bring to the table our heritage... to train young professionals" to be useful to society and enable people to "understand the challenges of their era". Recognition Long seen by many as "a pastime for the lazy that couldn't earn a man a crust", in Madzoo's words, graffiti is gaining increasing recognition. The founding of the RBS Akademya was a timely stroke of luck for fans seeking formal training. Art tableaux and graffiti pieces jockey to show off their beauty and colour in the corridors of the two-storey building that houses the



school. One arresting painting of an old, white-bearded man draped in blue fabric draws the visitor's gaze, a small plant made up of shells sprouts from his shaven head. "He symbolises Pan-Africanism," explains Madzoo, the artist of the work. The classroom, with a long work table and wall chart, is no less original. Large letters in a mix of pink and green decorate the wall at the entrance. It is difficult to make out what is written. It is "Style", Soumare says. "I also had trouble reading it," he admits with a smile. Today's course revolves around "concept art" — how to express or create an idea — and "colours", says Cherif Tahir Diop, aka Akonga, a graffiti artist, designer, and now teacher. - Theory and practice - "Here, we are not in a conventional school. Everything is done in a light spirit," he says against a soft backdrop of reggae music. Like Ibrahima, Libasse Sarr, 18, and Maurice Diouf, 25, have given up

study programmes to join the Akademya's ranks for six months of three classes a week mixing graffiti theory and practice. They will leave with a certificate — albeit one not recognised by Senegalese state authorities. To register at the school costs 25,000 CFA francs (40 euros) and then 15,000 francs per month. The money goes towards buying material for lessons and the school's rental charges. RBS Akademya, very active on social media such as Instagram and Facebook, also serves as an artists' residence. According to Madzoo, some international artists stay there periodically to join exhibitions or share their experiences. Introduced to graffiti art aged just seven by older youths in his district, the bespectacled Madzoo, 36, is today seen as one of Senegal's leading "street art" figures. Political pictures He describes himself as a Pan-Africanist "on the people's side" who happily airs his political views.

In March 2021, after serious rioting in Dakar following the arrest on rape allegations of opposition leader Ousmane Sonko, one of Madzoo's murals bearing the signature of his collective was widely shared on social media. It represented President Macky Sall, his blazer sleeve in French red, white and blue, shooting at point blank range at a youth holding a Senegalese flag. The drawing was swiftly removed from public view and Madzoo says the authorities have since had him in their sights. Though graffiti does not offer many outlets, Madzoo's students hope one day they will themselves know his success, but they "will have to be patient and strong", cautions Akonga. Sarr, says he enrolled in the school out of "passion". "I don't ask myself too many questions about the future, but I dream of travelling around the world to express my talent and improve my skills."

— AFP

MUSIC

Let me take you down... to Liverpool for Eurovision



THE ENGLISH CITY of Liverpool hosts the musical extravaganza that is Eurovision on Saturday after the UK agreed to host the song contest instead of 2022 winner Ukraine due to the war. With songs of love, torment, peace and likely sequins aplenty on eye-popping costumes, performers representing 37 nations battle it out in a city synonymous with pop royalty. The hometown of The Beatles and other big names in music in northwestern England stepped in after the UK came second to embattled Ukraine at last year's contest. Just months after Russia's attack of Ukraine, Kalush Orchestra won the world's biggest live music event with "Stefania", a rap lullaby combining Ukrainian folk and modern hip-hop rhythms. Carrying the hopes of Ukraine at the 2023 event is electronic music group Tvorchi, with the song "Heart of Steel". Inspired by the nearly month-long resistance put up by Ukrainian fighters at Mariupol's besieged Azovstal steelworks, singer Jeffery Kenny said the song "symbolises strength... courage". Even as it geared up for Eurovision in recent weeks, the group had to contend with shelling and air-raid sirens at home as it tried to perform.

SWEDEN FAVOURITES

Despite huge sympathy for the group at Eurovision, observers and bookmakers agree a second win for Ukraine in a row is unlikely. Sweden, again being represented by 2012 Eurovision winner Loreen, is the favourite to take home the crown, with the love song "Tattoo", ahead of Finland's energetic "Cha Cha Cha" by Kaarjia in his signature neon green bolero jacket. The UK last year had hoped to end a quarter-century of being shut out from the top spot with "Space Man" and its high notes belted out by the affable, long-haired Sam Ryder. In the end, it had to keep its feet on the ground with second place. This year's UK contender Mae Muller hopes to win over the judges and viewers with "I Wrote a Song" about getting over a broken heart. France, which has not won a Eurovision contest since 1977, is placing its hopes in Canadian singer La Zarra and her electro-disco number "Evidemment" ("Obviously"). Despite having cancelled two concerts recently in Amsterdam and London for personal reasons, the singer has said on social media that she is "more than ever determined to carry with pride and love the colours of France".

ROYAL SEAL OF APPROVAL

But politics is often not far from the surface at Eurovision. Croatia's song, "Mama Šć!" by the mustachioed Let 3, is a thinly veiled attack on Russian President Vladimir Putin. Switzerland's singer Remo Forrer has opted for a more traditional message of peace with his entry "Watergun". Performing for the 6,000-strong audience, the entrants take the spotlight on a stage designed by Julio Himede, who has said the idea behind it is "a wide hug, opening its arms to Ukraine, the show's performers and guests from across the world". Ahead of Saturday's Eurovision 2023 crowning, the stage — which boasts 700 video tiles and 1,500 metres (1,600 yards) of LED lights — has already received a royal seal of approval. King Charles III and Queen Camilla visited the site shortly before their coronation. Eurovision takes in performers from across Europe and Central Asia, as well as Israel and Australia. Two semi-finals are scheduled on Tuesday and Thursday to whittle the field down to 26 countries for Saturday evening's big final. The so-called Big Five main financial backers — Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Spain — as well as the previous year's winner automatically qualify. The British government has sought to reassure over concerns recently raised in parliament about interference attempts blamed on pro-Russian hackers at last year's event. "The National Cyber Security Centre are world experts at understanding attacks and providing incident response for the most serious of attacks," minister for technology Paul Scully said. As part of events around Eurovision, the port city of Liverpool has also unveiled a monument designed to be a "symbol of hope" for Ukraine. The aluminium statue of a man holding up a book, from which a dove takes flight trailing a Ukrainian flag, is to remain for the time being in Strawberry Field, the garden surrounding The Salvation Army children's home that gave its name to the Beatles' psychedelic hit. But it won't stay in Strawberry Fields forever — the statue is to be sent to Ukraine once peace returns. — AFP



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AROUND THE WORLD

TV SHOWS

Slow-paced nature TV captivates Swedish audiences



USING DOZENS of cameras set up throughout Sweden's massive forests, weeks-long live broadcasts of elk and other wild animals, or just as often not much at all, have captured Swedish audiences' hearts.

As three elks timidly approach a lake on screen, comments next to the live feed flood in. "Go on!", "Jump in!", "They're beautiful!" people write before the elk eventually turn back and move away.

It's a typical scene from the programme "Den Stora Algvandringen" ("The Great Elk Migration"), another example of so-called "slow TV", where things are just left to happen at their own pace and are an antidote to the stress of everyday life.

The genre was originally initiated in 2009 in Norway with the broadcast of a seven-hour recording from a camera attached to a train travelling through the snowy countryside. Aired for a few weeks each spring by public broadcaster SVT on TV and online, "Den Stora Algvandringen" attracts a large community that watches and comments on the animals' every move.

"Moose (elks) are called the kings of the forest," Ingvar Persson, a regular viewer, said.

There are over 300,000 of them in Sweden.

POPULAR

"They are a very special symbol for Swedish people," the 61-year-old added.

A hunter in his spare time, Persson said he enjoys the slow and natural pace of the show.

"It's kind of relaxing and also fascinating... Most of the time you spend in a forest there won't be that much happening.

"It's basically wind blowing and you are waiting for something hopefully showing up. You might think that a day spent waiting would be a day lost but it's not," Persson said.

Launched five years ago, the production has been a major success in the Scandinavian country, with viewers logging a combined 12 million hours in 2022. The latest broadcasts started on April 23 and 2023 looks to be a record year. "I had no idea it would be this popular," producer Johan Erhag said.

"On all the social media, everything is very stressed. There's a lot of music in programmes. There's a lot of speaking. And this is the totally opposite way," Erhag explained.

NOT LIKE DISNEY

"We can't decide what happens... We don't want to do a Disney programme where everything is perfect. I mean, this is nature, anything can happen. And we really want to show what it is like," he added.

The video feed is monitored in real time from a control room lined with screens. Teams work shifts day and night to offer alternating viewpoints from 30 cameras – some of which can be controlled remotely – scattered around the Kullberg region in the centre of the country. — **AFP**

SCIENCE

Scientists find chemical that stops locust cannibalism



Plagues of locusts that darken the skies and devastate all things that grow have been recorded since Biblical times, and today threaten the food security of millions of people across Asia and Africa.

But a new finding reported on Thursday – of a pheromone emitted by the insects to avoid being cannibalised when in a swarm – could potentially pave the way to reining in the voracious pests.

Study leader Bill Hansson, director of the Max Planck Institute's Department of Evolutionary Neuropathology, said that the new paper, published in Science, built on prior research that found swarms are directed not by cooperation – but actually the threat of consumption by other locusts.

While repulsive to modern humans, cannibalism is rife in nature – from lions that kill and devour cubs that are not theirs, to foxes that consume dead kin for energy.

For locusts, cannibalism is thought to serve an important ecological purpose.

Migratory locusts (*Locusta migratoria*) occur in different forms and behave so differently that they were, until recently, thought to be entirely different species.

Most of the time, they exist in a "solitary" phase keeping to themselves and eating comparatively little, like timid grasshoppers.

But when their population

density increases due to rain-fall and temporarily good breeding conditions, which is followed by food scarcity, they undergo major behavioural changes due to a rush of hormones that rev them up, causing them to aggregate in swarms and become more aggressive.

This is known as the "gregarious" phase and it's thought the fear of cannibalism helps keep the swarm moving in the same direction, from an area of lower to higher food concentration, according to 2020 research by Iain Couzin of the Max Planck Institute for Animal Research.

Hansson explained that "locusts eat each other from behind."

"So if you stop moving, you get eaten by the other, and that got us thinking that almost every animal who is under threat has some kind of countermeasure."

In painstaking experiments that took four years to complete, Hansson's team first established that cannibalism rates did indeed increase as the number of "gregarious" locusts kept in a cage went up, proving in the lab what Couzin had observed in the field in Africa (the triggering point was around 50 in a cage).

Next, they compared the odours emitted by solitary and gregarious locusts, finding 17 smells produced exclusively during the gregarious phase.

Of these, one chemical, known as phenylacetoneitrile (PAN), was found to repel other

locusts in behavioural tests.

PAN is involved in the synthesis of a potent toxin sometimes produced by gregarious locusts – hydrogen cyanide – so emitting PAN appeared to fit as the signal to tell others to back off.

- Genome editing -

To confirm the finding, they used CRISPR editing to genetically modify locusts so they could no longer produce PAN, which in turn made them more vulnerable to cannibalism.

For further confirmation, they tested dozens of the locusts' olfactory receptors, eventually landing on one that was very sensitive to PAN.

When they gene edited locusts to no longer produce this receptor, the modified locusts became more cannibalistic.

Writing in a related commentary in Science, researchers Iain Couzin and Einat Couzin-Fuchs said the discovery helped shed light on the "intricate balance" between the mechanisms that cause migratory locusts to group together versus compete with one another.

Future methods of locust control could therefore use technology that tips that delicate balance towards more competition, but Hansson cautioned: "You don't want to eradicate the species."

"If we could diminish the size of the swarms, steer them to areas where we are not growing our crops, then a lot could be gained," he added.

—**AFP**

CELEBRITIES

Celebrities attend King Charles III's coronation service



CELEBRITY GUESTS including Emma Thompson, TV presenters Anthony McPartlin and Declan Donnelly (Ant & Dec), Andrew Lloyd-Webber, Judi Dench and Stephen Fry have arrived at Westminster Abbey for the king's coronation service.

Ant & Dec are attending in their capacity as goodwill ambassadors for the Prince's Trust, a role they took up in 2021 after two decades working with the charity.

US singer Katy Perry, Australian musician Nick Cave, British Vogue's editor-in-chief Edward Enninful, BBC director-general Tim Davie, actress Joanna Lumley and US singer Lionel Richie, who will perform at the coronation concert on Sunday, were also in attendance.

Before the ceremony, Ant & Dec told "Good Morning Britain" it was an "honour and a privilege" to be invited to the event in central London.

McPartlin added that the Prince's Trust is the "best legacy" for the King to leave.

"He started the Prince's Trust with his Navy pension back in 1976 and since then, the Prince's Trust has grown every year and it's now worldwide," he said.

"We're just very proud to be part of it and we can see now first-hand how it does help young people in this country and around the world."

The duo entered the abbey just before 9 am (0800 GMT) in their morning suits, greeting other guests with waves and smiles. As the pair grinned and said hello to members of the congregation in the North Transept, they were welcomed with impromptu cheers.

Best known for hosting shows including "Saturday Night Takeaway," "I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here!" and "Britain's Got Talent," Ant & Dec have hosted the Prince's Trust Awards 10 times and recently collaborated with the charity on a course to make the media industry more accessible.

Oscar-winning actress Thompson, wearing a red floral jacket and her damehood medal and insignia, was accompanied by her husband, actor Greg Wise.

Australian singer Nick Cave was in conversation with former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams as they arrived at the abbey.

Spice Girl Melanie Brown also spoke to ITV outside the abbey, recounting the girl group's famous encounter with Charles in 1997. She said: "I think because we were all so excited on the day we all just kind of freaked out a bit, and broke protocol, and I gave him a kiss and then Geri gave him a kiss and pinched his bum... we were just overwhelmed with excitement. I don't think I'd do that again though... we were all just too excited."

Stephen Fry told BBC News he was grateful to have been invited to the "thousand-year-old ceremony, so rooted in the history of our islands."

Other notable faces expected to be in the audience include David and Victoria Beckham, Stella McCartney, Rowan Atkinson and Bear Grylls. Heads of state and kings and queens from across the globe, everyday heroes and family and friends of the royal couple are also on the guest list. — **dpa**

art & life

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STORIES EMANATE FROM FROZEN MOMENTS AT QOMRA Photography Week

Balqees Al Araimi

THE Qomra Photography Group of the National University of Science and Technology organised the opening ceremony of the Eighth Qomra Photography Week titled 'Story' under the auspices of Her Highness Assayidah Mian bint Shihab bin Tarik al Said.

Qomra Photography Week is an important annual artistic event that brings together photographers and enthusiasts from inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman. It aims to showcase talents and contribute to the development of the art scene.

The week comprises various events, including a photo exhibition presenting the works of participating photographers. It provides the audience with the opportunity to explore the stories behind the photos and perceive the world through the photographers' lenses. The organisation of this event reflects efforts to promote

culture, support talents, and encourage creativity across various fields.

The theme of this year's Qomra Photography Week is 'Story', which serves as a metaphor for the images as frozen moments and stories that photographers tell from their unique perspectives.

The opening ceremony commenced with a speech by Alaa al Saeghi, Head of the Qomra Photography Group, who highlighted that images are moments and stories narrated by photographers from their perspectives. The week was preceded by several activities, including a Sports Day event held in collaboration with photography groups from Middle East College and Sultan Qaboos University. The group members also visited autism champions, where they organised a range of entertainment and artistic activities, including a mini-play and a photo session for children.

Al Saeghi also expressed the Qomra group's aspirations to be a platform and an annual gathering for photography



enthusiasts, including photographers, directors, and people in the field. The group aims to reach global and international platforms as representatives of Omani photographers and their art.

In the past eleven years, Qomra has won local and regional awards at individual and group levels. The Photography Group at Middle East College supported the event as a logistical sponsor,

and the Photography Group at Sultan Qaboos University provided media coverage of the Sports Day event. Her Highness Assayidah Mian bint Shihab bin Tarik al Said, the sponsor of the occasion, presented the shields to the jury consisting of Hanan al Asimi, Nidal al Siyabi, and Muhannad al Badawi. They participated in the arbitration, sorting, and selection of works accepted in the exhibition based on approved technical criteria.

The audience had the opportunity to tour the exhibition and listen to the stories behind the photos selected for display in this edition of the Eighth Qomra Photography Week. These stories were narrated in a unique artistic style that reflects the photographer's message conveyed through their lens, expressing their artistic and creative vision. The photos focused on various topics, including the Omani woman and her traditional industries, traditional music vocabulary, and different harvest seasons.

The exhibition also featured pictures of silver industries,



personal images of the elderly and children, the innocence of childhood, stories of grandmothers, and the Omani man's relationship with beauty. The diverse photos showcased Omani culture and heritage in an elaborate artistic style. The images of Omani women

demonstrated remarkable elegance and expertise in their traditional industries. The daily life photos highlighted many aspects of the Omani man's life in an impressive and beautiful manner. The exhibition also included nature in the Sultanate of Oman and installation images that express young people's ideas and aspirations creatively and influentially.