

Salalah Mills to get 180,000 tonnes of wheat

Salalah Mills Company has affirmed that it concluded contracts to purchase 180,000 tonnes of wheat from India and Australia. The consignment is set to arrive in the next three months. Ahmed bin Alawi al Dhahab, CEO of Salalah Mills Company, said that the amount of wheat purchased will meet local demand till the end of 2022. The shipment has left India's Kandla Port, via bulk carrier Valiant Sumer, en route to the Port of Salalah, with 66,000 tonnes of wheat on board.



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SEEB OVERWHELM
ALANSAR TO
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ZONAL SEMIS



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OMAN SHELL, PDO
TO STUDY CARBON
CAPTURE UTILISATION
AND STORAGE



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OMANI STUDENTS
WORKING ON
SOLUTION TO GLOBAL
PLASTIC PROBLEM



MUSCAT

HIS MAJESTY GREET'S
GEORGIA PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Salome Zourabichvili of Georgia on her country's National Day. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments to President Zourabichvili, wishing her continuous good health and welfare. His Majesty also wished the people of Georgia further progress and prosperity. — ONA

DEVELOPMENTS IN
REGION REVIEWED

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the Arab League on Wednesday. The two sides reviewed the latest developments on the regional and international arenas. Their discussions also touched on the Arab League's efforts in activating and developing the joint Arab action in all spheres. — ONA

SHURA TO REVIEW
INDUSTRIAL GAINS

Majlis AshShura will host Qais bin Mohammed al Yusef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, to deliver his ministry's statement at the council's 13th regular meeting to be held next Sunday. This was stated by Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of Majlis AshShura. He noted that the council will discuss seven main topics during the meeting.

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MARCOS JR PROCLAIMED
NEXT PHILIPPINE PRESIDENT

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US GRIEVES AFTER 19
CHILDREN KILLED

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'GUARDING OMAN'

The practical demonstration of a joint military drill codenamed "Guarding Oman" concluded on Wednesday. The drill was carried out by the Command of the Sultan's Armed Forces with the participation of the Royal Army of Oman, Royal Air Force of Oman and the Royal Navy of Oman. — ONA

Bids invited to develop
castles in Musandam

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The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism invited bids for the management and operation of the Bukha castle in the Musandam Governorate. The last day to receive bids is Thursday (June 23, 2022). The move is part of the ministry's efforts to benefit from the tourism and heritage components to enable the local community to benefit from it and create a permanent partnership with it by providing the opportunity to invest in



heritage sites affiliated with the ministry.

The ministry explained that the investor will be given a grace period of up to three years from the rental value. It also announced earlier that it

had already started receiving applications for management, operation and employment of Khasab castle in Musandam.

The ministry called on companies to submit a request expressing their desire to confirm the management, operation and employment of these forts and castles and to present an action plan for how to develop and manage the sites, providing a visualisation of how to restore and diversify the use of buildings, spaces and rooms of outstanding historical importance.

TURN TO P2

Municipal councils
play a crucial role
in development

MUSCAT: Under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Oman's Renewed Development accorded special attention to the development of governorates and expansion of society's participation in this process, notably through municipal councils.

The legislations regulating the work of municipal councils are among the accomplishments of Oman Vision 2040.

The Royal directives to augment the governorates development portfolio from RO 10 million to RO 20 million — for each governorate during the Five-Year Plan 2021-2015 — serve as incentive for competitiveness and economic growth.

His Majesty the Sultan's keenness on drafting a framework for the implementation of development plans stems from his Royal directives to the departments concerned to present executive plans for the projects needed in each governorate.

This approach constitutes a motivation for Omanis to



It is a significant move to practice the right to vote and select competent members who represent members of the public in the governorates' municipal councils (two members per wilayat)

shoulder the responsibility of contributing to their respective governorates. A step forward in this direction has been the Interior Ministry's announcing the start of registration of citizens to contest as members of the municipal councils for the Third-Term, via the elections website (elections.com).

TURN TO P2

Experts warn of health
issues from heatwave

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Temperatures continued in the forties and mid-forties across the country, with Muscat recording 39°C, Suhar 41.5°C, Sur 45°C and Al Buraimi 45°C on Wednesday, as the heatwave continued unabated in the country.

Oman meteorology predicted partly cloudy skies over the coastal strip of Dhofar and dust flow in the governorates of Musandam, Al Buraimi and Al Dhahirah.

With the summer heat likely to be relentless in most parts of the country, except Salalah, Oman Meteorology has urged people to take necessary measures to avoid sunstroke and heat exhaustion, especially for workers exposed to sunlight and high temperatures.

Mid-day break for workers employed in outdoor activities will be implemented from June 1. It will continue until the end of August.

"Companies should take proper care and train workers to avoid exposure to the sun and ensure they get enough rest periods and drink water," Oman Met said.

Meanwhile, health experts have said that climate change can impact people's livelihood, apart from its effect on mental and physical health, and can contribute to the spread of infectious diseases. Experts said that extreme temperatures related to climate change has affected the productivity of various food sectors — including agricultural and fishery sectors — around the world, thereby aggravating food insecurity issues.

Monkeypox: Enough vaccines
available to handle outbreak

LONDON: Sufficient supplies of the Imvanex vaccine against monkeypox are available to handle the current outbreak, the producer of the shot said on Wednesday.

Bavarian Nordic is the only company in the world whose monkeypox vaccine has regulatory approval. It is currently possible to produce 30 million doses annually, spokesman Rolf Sass Sørensen said.

Cases of monkeypox are spreading. The virus usually causes mild symptoms such as rash, fever and pustules, but can also be severe.

The company is based in Denmark and produces the vaccine there, although it was initially developed in the German branch in Martinsried near Munich. However, the shot is only



approved in the US, where it is called Jynneos, and Canada.

Planning is currently under way for it to be approved in the European Union is being planned, Sørensen said.

In Europe, the vaccine

has only been approved for smallpox in humans, which is considered extinct. The vaccine is also being used in Britain but "off label," without the corresponding approval, Sørensen continued.

— dpa



Oman, Qatar review bilateral relations



MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received here on Wednesday Dr Mohammed Abdulaziz al Khulaifi, Assistant Foreign Minister for Regional Affairs of the State of Qatar.

The two sides reviewed the bilateral relations between the two countries and means of developing them. The meeting was attended by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, the Foreign Ministry's Under-Secretary for Diplomatic Affairs, Shaikh Jassim bin Abdulrahman al Thani, Ambassador of Qatar

to Oman, Khalid bin Hashel al Musalhi, Head of the Minister's Office Department, and several officials from the two countries' foreign ministries.

CONSULTATIONS

A session of political consultations was also held



between Oman and Qatar. The two sides discussed several matters of joint interest and ways of developing them.

They also exchanged views on regional and international matters of common interest. During the session, the Omani side was

headed by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, while the Qatari side was headed by Dr Mohammed Abdulaziz al Khulaifi. The session was also attended by the Ambassador of Qatar to Oman and officials from the two countries' foreign ministries. — ONA

Municipal councils spearhead development in governorates

FROM PAGE 1

It is a significant move to practise the right to vote and select competent members who represent members of the public in the governorates' municipal councils (two members per wilayat).

The Municipal Councils Law, promulgated under Royal Decree No 126/2020, serves as a major element in implementing Oman Vision 2040.

Municipal councils may propose mechanisms to invest governorates' resources in a manner that achieves sustainability, job creation, development projects and assessment of the performance of government service units.

Therefore, each municipal council member has a duty to utilise these legal, regulatory and financial factors to develop his part of the country, gaining insights from his/her firsthand knowledge of society's needs.

As His Majesty the Sultan said in the Royal speech in January 2022, "Our country boasts a wide range of competitive incentives, great potentials and promising opportunities that need to be utilised. The government will unleash all its efforts and capacities to serve cooperation and integration that ensure channelling development of the governorates.

They will enhance their preparedness for investment and develop their local role based on the comparative advantage of each governorate in a manner that creates development models.

This will be substantiated by a set of strategic goals to be executed by the government within the context of the five-year plans.

Thus, the march of development can be perfected and empowered to cover all parts of this dear homeland."

His Majesty added that upgrading Oman to the loftiest positions is a national duty and a responsibility to be shouldered by all citizens.

Oman 2040 Vision's priority of developing governorates and sustainable cities will create a distinctive model of balanced growth and consolidate the competitive feature of each governorate. It will also contribute to devising social, economic and environmental priorities within the framework of decentralisation. — ONA

FOREIGN MINISTER RECEIVES ARAB LEAGUE CHIEF



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received here on Wednesday Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the Arab League. The two sides reviewed the latest developments on the regional and international arenas. Their discussions also touched on the Arab League's efforts in activating and developing the joint Arab action in all spheres. The meeting was attended by several officials from the Foreign Ministry and the guest's accompanying delegation. — ONA

Shura to review achievements of industrial sector

MUSCAT: Majlis Ash'shura will host Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, to deliver his ministry's statement at the council's 13th regular meeting to be held next Sunday.

This was stated by Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of Majlis Ash'shura. He noted that the council will discuss seven main topics during the meeting, the first of which deals with the contribution of the commerce and industry sectors to the gross domestic product during the Ninth Five-Year Plan as well as the expected contribution during the Tenth Five-Year Plan. The second topic will discuss the ministry's future vision for the industrial sector. The third topic will focus on evaluating the government's economic stimulus plan for the part pertaining to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in terms of the implemented programmes and policies, the achieved results and the challenges.

The meeting will discuss the results of foreign investments in the national economy in terms of the size and cumulative flows until 2020, details of net foreign direct investment flows of the trade balance and details of the ministry's efforts to promote investment in terms of future programmes, policies and plans.

The secretary-general of Majlis Ash'shura noted that the council



will hold its 14th regular meeting of the third annual session on Monday. The meeting's agenda includes discussing the report of the Health and Environment Committee on the expressed desire to assess the reality and quality of primary health care institutions in the Sultanate of Oman. Also to be discussed during the meeting is the Health and Environment Committee's report on the expressed desire regarding the establishment of the Food and Drug Authority in the Sultanate of Oman, in addition to the report of the Youth and Human Resources Committee on the expressed desire to amend the rules and criteria for candidacy to compete for job vacancies in the public and private sectors.

The secretary-general of Majlis Ash'shura stated that both meetings will be public and open for journalists and citizens who are required to submit a request for attendance through the council's website and social media.

Bids to develop Musandam castles

FROM PAGE 1

It also called for the necessity of presenting the historical dimension of the prestige of the governorate in general and the castles in particular, highlighting their architectural wealth while marketing them commercially for cultural and heritage tourism.

It asked to determine the guided tours of the castles, lanes and markets, conducting workshops and short courses to transfer knowledge and experience to

younger generations. It asserted to involve the local community in various cultural and social events and highlighted the castles' tourism value and economic feasibility.

The ministry seeks to employ castles and forts to be permanent museums that tell the history of the governorates so that visitors can explore the origins, history and geography of respective wilayats, their scholars. It also aims to explore the social, political and

economic impact while working to highlight the Omani architecture exhibitions to highlight the history of architecture in the Sultanate of Oman.

It also involves the local community in developing castles and forts, water springs, and ancient monuments, developing beaches and providing public services, which contributes to making the Sultanate of Oman a tourist destination in the region and the world.

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CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL TIES WITH SYRIA REVIEWED



MUSCAT: Dr. Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, on Wednesday received Dr. Lubana Mushawih, Syrian Minister of Culture.

The two sides reviewed bilateral relations in the cultural and educational fields. They also touched on cooperation between Oman National Commission

for Education, Culture and Science and the Syrian National Commission for Education, Science and Culture. Separately, Dr. Abdullah bin

Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, also received in his office Dr. Lubana Mushawih. During the meeting, Dr. Abdullah welcomed the guest and lauded



the Oman-Syria relations. The two sides reviewed cooperation between Oman and Syria in areas of culture. The Syrian minister expressed

her admiration for the special attention accorded by the Omani government to the field of culture. The meeting was attended by a number of officials. — ONA

Iran media resonate in praise for ‘sincere’ ties

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The media in Tehran and Muscat continue to resonate with applause for the relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran, which were further cemented by the visit of President Ebrahim Raisi on Sunday.

President Raisi was quoted by ‘Tehran Times’ as describing the Sultanate of Oman as a “sincere and reliable friend” and said the will of the two countries to develop emerging ties is highly important.

The President went on to say that Iran sees the Sultanate of Oman as “friend” and “brother” and “we warmly press the hands of Omanis”.

The newspaper also quoted him as saying that “political trust” between Iran and Oman has reached a “new stage”.

During the trip, Omani and Iranian officials signed 12 cooperation documents and memorandums of understanding in various fields, including energy, politics, transportation, diplomacy, economy, tourism, sports and the environment.

The documents were signed in the presence of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and President

Ebrahim Raisi.

The President, who returned to Tehran early on Tuesday, said good relations between the two countries will help increase cooperation across the region. He said Tehran and Muscat agree on many issues.

“In meetings with senior Omani officials, it was emphasised that it is necessary for the two countries to have this cooperation at the regional and international levels, even as the positions of the two countries are remarkably in sync on many issues”, the President said upon his arrival at Mehrabad Airport, Press TV reported.

Raisi said economic actors and traders of the two countries discussed their problems in the fields of trade, money transfer, financial, banking and customs issues in a meeting with Oman’s minister of industry.

It was decided that obstacles would be removed soon to pave the way for trade and economic work, he added.

“Both Omani and Iranian traders are not much familiar with the capacities of the two countries”, he noted. “Therefore, the necessity of establishing an Iranian trade office in Oman was felt, and it was considered that this office should be established

as soon as possible in order to introduce the capacities of the two countries to economic actors.”

Earlier in an interview with Oman National TV, the Iranian President stressed that the greatest Iranian-Omani capital is mutual trust and called on regional and international cooperation between the two countries.

Answering a question about his evaluation of the effects and results of his visit and talks with the Sultan of Oman on the bilateral relations between the two countries, Ebrahim Raisi said, “I am very happy that I had the opportunity to travel to Oman and meet with the Sultan of Oman.”

He also expressed hope that this visit would become a reason for strengthening contacts and bonds between the two countries, saying, “During the meeting with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, we discussed ways to develop bilateral cooperation, and we affirmed that the current level of relations is good, but it is not enough, given the potential and willingness of both sides that exist in two countries.”

Raisi added, “Iran and Oman would like to consolidate the level of bilateral partnership in various fields, including trade, economy, energy, especially gas

and tourism”.

Iran’s Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said on Monday that “the Sultanate of Oman has always worked to play a positive role in regional equations, away from alignments, conflicts and polarisations.”

“Iran attaches great importance to the policy of the Sultanate of Oman, which is characterised by balance to solve problems”, the official IRNA news agency quoted him as saying regarding the settlement of regional crises.

Amir-Abdollahian praised Oman’s “prominent and active” role in diplomacy, opening the way for dialogue and establishing peace, pointing out that relations between Iran and Oman are progressing.

Ali Najafi, Iran’s Ambassador, has described Raisi’s visit to Oman as a “turning point” in relations between the two countries, telling ISNA that he is hopeful it can greatly help develop relations.

The ambassador went on to say that “relations between Iran and Oman have always been good” and such visits “especially at the level of heads of state” have always been the focus of attention.

Ambassador Najafi said the visit falls within Iran’s policy of consolidating relations with neighbours.



Practical demonstration of military drill ends

MUSANNAH: The practical demonstration of a joint military drill codenamed “Guarding Oman” concluded on Wednesday.

The drill was carried out by the Command of the Sultan’s Armed Forces (COSAF) with the participation of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) and the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO).

The concluding event, held at

Said bin Sultan Naval Base, was held under the auspices of Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, RNO Commander.

The implementation of this exercise comes within the framework of training plans of the Ministry of Defence and the SAF.

Meanwhile, Al Rahbi and several senior officers toured an exhibition which was held on the sidelines of the drill. — ONA



Future at Comex: Smart banking, retailing, driving...

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After a break of two years, Comex 2022, the annual IT event, is taking place as the country has been making rapid strides in the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), e-commerce, digital banking, governance and smart offices.

“Some of these projects are need of the hour. It simply reflects how the world has evolved during the two years of the pandemic”, said an executive of a company promoting technologies for smart offices.

Telecom major, Omantel, introduced the eDhukan smart store powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT), which has been operational at its headquarters in Madinat al Irfan.

The store is equipped with more than smart cameras and smart shelves that will capture shoppers’ movements in the aisles and track the products placed in their baskets. Customers’ mobile wallets will be debited for the items purchased as they walk out of the store, and a receipt sent to them electronically, providing them with an enhanced queue-free, cashless and grab-and-go shopping experience.

Speaking to the ‘Observer’, Wadee bin Murthada al Lawati, Senior Manager, ICT business development, Omantel, “This concept store was on display at Dubai Expo Venue and several multinational companies have installed it for their employees.”

He added, “We have been getting expressions of interest



from companies who want to install these smart stores for the benefit of their employees, offering sandwiches, beverages and other essentials.”

Bank Muscat has launched its new self-service kiosks, which will be soon available at some locations in the country.

Asma of the cards division said that with these kiosks, customers can print their new or supplementary debit cards without going to the branch. “The kiosks are a virtual bank and can be seen as a virtual bank.”

Meanwhile, construction is underway to build a manufacturing plant in Al Suwaiq for Sultanate of Oman’s first electric car, which was unveiled at Comex 2022 in Muscat on Monday.

Speaking to the ‘Observer’,

Sultan al Amri, Executive Chairman, Nur Majan, said that lots of efforts and money have been invested to set up this plant, which has certain challenges due to the geographical terrain of the location.

As per the prototype presented at Comex 2022, the car will be designed to go from zero to 60 mph in about four seconds, roll for 2,250 miles on a single electrical charge and go for 21 years without any maintenance.

Al Amri said, “We have made some updates to the prototype over the past two years and the specific timeline cannot be given as there are still some obstacles to be cleared. Following the Comex, the car will be on display from May 26 at the Al Arai Boulevard in Al Khoudh.”



BEE-WISE

KEEPING A SWEET TRADITION ALIVE

THE SHAHAD PROJECT IS AN INNOVATIVE PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP THAT AIMS TO STRENGTHEN THE APICULTURE VALUE CHAIN IN OMAN AND EMPOWER RURAL BEEKEEPERS TO ACCESS KNOWLEDGE, TECHNOLOGIES, MARKETS AND ENHANCE BEEKEEPERS' CAPACITIES

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
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The Sultanate of Oman has a centuries-old tradition of beekeeping. The method of producing honey has passed from one generation to another. Omani beekeepers possess special skills, which are combination of traditional and modern.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation marked the World Bee Day (May 20) focusing on Oman's Shahad project. It has been instrumental in boosting bee production in the country.

The traditional occupation's influence can easily be seen in Omani cuisine.

"In some regions, natural honey is served as a sort of a dip. You dip lamb cubes (mishkak) in a bowl of honey, usually placed in the middle, after wrapping the lamb cube with Rakhal Omani bread. This is usually served on occasions or when entertaining guests", explained Shabib al Kalbani, Clinical Dietician, Ministry of Health.

Millions of beekeepers depend on bees for their livelihoods and well-being. According to FAO Oman, "Together with wild pollinators, bees play a major role in maintaining biodiversity and promoting sustainability and adaptation to climate change."

Furthermore, close to 75 per cent of the world's crops that produce fruits and seeds for human consumption depends, at least in part, on pollinators for sustained production.

The Shahad project is an innovative public-private partnership that aims to strengthen the apiculture value chain in Oman and empower rural beekeepers to access knowledge, technologies and markets and enhance beekeepers' capacities.

The ongoing project encompasses

various activities conducted primarily in the Al Dakhiliyah and North Al Sharqiyah governorates with the aim of strengthening SMEs' capacities for sustainable and economic apiculture, diversifying, and adding value of bee related products and enhancing the level of knowledge and awareness on good beekeeping practices in the country.

Beekeeping goes far beyond the production of honey. It contributes to the achievement of many of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Everyone has a role to play in Building Back Better for Bees, rethinking how we relate to nature, and promoting pollinators to encourage biodiversity, support agri-food systems and build resilience.

With the view to raising awareness of the essential role bees and other pollinators play in keeping people and the planet healthy and on the many challenges they face today, the UN in 2017 designated May 20 as World Bee Day.

This celebration aims to strengthen measures aimed at protecting the key players along the apiculture value chain, which would significantly contribute to solving problems related to the global food supply and eliminating of hunger in developing countries.

This year's World Bee Day, fell under the theme 'Beengaged — Celebrating the diversity of bees and beekeeping systems'.

FAO Oman said, "Today bees, pollinators and many other insects are declining in abundance. This day provides an opportunity for all of us — whether we work for governments, organisations or civil society or are concerned citizens — to promote actions that will protect and enhance pollinators and their habitats, improve their

abundance and diversity and support the sustainable development of beekeeping."

The aim is also to look at beekeeping as a significant occupation as beekeeping tends to be perceived as a hobby or as a sideline activity.

"This may often be true, but a resilient livelihood — one that keeps people out of poverty — is one that has access to a range of options. In this case, apiculture and related activities can be a source of valuable strength to countless numbers of rural people's livelihoods", the statement said.

Rather than just a hobby, beekeeping may be seen as an important occupation and part of rural life worldwide. In rural communities where access to income is limited, small-scale beekeeping can contribute significantly to livelihood security.

Meanwhile, honey's nutritional value is an important factor why apiculture must be supported.

"Yes, natural honey is packed with minerals and vitamins that assist the human body in multiple chemical reactions. They differ from commercial honey in that in commercial honey you will not normally see the cloudy debris that is evident in raw honey", said an expert.

From a health perspective he said, "Any type of honey is equal in the amount of carbohydrates and therefore must be consumed in moderation, especially those who need to control their blood glucose due to insulin resistance or those who require weight management, to delay further complications. Honey can be used to supplement children's diet as this is a period of growth and development. It can also be used as a substitute to refined sugar rich desserts and dips."





Dhofar council debates tourism strategy



SALALAH: The Municipal Council of the Governorate of Dhofar held its meeting here on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Sayyid Mohammed bin Sultan al Busaidy, Minister of State and Governor of Dhofar, Chairman of the council.

The meeting covered a range of topics, particularly Oman's Tourism Strategy, the proposal of the Directorate-General of Tourism on regulating the phenomenon of portable homes (caravans) during the monsoon (Khareef) season and the report of the Oman Investment Authority on setting up a water desalination plant in the Wilayat of Rakhayout, among other topics. — ONA

MoH workshop

MUSCAT: The Directorate-General of Medical Supplies (DGMS), represented by the Occupational Development and Guidance Section in the Ministry of Health, and in collaboration with the Abbott Laboratories GmbH Company, organised on Wednesday the "Pharmacoeconomics" training workshop.

International experts from the Professional Society for Health Economics and Outcomes Research (ISPOR) and several pharmacists, assistant pharmacists, nurses and lab technicians from the Ministry of Health are participating in this two-day workshop.

RAO Commander at GCC meeting

RIYADH: Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), took part on Wednesday in the 20th meeting of GCC Land Forces Commanders, held in Riyadh, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The meeting's agenda included the topics that address developing the joint military action of the GCC countries. — ONA



Royal Hospital marks Hand Hygiene Day



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 25

On the occasion of World Hand Hygiene Day, the Royal Hospital, represented by the Infection Control Department, organised on Wednesday an awareness event at the Training and Studies Centre of the hospital with the participation of several departments such as the laboratories, nursing

department, radiology and rehabilitation.

The World Hand Hygiene Day, which falls on May 5, comes this year under the theme "Unite for safety: Clean your hands".

The awareness event aimed to raise awareness among the health workers in the hospital on the importance of hand hygiene and reduce healthcare-associated infection. Dr Qasim al Salmi, Director-General of

Royal Hospital, pointed out that this celebration reflects the importance and direct impact of hand hygiene on patient healthcare to avoid spreading infectious diseases, particularly antibiotic-resistant bacteria. He also added that hand hygiene is the responsibility of all health workers as well as it is one of the essential tasks of medical practice in any health institution.

Municipal Council of Musandam meets

KHASAB: The Municipal Council of the Governorate of Musandam on Wednesday held its meeting under the chairmanship of Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Governor of Musandam, Chairman of the Municipal Council.

The meeting covered several topics, mainly developing the municipal action in the governorate's wilayats and the proposal of the Directorate-General for Housing and Urban Planning, among other issues. — ONA

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

TENDERS NOTICE

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

Tender No.	Description	Tender Documents Price (R.O)	Class	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Last Date for Submission of Documents
270/2021/MAFWR/HQ-24 Retender	Maintenance Works of Wadi Al Awabi in South Batinah Governorate	25/-	First	Sunday 5/6/2022	Monday 13/6/2022
268/2022/MAFWR/HQ-31	Cleaning and Remove the Waste from Fishing Ports in each of (Dhalkut - Raysut - Taqah - Mirbat)	25/-	Specialized	Tuesday 14/6/2022	Thursday 30/6/2022
274/2022/MAFWR/HQ-33	Maintenance of Service Roof and Administration Building at Al-Seeb Fisherie Harbour	25/-	Second	Sunday 5/6/2022	Wednesday 15/6/2022

- 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 Bank Guarantee issued by any bank 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 electronic guarantees from local banks.
- 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 Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

سلطنة عُمان
وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات
Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

إعلان مناقصة Tender Notice

The Internal Tender Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology invites for the Following Tender:

TENDER NO	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
MTCIT/HQ-14/43/2022	DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF WATER DRAINAGE CHANNEL IN WILAYAT OF SHINAS (SOUTH AL BATINA GOVERNARATE)	26/5/2022	8/6/2022	6/7/2022	EXPERIENCED SME COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (FIRST CLASS)	(25/-) TWENTY FIVE OMANI RIAL NON-REFUNDABLE

Interested Companies registered with the Secretariat General of Tender Board 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. Tenders should be submitted online on given website. In addition to Tender Bond as Bank Guarantee issued by local bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of (1%) of the Tender value validity for (90) days.

CORRESPONDANCE:

- Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at e-Tendering System. (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- E-Tendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-Tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number:
Tel: +968 24402200, e-mail: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE

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2022

RE-BRANDING PROJECT FOR NAMA GROUP RE-STRUCTURED COMPANIES

Nama Holding invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their best offers for the tender below:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR)
EHC/2022/014	Re-branding Project for Nama Group Re-Structured Companies	2-June-2022	9-June-2022	50/- (Plus VAT Amount: 2.5/- OMR) Total: 52.5/- OMR (Non-Refundable)

- Interested party may purchase the tender through the company website (www.nama.om/ar/new-tenders). Supplier user guide is available to be downloaded at the same page.
- Payment of the tender fees to be done online through the link available in the website. The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 12.00 pm.
- Bids shall be submitted online through I-supplier portal before 01.00 pm, time of the Sultanate, on Thursday 9 June 2022.
- Each bid should be accompanied with a temporary insurance, in the form of a bank guarantee from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate, covering (1%) of the total bid value and valid for a period of (90) days from the last date for submission of offers. Tenders that do not include the required temporary insurance will not be considered. The original hard copy of the bid bond should be dropped in the tender box at Nama Holding reception.
- NH is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.

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North Korea fires likely ICBM after Biden leaves Asia

SEOUL: North Korea fired three ballistic missiles eastward on Wednesday, just a day after the end of US President Joe Biden's visit to Asia.

The first was a suspected intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) that flew some 360 kilometres at an altitude of 540 kilometres, the South Korean military's general staff (JCS) said.

Missiles with the capability to travel more than 5,500 kilometres are counted as ICBMs.

It was not initially clear if North Korea had purposely limited the flight distance to several hundred kilometres. The other two missiles were deemed short-range ballistic missiles.

Pyongyang launched the three missiles in the direction of the Sea of Japan, also known as the East Sea, from around the Sunan area in Pyongyang at around 6 am, 6:37 am and 6:42 am. Japan's Defence Ministry also confirmed the launch of three missiles by North



People watch a TV screen showing a news broadcast with file footage of a North Korean missile test, at a railway station in Seoul after North Korea fired three ballistic missiles towards the Sea of Japan. – AFP

Korea, saying at least two were ballistic missiles and the third was being analysed, UN resolutions prohibit North Korea from testing ballistic missiles, which can carry a nuclear warhead.

Pyongyang launched the three missiles in the direction of the Sea of Japan

The country has tested missiles several times since the beginning of this year, including an ICBM. The JCS said it was reinforcing monitoring and vigilance activities and maintaining a "full readiness posture" in close cooperation with the United States, Yonhap news agency reported.

The US Indo-Pacific Command said it was aware of the multiple launches and was "assessing and consulting closely with (its) allies and partners."

"While this event does not pose an immediate threat to US personnel or territory, or to our allies, the missile launches highlight the destabilising impact of

the DPRK's illicit weapons programme," the statement said, using the acronym for North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The White House had previously said that there was a "genuine possibility" that Pyongyang would carry out a missile test around the time of Biden's visit to South Korea and Japan.

In addition, there were increasing signs of an imminent new nuclear test by North Korea.

According to the deputy director of the National Security Office in Seoul, Kim Tae Hyo, there are indications that the neighbouring country recently experimented several times with explosive devices for its seventh nuclear test.

It is unlikely that a test could take place in the next day or two, but "sometime after that it is likely," Kim was quoted as saying by South Korean broadcasters.

— dpa

Turkey's top diplomat on West Bank visit

TEL AVIV: Turkey's diplomatic thaw with Israel will help the Palestinians, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Monday, in the first trip to Israel by Ankara's top diplomat in 15 years. Cavusoglu, who met Palestinian officials in the occupied West Bank on Tuesday, was in Jerusalem as Turkey and Israel seek to mend ties following a breakdown that began during a military operation in Gaza.

Cavusoglu and his Israeli counterpart Yair Lapid stressed that economic ties had continued to grow despite years of acrimony between the two countries.

"We won't pretend that our relationship has not seen its ups and downs," Lapid said. "Even in times of political tension,

economic cooperation between our countries has been constantly on the rise."

Cavusoglu noted that Turkey was a top 10 trading partner for Israel and a major destination for Israeli tourists, voicing hope that deepening ties could yield benefits for Palestinians. "We believe that normalisation of our ties will have a positive impact on peaceful resolution of the conflict," he said.

Cavusoglu claimed that dialogue between Turkish President Erdogan and his Israeli counterpart Isaac Herzog helped "maintain calm" this year that saw widespread clashes. "Turkey is ready to take responsibility to continue the efforts towards (Israeli-Palestinian) dialogue," Cavusoglu said. - AFP



Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu is pictured during his visit at Al Aqsa compound in the Old City of Jerusalem. – AFP

Marcos Jr proclaimed next Philippine president, takes office next month



Philippine President-elect Ferdinand Marcos Jr with his certificate of proclamation as the country's president as his mother and former first lady Imelda Marcos and Senator Imee Marcos-Manotoc look on at the House of Representatives in Quezon City. – AFP

MANILA: Ferdinand Marcos Jr was on Wednesday proclaimed the next Philippine president after a landslide win that rights groups and religious leaders fear could weaken the corruption-prone country's democracy.

Marcos, who formally takes office next month, secured more than 31.6 million votes, or 58.8 per cent of the total, according to a final tally released by parliament. He was the first presidential candidate to win an outright majority since his dictator father, who presided over widespread graft and human rights abuses, was ousted by a popular revolt in 1986.

A joint session of the House of Representatives and Senate formally ratified the results and proclaimed Marcos the Philippines' 17th president. He will be inaugurated on June 30.

Speaking after the proclamation ceremony, Marcos said he was "humbled" by his success at the ballot box and vowed to "always strive to perfection".

"I want to do well because when a president does well the country does well and I want to do well for this country," the 64-year-

old told reporters. Marcos's victory followed relentless online whitewashing of his family's past and alliances with rival political dynasties that have the means to influence voters in their regions.

His liberal rival Leni Robredo finished well behind in second place with just over 15 million votes.

Marcos's running mate Sara Duterte, the daughter of the outgoing President Rodrigo Duterte, was proclaimed winner

of the vice-presidential race. Wearing a traditional formal shirt, Marcos greeted Sara Duterte with a hug as she arrived at a holding room inside the parliament building.

Former first lady Imelda Marcos, 92, who has been the driving force behind the family's comeback from exile to the peak of power, was pushed in a wheelchair into the chamber where she held a seat as recently as 2019. Joining her was the new

first lady, Louise Araneta-Marcos, along with other relatives and supporters. Hours earlier and several kilometres away, hundreds of riot police and protesters opposing the proclamations clashed outside the Commission on Human Rights.

Water cannon was sprayed on the crowd of activists. Leftist groups reported at least 10 people wounded.

"Is the violent dispersal today a prelude of things to come under a Marcos-Duterte administration -- where exercising our basic rights and freedoms are met with brazen State violence?" Cristina Palabay, secretary-general of Karapatan human rights group, asked in a statement.

After six years of President Duterte's authoritarian rule, activists and many religious leaders wanted Robredo for the top job, fearing a Marcos administration would lead to further erosion of human rights and democratic checks and balances.

Marcos has so far given few clues about how he will govern the poverty-plagued country of 110 million people. —AFP

SHORT TAKES

ISLAMABAD

Imran leads protest march on Pakistan capital

Pakistan's ousted prime minister Imran Khan led a convoy of thousands of supporters towards the capital Islamabad in a show of force the new government has attempted to shut down, with clashes breaking out between police and protesters. The cricket star turned politician has heaped pressure on the country's fragile new coalition rulers by staging mass rallies. In a centrepiece showdown with his rivals, Khan had called for supporters to march towards the capital and



stage a sit-in until fresh elections are called. "No obstacle can stop us, we will cross all the barriers and will reach... Islamabad," Khan declared from atop a truck. — AFP

COLOMBO

Sri Lanka appoints PM to helm finance ministry

Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe was given the additional responsibility of running the finance ministry as the island nation grapples with its worst-ever economic crisis.

The island nation suffered months of dire shortages and anti-government protests, with importers unable to finance vital food, fuel and medicines.

Wickremesinghe was sworn in as finance minister after weeks of wrangling among coalition partners for the crucial



position. His appointment was delayed by a dispute between Wickremesinghe and the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) party over who would take the post. — AFP

DUBAI

Egypt approves flights between Sanaa, Cairo

Egypt has approved direct flights between Yemen's capital and Cairo, the Yemeni government said, in the latest sign of progress in the country. The green light comes after the first commercial flight in six years flew from Sanaa to Amman in Jordan last week, as part of a UN-brokered truce between Yemen's internationally recognised government and the Ansar Allah fighters. "We express our deep thanks to the brotherly Egyptian government... for agreeing to



operate direct flights between Sanaa and Cairo in accordance with the armistice agreement," Yemeni Foreign Minister Ahmed bin Mubarak wrote on Twitter. —AFP



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In brief

■ LONDON



UK'S JOHNSON BLASTED FOR 'PARTYGATE' CULTURE

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson presided over a culture of lockdown-breaking parties that featured drunken fighting among staff, according to a long-awaited inquiry on Wednesday that prompted renewed calls for his resignation. Johnson is among dozens of people in Downing Street who have received police fines for breaching Covid regulations since 2020 -- making Number 10 the most penalised address in the entire country. "I take full responsibility for everything that took place on my watch," he told MPs in response to the report by senior civil servant Sue Gray, insisting: "I am humbled and I have learned." —AFP

■ MONTREAL



CANADA SAYS 15 CASES OF MONKEYPOX IN QUEBEC

Health authorities in Canada said they had identified 10 new cases of monkeypox in Quebec, bringing the total number to 15, with additional cases expected in other provinces. Monkeypox, detected in recent weeks in Europe and North America, is a rare disease originating in Africa which usually clears up on its own. "We expect more cases to be confirmed in the coming days," said Health Minister Jean-Yves Duclos, who said more samples were being analysed. He said the federal government had made available the Imvamune vaccine and other drugs stored in the national emergency strategic reserve.

—AFP

■ GENEVA



SUU KYI'S FAMILY FILES COMPLAINT AT UN AGAINST DETENTION

Relatives of Myanmar's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi filed a complaint before a UN watchdog against her detention following a military coup last year, their lawyers said. Since a coup ousted her government in February 2021, plunging Myanmar into upheaval, the 76-year-old Nobel peace prize laureate has been in military custody and faces a raft of charges that could jail her for more than 150 years. Describing the situation as a "judicial kidnapping", human rights lawyers Francois Zimeray and Jessica Finelle said they had filed a complaint on behalf of her relatives with the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

—AFP

US grieves after 19 children killed

UVALDE: A tight-knit Latino community in Texas was wracked with grief on Wednesday after a teen in body armour marched into an elementary school and killed 19 small children and two teachers, in the latest spasm of deadly gun violence in America.

Details of the atrocity, the victims and the 18-year-old suspect — who was killed by police — emerged as America grappled with its deadliest school shooting since the Sandy Hook tragedy in Connecticut a decade ago.

"This town is heartbroken, devastated," said Adolfo Hernandez, whose nephew was at Robb Elementary in Uvalde, a small community about an hour from the Mexican border, during the Tuesday shooting.

"We feel like there's a black cloud above this town," he said. "You just want to pinch yourself and wake up from that horrible nightmare."

Grief-stricken and angry, President Joe Biden addressed the nation in the hours after the attack, with a call on lawmakers to take on America's powerful gun lobby and enact tougher laws to curb gun violence.

"When in God's name will we do what we all know in our gut needs to be done?" Biden asked, his voice slow and heavy with emotion.

In Uvalde, police had blocked off the area around the school on Wednesday and there was little traffic or pedestrian movement. The neighbourhood is one of modest single story homes, with a small yard and often a swing set and an outdoor grill for barbecues.

Identified as Salvador Ramos, the teen gunman was a resident of the town and a US citizen.

According to Texas Department of Public Safety officials, Ramos shot his grandmother before heading to Robb Elementary School around noon where he abandoned his vehicle and entered with a handgun and a rifle, wearing body armour.

Details have emerged of the suspect as a deeply troubled teen -- he was repeatedly bullied over a speech impediment that included a stutter and a lisp and once cut up his own face "just for fun," a former friend of Ramos, Santos Valdez, told The Washington Post.

Valdez said he used to be close to Ramos but not since the



A girl is comforted by two adults, outside the Willie de Leon Civic Centre where grief counselling will be offered in Uvalde, Texas. — AFP

WORLD LEADERS EXPRESS ANGUISH

EU CHIEF 'HEARTBROKEN'

BRUSSELS: European Council President Charles Michel sent his condolences on Wednesday after a shooting at a primary school in Texas. "My thoughts go out to the people of the United States in the wake of the horrific attack in Texas," Michel said on Twitter and that he was "heartbroken by the senseless loss of so many innocent lives." "My deepest condolences to the families and friends of the victims," he said.

POPE: 'COMMIT OURSELVES'

ROME: Pope Francis has expressed shock at the rampage. "I am heartbroken after the massacre at the primary school in Texas," the head of the Catholic Church said at the general audience in St Peter's Square on Wednesday. "I pray for the children, for the adults killed and for their families." "It is time to say no more to the indiscriminate arms trade," the pontiff demanded in his brief



US flags, across New York Bay from the Statue of Liberty, fly at half-mast at Liberty State Park in Jersey City. — AFP

address. "Let us all commit ourselves so that such tragedies can never again happen."

MACRON SHARES SHOCK

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron has expressed his sympathy after the rampage. "We share the shock and grief of the American people, and the rage of those who are fighting to

end the violence," Macron wrote on Twitter on Wednesday. The French leader called the attack "cowardly."

GERMAN CHANCELLOR SENDS CONDOLENCES

BERLIN: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has expressed his condolences to the bereaved and injured after the deadly shooting at a school in Texas. "Our thoughts are with the injured and the bereaved of the victims of this inconceivable massacre for which hardly any words can be found," he wrote on Twitter in English.

He expressed his condolences to US President Joe Biden and "our American friends." Social Democrat leader Saskia Esken wrote on Twitter of "inconceivable grief and inconceivable rage" at the killings.

"Once again innocent people, yes: children! have become victims of a violent crime in the USA. — dpa

latter had begun to "deteriorate." Ramos killed all 21 people in one

classroom, CNN and other news outlets reported. As shattered

families shared the news on social media, the names of the murdered

Zelensky calls for Western unity as Russia advances

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky blasted the West for lacking unity on Wednesday, as the Russian attack entered its fourth month and Moscow's troops advanced in eastern Ukraine. Fighting reached the edge of the industrial city of Severodonetsk, which is under fierce bombardment by Russian forces who are trying to encircle it in one of their key goals in Ukraine's Donbas region.

An unrepentant Moscow told the West to lift sanctions to stave off a global food crisis sparked by the war between two countries that together produce nearly a third of the world's wheat.

Zelensky renewed calls for heavy weapons from foreign partners, saying the billions of dollars' worth already put up were not enough to help Ukraine's outgunned forces. "Unity is about



Ukrainian President Zelensky delivers a statement by videolink during an event on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos. — AFP

weapons. My question is, is there this unity in practice? I can't see it. Our huge advantage over

Russia would be when we are truly united," Zelensky said via videolink to an event on the sidelines of the

World Economic Forum in Davos. Zelensky said Ukraine was grateful for US support, but urged Europe

to step up, specifically naming neighbouring Hungary which is blocking an EU-wide embargo on Russian oil.

The Ukrainian president said hours earlier in his daily address to the nation that Russian forces "want to destroy everything" in eastern Ukraine.

Western funds and weapons have helped Ukraine hold off its neighbour's advances in many areas, including the capital Kyiv.

Russia is now focused on expanding its gains in eastern Donbas, home to pro-Russian separatists, as well as the southern coast.

The governor of the eastern region of Lugansk, Sergiy Gaiday, said fighting had reached the "outskirts" of Severodonetsk, which was being hammered by air strikes, rockets, artillery and mortars. — AFP

Investing in public safety



Khalid Alsafi Al Huraibi
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The writer is an entrepreneur and innovation adviser

We are witnessing two emerging outcomes as we recover from the global pandemic. First we are realising now that our health is our most underrated blessing and our least optimised asset and second is that innovation and technology advancement are necessary for the sustainability of humanity.

For example, as shown in many of the technology advancements highlighted in tech gatherings such as Comex Oman 2022, there has been more technology adoption in the past two years than in the past decade.

One amazing case study are the vaccines that took the pharmaceutical industry years to develop now took a few months, thanks to emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and related fields.

I would argue that over the new few years we will see even more synergy between innovation and the broader sense of our well-being as individuals. This can be attributed to the unprecedented

flow of ideas and products between all corners of the earth and how much they are occupying our attention and making an impact not on our physical health, but also on the balance with our mental and spiritual health as well.

It has been well documented that the private sector, especially in the energy, construction and logistics sector has taken the lead for decades developing what is called HSSE (Health, Safety, Security and Environment). However, who has been taking the lead in the public sector in leveraging the balanced adoption of the said technology advancement for our HSSE? The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has been for years the catalyst behind digital transformation, especially in the area of public safety. This is a truly interesting case especially since the world of business, research and innovation is traditionally considered closer to the civilian government units. Here are 4 examples in which the ROP's lead in digital transformation in public

OVER THE NEW FEW YEARS WE WILL SEE EVEN MORE SYNERGY BETWEEN INNOVATION AND THE BROADER SENSE OF OUR WELL-BEING AS INDIVIDUALS

safety can be scaled up on a national level:

HEALTH
'Prevention is better than cure,' mindset adopted in regulations such the Traffic Law and the Penal Code has been successful in saving thousands of life. Investing in nudging the wider community towards this mindset, as opposed to fixing-problems-after-they-happen mindset, can be adopted throughout public services for a more sustainable positive impact.

SAFETY
The increasing online threats to our safety and the safety of our loved ones has become a fact of life associated with the rise of the

digital world. Digital money, Mixed Reality (MR) and Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) are only a few of the promising opportunities of the digital world that come with a cost.

To mitigate these emerging side effects, bodies like ROP are building the capabilities of their specialised teams and engaging stakeholders to be ready and keep our digital world safe and thriving.

These mitigation measure could be scaled up and adopted by every single regulator because current and future generations are already living in a digital, parallel and global digital universe, and will not wait for regulators to catch up.

SECURITY
Embracing the values of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEI & B) used to be a nice-to-have in the corporate world. Today they are a must have in all sectors civilian and military sectors, such as ROP. No security, or social peace and cohesion, can be guaranteed until the wider community, (citizens, residents and

visitors) instils the DEI & B values as its default mode.

ENVIRONMENT
Protecting our biodiversity in land, air and water is not an easy task by any measure. In today's world, the increase in industrial and manufacturing activities are much needed to and we can recover economically and socially from the pandemic. This means that the earth's finite natural resources are under pressure. Some of the best practices in achieving a balance in this matter is Oman Vision 2040's sustainable environment pillar and increase of national nature reserve area to be guarded in cooperation with competent authorities such as the ROP.

A national investment in scaling the said HSSE measures with competent authorities has become a matter of surviving and thriving. I hope that investing in leveraging the successful case studies of competent authorities, such as ROP, will be adopted as a step in the right direction.

Another mass shooting, another US gun control debate

PAUL HANDLEY

A mass shooting that left 19 schoolchildren and two teachers dead in the deeply pro-gun state of Texas on Tuesday increased pressure on US politicians to take action over the ubiquity of firearms — but also brought the grim expectation of little or no change.

It was the eighth mass shooting this year, according to the Everytown gun control group, and came 10 days after another 18-year-old murdered 10 African Americans at a supermarket in New York.

But nearly 10 years after a man slaughtered 20 children and six others in an attack on the Sandy Hook elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, and four years after 17 were killed at a Florida high school, restrictions on gun purchases and ownership have not significantly changed.

"I had hoped, when I became president, I would not have to do this, again," a distraught President Joe Biden said as he led national mourning, vowing to overcome the US gun lobby and find a way to tighten gun ownership laws.

"Another massacre... an elementary school. Beautiful, innocent, second, third, fourth graders," he said. "I am sick and tired of it.

We have to act. And don't tell me we can't have an impact on this carnage."

But guns of all kinds, especially high-powered assault rifles and semi-automatic pistols are cheaper and more widely available than ever across the United States.

And the all-too-familiar arguments over guns, public safety and rights re-opened immediately on the news of Tuesday's mass shooting.

The debate is set to intensify going into the weekend when Houston, Texas hosts the annual convention of the country's leading pro-gun lobby, the National Rifle Association.

Scheduled to speak at the convention is former president Donald Trump, Texas Governor Greg Abbott, Texas Senator Ted Cruz and other prominent Republicans.

Senator Chris Murphy, who represents Connecticut, made an emotional call on the Senate floor for lawmakers to take action.

"Nowhere else does that happen except here in the US of A and it is a choice. It is our choice to let it continue," he said. —AFP



Megan Specia

The writer is a correspondent on the International Desk in London

As UK offers homes to Ukrainians, the process lags behind the goodwill

At a church in East London this month, Imogen Moore-Shelley balanced her 6-month-old on her hip as she scrawled an important message on a poster: "Useful information for sponsors."

She then handed her marker to Natalia, a Ukrainian woman who had moved into Moore-Shelley's home a week earlier. Natalia then wrote the message in Ukrainian as people filtered into the church for a luncheon bringing together refugees and the Londoners opening their homes to them.

Natalia and Moore-Shelley's story — of a woman fleeing war and finding shelter with a stranger 1,300 miles away — served as a hopeful example of a smooth transition to safety in Britain. But not every experience with a British visa programme meant for Ukrainians fleeing war has been so easy, and many of the sponsors gathered at the church, unable to get clear answers from the government, were looking to one another for advice.

Weeks after Russia attacked Ukraine on February 24, and amid widespread criticism that it was not doing enough to help, the British government began

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT BEGAN HOMES FOR UKRAINE, A PROGRAMME MEANT TO OFFER UKRAINIANS A QUICK PATH TO SAFETY

Homes for Ukraine, a programme meant to offer Ukrainians a quick path to safety. But despite tens of thousands of Britons having expressed interest in playing host, the rollout has been painfully slow.

Aid groups, potential hosts and Ukrainians say the programme is full of pitfalls, including a difficult application process and significant delays in visa processing. They also express concerns about safety and about a lack of support in gaining access to schools and other vital services in Britain.

The programme was supposed to



be a response to earlier criticism that Britain had been slow to respond to the Ukrainian refugee crisis. Initially, as members of the European Union threw borders open, Britain, which left the bloc in 2021, allowed only those with immediate family in the country to even apply for a visa. Homes for Ukraine was intended to broaden the British response, even if the programme still required cutting some red tape, including a condition that hosts make direct contact with Ukrainians who need housing. Problems with this matching process have grown.

As of May 16, about 53,800 Ukrainians had arrived in Britain, with 20,800 joining their immediate family members and 33,000 arriving under the sponsorship programme.

More than 6.4 million people have fled Ukraine since the war began, according to the United Nations.

Mark Lillicrap, 58, who lives in St Albans, a town north of London, and his wife have been trying for seven weeks to get visas for a family currently in Hamburg, Germany, but he said the process had been "terrible" amid "staggering bureaucracy."

Two weeks ago, he was told that both parents had been approved but that their baby — who does not have a passport because he was born only weeks before the war began — needed to be seen at a visa application centre hundreds of miles from Hamburg. Many others described similar obstacles.

The luncheon at the church was intended to help build community, but it was also a reflection of the exasperation felt by many sponsors.

Moore-Shelley, 34, who organised the event, said that she and her husband had felt powerless while watching the horrors of the war unfold on the news and that opening up their home was "a small way that we could do something." — New York Times

Stay sane with a digital detox challenge



SONIA AMBROSIO
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Have you been feeling tired, tense or grumpy? What about headaches, eye strain and stiff neck? This is not a medical consultation or a survey but a piece on social media burnout. Frequent Instagram, Snap Chat and TikTok postings provide immediate satisfaction, right? Dopamine's effect. This emotional pleasure, however, has consequences. Once, as a member of a committee for a social media content award, I could feel the almost palpable signs of job exhaustion. The 30s something-year-old 'guru' in social media within a broad public sphere had physical and mental red flags all around him. The young man was in charge of generating content for many clients.

Online weariness is defined as social media burnout. As a content creator, you're constantly watching what your competitors are doing, analysing metrics and thinking of new ways to stand out. It's a never-ending quest for improvement and a lot of time spent on the Internet. It is a big task to create relevant and unique text and visual materials and to keep communities engaged.

Online skills, content strategy, audience engagement and different approaches to analytics are all designed to keep the users absorbed for a long time, which contributes to social media fatigue. Both the content creator and the receiver experience the fear of missing out (FOMO) — the feeling that other people are having a good time without you, which leads to a constant checking on social media to see what friends, followers and competitors are doing. It is a jungle out there!

PLATFORMS ARE INTENTIONALLY DESIGNED TO BE ADDICTIVE. THEY WORK TO BOOST SELF-ESTEEM, CREATE A FEELING OF BELONGING OR MONETISE CONTENT

Platforms are intentionally designed to be addictive. They work to boost self-esteem, create a feeling of belonging or monetise content. Media specialists expect to receive positive feedback, approval, recommendation, branding recognition and an increase in sales.

Physically, social media burnout can affect sleep, cause nausea, headaches and a variety of other health problems. Mentally, it can provoke depression, memory loss, and oh well, poor academic performance. Anxiety, the use of drugs or other substances and suicidal thoughts are also common signs.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recognised burnout in 2019. It was classified as a disease caused by emotional, mental and sometimes physical exhaustion. According to definitions, stress is generally caused by pressure at work or other responsibilities, whereas burnout is caused by prolonged and repeated stress.

Much academic research on social media use has been conducted in recent years. While some scholars explain social media fatigue (SMF) in terms of information overload, others investigate the relationship between SMF and psychological distress.

The month of May is dedicated to mental health issues. One of its goals is to raise awareness about the dangers of constant Internet exposure. Producing social media material is a stressful job, but being 'hooked' on social media for enjoyment, self-esteem or gaming can be harmful to one's health too.

Another type of mental tiredness is 'zooming', 'Googling', or 'videoconferencing', which has many of the same symptoms as social media exhaustion. The avalanche of apps that one has to have, needs to have, or simply wants to have pushes the boundaries of digital weariness. Smartphones are swamped with applications from restaurants to retail stores to government agencies, and users must keep up with newly launched developments.

Social media platforms have many positive advantages, as evidenced by the prolonged Covid-19 lockdown around the world. Unfortunately, digital audiences are being bombarded with a slew of advertisements, public relations, and marketing strategies masquerading as useful information.

For several years, I emphasised the importance of media literacy, and then I expanded to include an understanding of technology literacy and social networking functions. Now, I turn my attention to the need for digital literacy programs to assist individuals in dealing with social media fatigue.



Has the US damaged Africa's Covid-19 vaccination drive?



Ebere Okereke

Senior Technical Adviser at the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, is an honorary senior public health adviser at the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and an associate fellow at Chatham House

The United States Food and Drug Administration's recent decision to limit the use of the Johnson & Johnson Covid-19 vaccine to adults who cannot or will not get another vaccine will have profound consequences for African countries.

The FDA said its move reflected the risk that the vaccine might cause a rare blood-clotting syndrome. But the decision shows that, even after two years of the pandemic, the needs of people in low- and middle-income countries and Africans in particular, remain an afterthought for leading global health authorities.

The FDA's restriction is not based on new evidence, but rather reflects an abundance of caution in a country with a relatively high Covid-19 vaccination rate and widely available alternative vaccines. The US has vaccinated more than 65% of its population against Covid-19, predominantly with Pfizer and Moderna vaccines.

Only 8% have received the J&J vaccine. So, the FDA's decision will have little material impact in America.

In Africa, on the other hand, the J&J vaccine is widely used.

According to analysis from the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 42 million J&J doses have been administered in African countries so far.

The fact that it requires only a single shot makes it well-suited to the logistical and capacity constraints of many poorer countries, and it is the vaccine of choice across much of the continent.

Moreover, data from South Africa, where more than 8.5 million doses of the J&J vaccine have been administered — including through the Sisonke study, a vaccine trial involving healthcare workers — indicate that the FDA's extreme caution is unwarranted. And in countries where Covid-19 vaccination options are more limited, increasing conjecture about the J&J vaccine will significantly exacerbate the challenge of immunising the population.

The FDA's decision risks triggering a widespread loss of confidence in the J&J vaccine, causing demand to plummet and irreparably reducing the reach of a safe, effective, and widely available means of protection against Covid-19.

This will have major implications for African countries' ongoing efforts to stimulate vaccine demand and safeguard their populations. The Tony Blair Institute

EVEN AFTER TWO YEARS OF THE PANDEMIC, THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE IN POORER COUNTRIES AND AFRICANS IN PARTICULAR, REMAIN AN AFTERTHOUGHT FOR LEADING GLOBAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES. THE US FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION'S RECENT TIGHTENING OF RESTRICTIONS ON THE JOHNSON & JOHNSON COVID-19 VACCINE IS YET ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THIS

for Global Change estimates that African countries have about 135 million J&J vaccines in stock, approximately 25% of which are donated doses from the US.

Vaccine donations are welcome, of course, and African governments are committed to turning doses into vaccinations.

But when the donor country deems those vaccines too dangerous for its own population, Africans will resoundingly refuse to accept them.

Shockwaves from the FDA's decision will also extend to domestic manufacturing of vaccines in Africa. A leading South Africa-based pharmaceutical firm, Aspen Pharmacare, is the first African manufacturer to package, sell, and distribute the J&J Covid-19 vaccine under its own brand. The US advocated for the deal, and J&J had agreed potentially to expand it to cover more advanced versions of the vaccine such as variant-specific shots.

The FDA decision will undermine many of the concrete steps taken by the US and African countries to bolster the continent's health and vaccine security.

It will also affect the ongoing negotiations between the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Aspen Pharmacare, and the Covid-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) facility regarding a possible deal to procure and distribute the South African J&J vaccine.

It is particularly troubling that the FDA made its announcement without

considering the implications for other jurisdictions or giving them advance notice so that they could respond appropriately. Although the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority released a statement reassuring the public of the vaccine's safety and effectiveness, a decision with regional implications requires a regional approach. Had the Africa CDC known in advance of the FDA's decision, it could have addressed anticipated concerns across the continent.

Looking ahead, the recently established African Medicines Agency could take such regional actions.

A well-functioning AMA, working alongside the Africa CDC, will improve the continent's capacity to provide speedy evidence-based responses to regulatory decisions elsewhere.

Finally, this episode is symptomatic of a wider problem in the Global North, where leaders and policymakers consistently fail to consider others' perspectives and to recognise that their actions have wide-reaching effects beyond their own borders.

Africans are global citizens and obtain their information from the same media sources as Europeans and North Americans.

They are thus influenced by messages that may not be relevant to their context. In 2021, for example, some European Union countries' suspension of the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine hit demand in Africa, likely costing thousands of lives.

The expertise of stringent regulatory bodies such as the FDA, the UK Medicines & Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency, and the European Medicines Agency is globally recognised and respected.

These institutions must therefore consider the wider and unintended consequences of their decisions, particularly amid a global pandemic.

The FDA's recent tightening of restrictions on the J&J Covid-19 vaccine is not the first time that a health-related announcement by the US or other authority in the Global North has had far-reaching consequences for Africa, and it will not be the last.

To manage Covid-19 and future pandemics effectively, policymakers must collaborate now to reduce the frequency and mitigate the impact of such decisions.

sport



OMAN TO HOST THIRD GCC BEACH GAMES IN 2025

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, MAY 25

Oman will host the third edition of GCC Beach Games in 2025, it was announced on the sidelines of the third GCC Games in Kuwait on Wednesday.

The meeting was held under the chairmanship of Fahd bin Jalawi with the participation of the Oman Olympic Committee Secretary-General Taha bin Suleiman al Kishri.

The heads of the Olympic committees of GCC announced that Oman will host the GCC Beach Games in 2025, the UAE will host the first edition of the GCC Youth Games in 2023, the GCC Martial Arts and Indoor Games will be held in Saudi Arabia in 2024, while the fourth edition of the GCC Games will be held in Qatar in 2026.

At the GCC Games in Kuwait City on Wednesday, Oman beat UAE 3-1 (29-27, 19-25, 25-20, 25-18) in volleyball. With the win, Oman brightened their chances for a medal as one match left for the team on Friday against Saudi Arabia.

Oman futsal team concluded its journey in Kuwait with a 3-1 loss from the hosts Kuwait team.

3.

Kuwait won the gold after



beating Bahrain 2-1. Saudi Arabia took the silver and Bahrain claimed the bronze after winning against UAE 4-1.

Oman padel team will meet Saudi team on Thursday at the Kuwait Padel Complex.

The Oman women's team is one of the favourites to win the gold.

The team, which includes star player Fatma al Nabhani, had won the title of the Gulf Women's Padel Cup in the UAE in March.

BRONZE IN E-GAMES

Oman claimed a bronze in electronic games on Tuesday to make total medal tally to 27. The bronze medal in the 'Fifa 22' game was earned by the Oman team consisting Saleh al Ghassani and Fahd al Hasani.

This is the second bronze medal for Oman in electronic games competition after Sarah al Amri won the first bronze in the 'Fifa 22' game.

In addition, the round of 16

matches of the tennis tournament resulted in Issa Qabazard winning over Qatar's Musa Shannan 6-3, 6-1, Abdulhamid Mubarak beating Qatar's Mubarak Shanan 6-1, 6-1, and Badr Antar overcoming Bahrain's Hassan Abdulridha 6-3, 6-0. Ali al Shatti lost to Qatar's Rashid Nawaf 4-6, 4-6 and Hussein al Shatti lost to Saudi Arabia's Abdullah al Faraj 5-7, 3-6 and Saudi Arabia's Saud al Haqbani beat Bahrain's Youssef Qaed 6-1, 6-2.

His compatriot Omar al Haqbani beat Qatar's Issa Shanan 6-0, 6-2 and Saudi's Sulaiman al Qasim beat UAE's Abdulrahman al Janahi 2-6, 6-2, 6-4.

In table tennis, Qatar defeated Kuwait 3-0, while Saudi Arabia blanked UAE with the same score. Qatar lead the standings with 6 points, followed by Saudi Arabia (4), Kuwait and Bahrain (3) and the UAE (2).

In the women's cycling competition, UAE swept the medals in the 49.7 km race held in Jaber Bridge. Sheikha Rashid claimed the gold, Safia al Sayegh took silver and Huda Hussein won the bronze.

In the women's team category, the UAE won the gold, Saudi Arabia took silver and Kuwait claimed the bronze.



Czech Republic's Karolina Muchova plays a return to Greece's Maria Sakkari during the French Open match at the Court Suzanne-Lenglen in Paris. — AFP

Muchova downs Sakkari; Kerber, Azarenka win

PARIS: Greek fourth seed Maria Sakkari crashed out in the French Open second round on Wednesday, going down 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/4) to Czech world number 81 Karolina Muchova.

Sakkari, a 2021 Roland Garros semifinalist, is the fifth women's top-10 seed to lose in the first four days at Roland Garros.

Muchova has matched her run to the third round from 12 months ago and will next play 27th seed Amanda Anisimova, who reached the last four in Paris three years ago.

"It's very special, she's an amazing player. It was a big fight, a little bit of a test and challenge for me and I'm happy I took it the way I did," said Muchova.

The 25-year-old reached the semi-finals at last year's Australian Open and the last eight for the second time at Wimbledon, but is playing just her fourth tournament since the US Open after struggling with an abdominal injury.

"It's an amazing feeling I can play again fully."

Earlier, former Grand Slam champions Angelique Kerber and Victoria Azarenka

advanced to the third round.

Kerber, who won her first clay title in six years on the eve of the French Open, defeated French wildcard and 2020 junior champion Elsa Jacquemot 6-1, 7-6 (7/2) as she seeks the only Grand Slam missing from her collection.

The German 21st seed next plays Aliaksandra Sasnovich, the Belarusian who knocked out US Open champion Emma Raducanu 3-6, 6-1, 6-1.

"I think the last week was really important for me to get the title," former number one Kerber said of her Strasbourg triumph.

"I had a lot of confidence. It's great to be back here and I hope I can still play a few more matches."

"Where you achieve everything you want, you play for the love of the game. I just love the sport. Let's see how long I can keep playing at a high level."

Azarenka, a two-time Australian Open winner, beat 2014 Roland Garros semifinalist Andrea Petkovic 6-1, 7-6 (7/3). She meets Swiss 23rd seed Jil Teichmann for a place in the fourth round. — AFP

Kerber, who won her first clay title in six years, defeated French wildcard Elsa Jacquemot as she seeks the only Grand Slam missing from her collection

FRENCH OPEN RESULTS

MEN (SECOND ROUND):
Aljaz Bedene (SLO) bt Pablo Cuevas (URU) 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/5), 6-4;
Felix Auger-Aliassime (CAN x9) bt Camilo Ugo Carabelli (ARG) 6-0, 6-3, 6-4; John Isner (USA x23) bt Gregoire Barrere (FRA) 6-4, 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (7/5); Bernabe Zapata Miralles (ESP) bt Taylor Fritz (USA x13) 3-6, 6-2, 6-2, 6-3; Cameron Norrie (GBR x10) bt Jason Kubler (AUS) 6-3, 6-4, 6-3; Karen Khachanov (x21) bt Hugo Dellien (BOL) 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/1), 6-3

WOMEN (SECOND ROUND):
Angelique Kerber (GER x21) bt Elsa Jacquemot

(FRA) 6-1, 7-6 (7/2); Aliaksandra Sasnovich bt Emma Raducanu (GBR x12) 3-6, 6-1, 6-1; Amanda Anisimova (USA x27) bt Donna Vekic (CRO) 6-4, 6-1; Karolina Muchova (CZE) bt Maria Sakkari (GRE x4) 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/4); Elise Mertens (BEL x31) bt Marie Bouzkova (CZE) walkover; Coco Gauff (USA x18) bt Alison Van Uytvanck (BEL) 6-1, 7-6 (7/4); Kaia Kanepi (EST) bt Beatriz Haddad Maia (BRA) 6-4, 6-4; Victoria Azarenka (x15) bt Andrea Petkovic (GER) 6-1, 7-6 (7/3); Jil Teichmann (SUI x23) bt Olga Danilovic (SRB) 6-4, 6-1



DHAKA: Angelo Mathews and Dhananjaya de Silva each hit a fifty and put on a 102-run partnership to keep Sri Lanka going strong in the rain-hit second Test against Bangladesh on Wednesday.

Mathews remained unbeaten on 58 after De Silva went out with the same score to take Sri Lanka to 282-5 at stumps on the third day, still trailing Bangladesh by 83 runs.

Rain washed out entire post-lunch session but the duo stepped up their scoring rate to make up for lost time, with de Silva striking nine fours before Shakib Al Hasan got his wicket.

The right-hander, who faced 95 balls, was initially given not out on a caught-behind appeal before Bangladesh successfully reviewed.

Mathews, who smashed four fours and a six, was batting with Dinesh Chandimal on 10 at stumps.

Bangladesh made early inroads after Sri Lanka resumed on 143-2, Ebadot Hossain bowling nightwatchman Kasun Rajitha for a duck with the second ball of the day.

A gem of a delivery from Shakib dismissed Dimuth Karunaratne for 80 soon afterwards, with the Sri Lankan skipper adding 10 to his overnight score.

Shakib tossed the ball up on off-stump and Karunaratne went for a drive but saw the flighted delivery dip and turn between bat and pad before crashing into his stumps. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

Bangladesh first innings -----	365
Sri Lanka first innings	
O Fernando c Najmul b Ebadot	57
D Karunaratne b Shakib	80
K Mendis lbw Shakib	11
K Rajitha b Ebadot	0
A Mathews not out	58
Dhananjaya c Liton b Shakib	58
D Chandimal not out	10
Extras (lb6, nb2)	8
Total (five wickets; 97 overs)	-282
Fall of wickets: 1-95, 2-139, 3-144, 4-164, 5-266	
Bowling: Khaled 15-1-62-0, Ebadot 26-4-78-2, Shakib 26-9-59-3, Mosaddek 2-0-14-0, Taijul 28-6-63-0	

MATHEWS, DHANANJAYA KEEP SRI LANKA ALIVE



Pandya praises ‘Killer’ Miller as Gujarat reach IPL final

NEW DELHI: Skipper Hardik Pandya on Tuesday hailed “match-winner” David Miller after the South African batsman led newcomers Gujarat Titans in to the IPL final with a seven-wicket victory over Rajasthan Royals.

Chasing 189 for victory in the first qualifier, Gujarat rode an unbeaten 106-run fourth-wicket stand between Pandya (40) and Miller (68) to achieve the target with three balls to spare in Kolkata.

With 16 needed off the final over, the left-handed Miller smashed each of Prasidh Krishna’s first three balls for six to bring the house down at a full capacity Eden Gardens in the first qualifier.

Known as ‘Killer’ Miller for his big hitting, the left-hand batsman smashed three fours and five sixes in his 38-ball knock.

“A lot of people counted David Miller out but for us he was always a match-winner from the time we brought him in the auction,” Pandya said of the attacking batsman who has been key to Gujarat’s success in their debut season.

“What he did today, we always expected him to do that. But for us it was important to give him importance, love and clarity that what we expect of him and if he fails it’s okay, ‘it’s just a game.”

Afghanistan spin wizard Rashid Khan set up the win with figures of 0-15 that kept Rajasthan to 188-6 despite Jos Buttler’s 56-ball 89.

Gujarat, one of two new teams alongside Lucknow Super Giants in the expanded 10-team IPL, now await their opponent for the title clash on Sunday in their home ground Ahmedabad.

The second qualifier on Friday will decide the other finalist.

Rajasthan, who ended second in the table topped by Gujarat, have another shot of making the



finals when they meet the winner of Wednesday’s eliminator between Lucknow and Royal Challengers Bangalore.

‘STILL ALIVE’

“We are still alive. We still got a chance, disappointed today but dust ourselves off and go again,” Buttler said of his team, who won the inaugural edition in 2008. “We have full faith in the guys, we have a really good team.”

Gujarat lost Wriddhiman Saha for nought off New Zealand quick bowler Trent Boult on the second ball of the chase with the crowd silenced by the departure of their local hero.

Shubman Gill (35) and Matthew Wade (35) then took charge to take the attack to the opposition bowlers as Gujarat reached 64-1 in six overs of the powerplay when only two fielders are allowed outside the inner circle.

The right-left batting pair of Gill put on 71 before a mix-up between the two saw Gill comfortably run out.

The Australian soon followed, slapping Obed McCoy to deep mid-wicket where Buttler made no mistake.

Doncic helps Mavs down Warriors to keep series alive

DALLAS: Luka Doncic scored 30 points as the Dallas Mavericks defeated the Golden State Warriors 119-109 to keep their NBA Western Conference finals series alive on Tuesday.

The Mavericks, needing a victory to avoid a clean sweep, delivered a revived offensive performance to ensure a game five in San Francisco on Thursday.

No team in the 75-year history of the NBA has ever come back from 3-0 deficit to win a best-of-seven play-off series.

But after Tuesday’s performance, the Mavericks have at least a lifeline to cling to as the series heads back to California with the Warriors needing just one win from three remaining games to advance to the NBA Finals.

Doncic, who has carried the scoring burden for Dallas in the three previous games, finally received scoring support from his team-mates on Tuesday.

Six Dallas players finished in double figures, with Dorian Finney-Smith adding 23 points and Reggie Bullock 18.

Jalen Brunson added 15 while Maxi Kleber contributing 13 and Spencer Dinwiddie 10.

Doncic however praised the defensive performance of his team-mates after a display which

restricted Golden State’s leading scorer — Stephen Curry — to just 20 points.

“Our defence was amazing today,” said Doncic, who finished with 14 rebounds and nine assists. “That’s how we’ve got to play, when we play like this we’re a dangerous team.”

Asked if he felt the Mavs could still salvage a series victory, Doncic replied: “You never know. We’re going to stick together. It’s going to be tough, we know that but we have to stay together.”

Dallas coach Jason Kidd cautioned that the Mavericks remained only one defeat away from elimination.

“We believe it’s just one game at a time, we did our part tonight and found a way to win tonight,” Kidd said. “The next part is to find a way to win on the road.

“We can’t get ahead of ourselves. It’s still 3-1 and Golden State is a tough place to play. But we’ve won there before. We just have to take care of the ball and make shots.”

After being outplayed in the first three games by the six-time NBA champions, Dallas came out with a renewed sense of purpose at the American Airlines Center.

The Mavs led by 15 points at half-time after cutting loose midway through the second



quarter with a 19-2 run that propelled them into a double-digit lead.

Golden State struggled to make inroads into that deficit and were successful on only three of 16 attempts from three-point range.

LATE RALLY

The Mavs by contrast drained 11-of-23 from beyond the arc in the first half, a statistic that helped them into a 62-47 half-time lead.

The start of the second half was delayed by around 20 minutes after what appeared to be a leak from the arena roof allowed puddles of water to gather at one end of the court.

But any idea that the delay would allow the Warriors to regroup quickly evaporated as the Mavericks continued to rain in buckets, outscoring Golden State 37-23.

That left Dallas 99-70 in front heading into the fourth quarter, with Dallas seemingly cruising to victory.

The Mavs were given a scare in the final minutes of the game as the Warriors bench players suddenly trimmed the lead to just eight points.

But Doncic reasserted control and a Bullock three-pointer put Dallas 13 points clear again to

secure the win.

“It felt like we had a shot,” Warriors coach Steve Kerr said of the fourth quarter rally.

“But it wasn’t meant to be, Dallas was great tonight and deserved to win.

“They played with more force, and executed. This is the conference finals and that’s how it’s supposed to be — two great teams. And they handled us well tonight.”

Kerr meanwhile said the Warriors’ locker room had been subdued before the game as his team digested the horror of the Texas school shooting earlier on Tuesday that left 19 children dead.

“There was an unspoken awareness of what happened today,” said Kerr, who had made an impassioned plea for stricter gun control laws in his pre-game press conference.

“It was a very quiet locker room beforehand. I felt like as a coach my job was get the team ready to play. But difficult to keep perspective on a day like day. The shock, the anger and the grief is there for all of our guys and I’m sure everyone in the building.

“But you just have to accept and go out and play and that’s what we tried to do.” — AFP

Seeb overwhelm Al Ansar to reach AFC zonal semis

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 25

Oman representatives Seeb booked a place in the AFC Cup 2022 West Zonal semifinals as they thumped Lebanon's Al Ansar 4-0 at Seeb Stadium late on Tuesday.

The victory helped the domestic double title holders reach six points to lead the Group A.

Three times champions Kuwait SC played out goalless draw with

Jableh SC of Syria to exit from AFC Cup 2022 at the group stage.

The Kuwaiti team ended at five points in second place while Jableh SC of Syria came third with four points and Lebanon's Al Ansar finished in the bottom with one point only.

The Muscat-based team will take on Kuwait's Al Arabi, the Group B winners, in the semifinals of the West Zonal.

Dhofar's hopes to progress into



second round ended after a 1-1 draw against Kuwait's Al Arabi SC. Dhofar ended in third place at four points while Al Riffa of Bahrain advanced as the best runners-up

after a 3-1 win over Shabab Al Khalil in Group B at the Kuwait SC Stadium.

Al Riffa will face their fellow Bahraini side East Riffa who

topped Group C in the West Zonal semifinals.

Seebs' Serbian coach Boris Bunjak thanked all the players for their top show. "A great recognition for all the squad members to what they showed during the whole season. The team players were fully focused in the concluding game despite leading 3-0 at the break. I am very proud of them", he said after the match.

"We need for sure some new

young faces to have refreshed energy for the forthcoming season. However, the new squad members need to be fit in within this family so the synergy will continue", he said. He said that team's style and level did not change during the past games. "The players implemented all the technical instructions very professionally. Five young players entered after the break in the last game and we played with same level and intensity," he concluded.

Fati gets late winner as Barca down All Stars

SYDNEY: Teenage striker Ansu Fati got a late winner as Barcelona survived a scare to beat Dwight Yorke's A-League All Stars in a 3-2 thriller in front of 70,000 fans in Sydney on Wednesday.

The Catalan giants only arrived in Australia on Tuesday morning on a whistlestop 48-hour visit, barely a day after completing their league season with a 2-0 loss to Villarreal, which saw them finish 13 points adrift of champions Real Madrid.

They showed few effects from the long trip to turn on the style for a noisy pro-Barca crowd, dominating the first half and going into the break 1-0 ahead after French striker Ousmane Dembele clinically finished in the 34th minute.


 A photograph of Ousmane Dembele, a professional footballer, wearing a red and blue striped FC Barcelona jersey. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The jersey features the Rakuten sponsor logo and the FC Barcelona crest. The background is blurred, suggesting a stadium setting.

But the All Stars stunned them with two goals in eight second-half minutes, before Xavi Hernandez's side rallied to retake control with strikes from Adama Traore and Fati. "Amazing atmosphere, five goals today, they played really well, I have to congratulate them", said coach Xavi. "I think we played a very serious 90 minutes, I think we played really well. We conceded two goals, this is football, and then we came back so a very good test for us. I'm very proud."

After a rare trophy-less season, Xavi brought a strong squad and a host of top names started including captain Sergio Busquets, veteran Dani Alves and the unsettled Dembele, who may have played his last game for the club. — **AFP**

Chelsea sale gets green light from UK government



LONDON: The British government announced on Wednesday it had approved Todd Boehly's £4.25 billion (\$5.3 billion) purchase of Chelsea football club from the sanctioned Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich.

The Premier League club was put on the market in early March, days before Abramovich was sanctioned by Britain following Russia's war on Ukraine. The Premier League gave the green light on Tuesday evening and hours later ministers said they would permit Chelsea's sale.

Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries, whose brief includes sport, tweeted: “Given the sanctions we placed on those linked to Putin and the bloody war on Ukraine, the long-term future of the club can only be secured under a new owner.”

“We are satisfied the proceeds of the sale will not benefit Roman Abramovich or other sanctioned individuals.” — **AFP**



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Oman Shell, PDO to study Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage

Sustainable energy: Through this collaboration, Petroleum Development Oman and Oman Shell seek to leverage joint capabilities and economies of scale to initiate the CCUS industry in the Sultanate of Oman, and to facilitate the inception of a Low Carbon Hydrogen value chain in the country

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 25

Shell Development Oman LLC (Oman Shell) and Petroleum Development Oman LLC (PDO) have agreed to collaborate and jointly study Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman.

As part of this agreement, Oman Shell and PDO signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for a joint study, which will broadly assess all aspects related to reinjecting and storing CO2 in Oman. The study's scope will cover technical matters, project time frame and cost, as well as consider support for a regulatory and fiscal framework for CCUS in Oman.

Through this collaboration, Petroleum Development Oman and Oman Shell seek to leverage joint capabilities and economies of scale to initiate the CCUS industry in the Sultanate of Oman, and to facilitate the inception of a Low Carbon Hydrogen value



Walid Hadi
VP & Country Chairman, Oman Shell

chain in the country.

PDO is the operator of Block 6 and in line with Oman Vision 2040 has clear commitments towards achieving Net Zero Emissions by 2050.

PDO is therefore progressing opportunities to grow its core hydrocarbon business whilst also reducing GHG emissions from its operations, including the use of CCUS for enhanced oil recovery and long-term CO2 storage.

Oman Shell is the operator of Block 10 and is maturing options for an associated downstream project based on Low Carbon Hydrogen value chains with CCUS.

Commenting on this



Steve Phimister
Managing Director, PDO

agreement, Walid Hadi, Oman Shell's VP and Country Chairman, said, "This collaboration allows Oman Shell and PDO to positively contribute to Oman Vision 2040, creating opportunities to reduce the carbon intensity of PDO's existing operations and creating a new Low Carbon Hydrogen value chain in Oman.

The intent of this collaboration is to progress CCUS opportunities in Oman, making the best use of PDO's knowledge of the subsurface/surface and its long-standing experience of operating assets in Oman, together with Shell's global knowledge and experience in Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage. The initial

study may well result in further collaboration involving additional projects in the future."

Steve Phimister, Managing Director of PDO stated: "In line with PDO's commitments to Oman Vision 2040 and our role in the energy transition, this collaboration lays the foundation for PDO to reduce emissions from our operations as well as helping to progress Oman's national energy agenda, via large scale CCUS. PDO and Shell, are uniquely positioned based on capacity, geography, and expertise to execute this project together and build sustainable energy solutions for Oman's future."

India, Australia to supply 180,000 tonnes of wheat to Oman

MUSCAT: Salalah Mills Company, the largest flour mill firm in the Sultanate of Oman, says it has awarded contracts for the procurement of 180,000 tonnes of wheat from India and Australia. The deliveries are expected during the next three months, said Ahmed bin Alawi al Dhahab, CEO of Salalah Mills Company.

In a statement to ONA, the official said that the contracted quantity is sufficient to meet its requirements until the end of this year. The grain carrier 'Valiant Summer', laden with a first shipment of 66,000 tonnes of wheat, has just



left the left the Indian port of Kandla and is currently heading to the Port of Salalah in Dhofar Governorate, he said. Al Dhahab added that Salalah Mills is currently looking to cover its wheat needs for the first half of next year 2023. The company operates with a production capacity of 1,500 tonnes per day and imports more than 400,000 tonnes of wheat annually.

Special Oilfield Services Signs Licence agreement with EN Global for Gas to Liquids (GTL) Technology for Flare Gas and Stranded Gas Recovery

Special Oilfield Services Co LLC (SOS), a leading Omani oil and gas service provider, announced that it had signed a seven-year License Agreement with EN Global Inc. (ENG) for its revolutionary Calvert Gas to Liquid (GTL) patented technology to convert flare gas and stranded gas to synthetic liquids such as crude oil or diesel. Calvert's GTL process has been recognized by The World Bank's "Global Gas Flaring Reduction Partnership" (GGFR) as one of the leading technologies in small scale GTL for flare gas recovery.

The patented Gliding Plasma Arc Reformer embedded within the GTL process requires no pre-treatment or separation of feed gas, accommodates condensates and is low power consuming. Calvert's modular design focus on standardized and truckable modules, currently in two sizes of 50 and 100 barrels per day (BPD).

SOS Chairman and MHD Chief Investment Officer, Mohammed Abdullah Al Kharusi was present during the signing and noted, "The world is transitioning towards a more sustainable future. The small-scale GTL technology will help clients not only to achieve their de-carbonization target, but also improve In-Country Value by creating 'zero-Sulphur' synthetic fuels locally and drive forward Oman's 2040 vision.

Special Oilfield Services CEO, Zahar Saud Al Busaidi commented, "We are extremely pleased to sign a license agreement for this revolutionary technology. Along with our partners EN Global, we look forward in supporting our esteemed Oil and Gas clients fulfil their commitment to reduce flare/stranded gas to zero, by producing the first barrels of synthetic fuels in Oman and monetizing what was once considered a waste product. The Calvert GTL pilot plant will be the first of its kind in the Middle East and North Africa region and we look forward to installing many more plants in the future."

Gas flaring, the process of burning-off associated gas from oil wells and hydrocarbon processing plants either as a means of disposal or as a safety measure, is today recognized as a major environmental problem, contributing some millions of tons of CO2 emissions worldwide. It also has major economic implications, with significant volumes of a valuable natural resource being wasted.

EN Global CEO, Mark A. Hess stated, "Our acquisition of this revolutionary Calvert GTL technology has the potential to be transformational for ENG and this design-build technology provides an attractive flare recovery solution for clients, both in the US and abroad. We are extremely pleased to partner with SOS to provide small scale GTL plants in Oman and are confident that this solution will provide



Omani Energy companies a cost-effective and environmentally preferable alternative to flaring gas."

The 50 BPD plant is designed to convert approximately 500,000 standard cubic feet per day (SCFD) of flare or stranded natural gas and the 100 BPD plant is designed to convert approximately 1,000,000 SCFD of flare or stranded natural gas. Calvert's GTL technology is a scalable system for larger flare and stranded gas sites. SOS and ENG believe the first plant can be delivered in six months and that, after starting production, SOS and ENG would be able to build in excess of 50 plants per year. The GTL plants will be built in a controlled shop environment and delivered to the flare or gas feed site for quick installation.

About SOS
Special Oilfield Services (SOS) was incorporated in March 1986 as a Joint Venture between Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC (MHD), one of the largest and oldest business houses in Oman and Al Mansoori Petroleum Services (AMPS), one of the largest oilfield companies operating in the Middle East. Further information about the Company and its businesses is available at www.specialoilfield.com.

About ENG
ENG (NASDAQ:ENG) is a leading provider of complete project solutions for renewable and traditional energy throughout the United States and internationally. Further information about the Company and its businesses is available at www.englobal.com.

Duqm SEZ strengthens local road network

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) has awarded contract to Al Rawas & Al Hashemi Contracting for the construction of 13 km of internal roads in the commercial district of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

The package of works will connect the commercial district with the Rock Garden, Sayy Road and National Road 32, among other landmarks. Eng Yahya bin KhamisalZadjali, in charge of managing the operations of Duqm SEZ said, "The construction of internal roads project for the commercial district is one of the components of the road network within the master plan for the development of the zone. It will also complement OPAZ's plans to provide an integrated road network and create a modern urban environment that attracts investment and stimulates commercial movement in the zone."

The project also includes the implementation of a sewage network, car park, sidewalk, special path



for bicycles and other urban amenities. The project plan includes the implementation of paving and improvement works, including preparing secondary roads, construction of a number of internal intersections and the establishment of a number of road barriers and speed bumps.

According to the scope of work, the contractor will install smart street light poles, in addition to preparing a number of outlets designated for charging electric cars and providing telecommunication networks.

Lulu launches ‘Kingdom of Mangoes’ festival

MUSCAT: Lulu Hypermarket Oman has launched ‘Kingdom of Mangoes’ festival across all its stores in Oman. Largely popular among mango-lovers, this mango festival, held from May 24 to June 2, 2022, is a celebration of the King of Fruits and everything about this juicy, golden fruit.

The festival was inaugurated by HE Amit Narang, the Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, at Lulu Hypermarket Bausher, in the presence of Waleed bin Khalfan al Mamari, Director of the Plant Quarantine Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Lulu staff and customers. This festival will showcase several species of the delicious fruit from different parts of the world.

Customers will also be able to relish some of the special mango treats in the hot food, bakery, sweets and grocery section.



Special mango delicacies, pickled mangoes, as well as mango preserves, smoothies, pulps, juices, jellies and jams will also be available during the promotion. As part of the festival, Lulu has

flowed in more than 50 varieties of the tropical fruit from countries across the world, including India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Yemen and more.

The local collection of Omani mangoes is also a part of the highlight of this event. The promotion will also feature great deals and offers on freshly imported selection of mangoes across all Lulu stores.

Shabeer K A, Regional Director – Lulu Hypermarkets, Oman, said, “For the past several years, Lulu has been promoting the festival of mangoes and this year’s ‘Kingdom of Mangoes’ is sure to become a popular event among our customers.

“We have coordinated with our sourcing centres worldwide to help us bring in this delicious fruit for our customers at the most affordable prices. The different varieties of this tropical fruit are equally loved by people of all nationalities.

“We organise mango festival

every year to not just promote the King of Fruits, but also encourage the trading of this fruit worldwide.”

“For this year’s fest, we have stacked up our aisles with a wide range of juicy and scrumptious mangoes, packed with vitamins and fibre, from countries all over the world. Whether in the form of pulps, juices, shakes, ice creams or desserts, this is the perfect opportunity for our customers to indulge in the temptation of these mouth-watering mangoes during the festival,” he added.

Lulu’s state-of-the-art food sourcing network and sophisticated logistics chain help provide and sustain the supply of global products at the most competitive rates. The Group’s excellent combination of high-quality offerings and value for money make it the favourite shopping destination for customers all over the country.

Gazoo racing wins 6 hours of Spa-Francorchamps



MUSCAT: The Gazoo Racing (GR) team earned its first win of the 2022 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) season after an eventful 6 hours of Spa-Francorchamps.

World champions Mike Conway, Kamui Kobayashi, and José María López, driving the No 7 Toyota GR010 Hybrid Electric Hypercar, overcame a strong challenge from Hypercar competitors, as well as adverse weather, to win round two of the 2022 season, the final event before the Le Mans 24 Hours.

With the stunning performance at the 7.004 km circuit in Stavelot, Belgium, the team celebrated its sixth consecutive victory at Spa-Francorchamps with seven wins out of eight races for Toyota GR010 Hybrid Electric since the Hypercar was introduced at Spa in 2021.

The race had started full of promise for the GR team that showcased its unmatched capabilities throughout the stages. As the race progressed, extreme weather conditions led to several off-track incidents, interruptions and red flag periods. However, Mike and Kamui maintained steady performance throughout the race amid the challenges.

Inside the last hour-and-a-half, José María took the wheel of the No 7 Toyota GR010 Hybrid Electric Hypercar for the final stint, which saw a close battle among the three Hypercar contenders amid weather-driven disruptions.

But eventually, José María managed to lead the race’s final stages, especially as track conditions improved continuously and crossed the line after six hours to win by 27.473 seconds from the competitor car.

Bank Muscat continues attractive Baituna Home Finance offer

MUSCAT: As the largest financial services provider in Oman and aligned to its customer-centric vision, Bank Muscat has been providing various financing products to the largest number of customers in Oman, which are in line with their unique needs.

Bank Muscat’s Baituna home finance in particular has been helping large numbers of customers over the years in financing their dream home.

As part of its efforts to improve financial inclusion, the bank is currently offering an attractive interest rate on home finance till June 30, 2022 to select customer segments, who are currently not availing any financing from the bank. New customers can also avail the attractive offer by applying for financing or transferring their existing financing to Bank Muscat.

Omani nationals in government institutions, Tier 1 companies, select government and private sector entities and pensioners are eligible for this special offer, which features low interest rates starting at 4.5 per cent. Customers can use



Baituna financing up to RO 500,000 and for a tenor up to 25 years to construct or purchase new homes or buy land for residential construction.

Bank Muscat customers can take advantage of the fast processing of applications and the excellent insurance coverage for their financing. Flexible payment options and quick documentation makes Baituna the leading home finance in the Sultanate of Oman.

Documents required include ID card, Salary assignment letter, Krooki and Mulkiya copy, valuation of property from an approved evaluator, Sales and Purchase agreement, and seller ID. Construction legalisation (Ebahaa) and maps as well as

Advisory letter and contractor agreement are required in case of construction loans.

Speaking about Baituna, Abdullah bin Tamman al Maashani (pictured), General Manager - Products, said: “Bank Muscat is very keen to provide products and benefits in line with the needs of its customers, and is continuously fine-tuning and developing them.

“We would also like to thank our customers for the strong confidence in our products and services and their valuable feedback, which is helping the bank develop and offer new products that best serve the needs of its customers.

“We would like to encourage all eligible customers to take maximum advantage of this special offer at the earliest in making their dream homes a reality.”

Housing finance development is particularly important in boosting equitable economic growth, enabling households build assets, improving living conditions, empowering a country’s population, and strengthening communities and overall social cohesion.

Khimji Ramdas heralds 25 long-serving employees



MUSCAT: As an organisation that places immense importance on its employees, considering them one of the most valuable assets of the company, Khimji Ramdas Group recently felicitated 25 of its employees for completing 25 years of service.

A total of 397 awardees completed a 25-year tenure between 2010 and 2021. In the 12th edition in 2022, 26 more employees were added to the list, out of which 18 were Omani nationals. As a mark of respect, 25 grammes of gold were given to the employees for their ongoing contribution to the company.

Pankaj Khimji, Director of Khimji Ramdas Group, said, “One of the core pillars of Khimji Ramdas is ‘care’, and that begins with our employees. We have achieved great milestones and the credit, undoubtedly, goes to the unfaltering dedication, professionalism and responsibility that our employees

have demonstrated.

“The inherent values of trust, commitment and learning have been the cornerstone of our success and these beliefs have formed the base of a strong and long-running organisation. While we congratulate all the awardees at the event, we also thank them for their years of loyalty, hard work and faith in the company.”

Meanwhile, Nailesh Khimji, Director, Khimji Ramdas Group, further added saying, “Our employees are the ambassadors of our organisation and play a quintessential role in its success story. On behalf of the entire board of directors, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to everyone who has helped create the strong brand identity of Khimji Ramdas. These contributions are of paramount importance to the continued growth of the organisation and are a mark of passion, perseverance and dedication.”

NBO employees bolster trade finance skillset

MUSCAT: Continuing to foster a market-leading workforce, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has partnered with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Academy to develop its teams’ trade finance skillset.

Members of the bank’s Global Transaction Banking, Trade Finance and Corporate Banking Operations teams will complete the Certified Trade Finance Professional (CTFP) programme in the coming months, developing their expertise in key trade finance products and techniques as well as structured trade solutions as part of the bank’s efforts to meet the dynamic requirements of its

corporate customers.

As the educational arm of the International Chamber of Commerce, the world’s largest business organisation, ICC Academy offers a specialised and internationally-accredited certification for trade professionals designed by leading industry experts. The structured preparation for the certification includes e-learning, lecture-led presentations, case-study discussions, one-on-one coaching and mock assessments, allowing participants to develop a wide range of expertise.

Mohammed bin Yahya al Jabri, Head of Global Transaction



Banking at NBO, said, “At NBO, we invest heavily in upgrading our staff members’ skillsets to make sure that they remain ahead of the curve and are able to continue to serve our customers better. We

are delighted to team up with ICC Academy to offer this industry-recognised specialty training programme as we reinforce our commitment to ensuring that corporate clients are supported by

our team of dynamic and highly-skilled professionals. This credible certification will sure add value to our customers and develop the expertise of our employees to become well-rounded bankers capable of advising and assisting with both traditional and complex solutions.”

The programme is one of many strategic interventions launched by NBO’s Academy of Excellence, which has been helping its employees meet their professional goals while serving a diverse clientele, ranging from small- to mid-sized local businesses to large conglomerates, multi-nationals and government entities.



Omantel, PDO and Al Mouj receive Customer Experience awards



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 25

Organisations that have effectively invested in the digitisation of their CX journey and made a mark to that effect were recognised at the Customer Experience Live and Intelligent Automation Show Middle East. Omani organisations fetching top honours for their exemplary CX, AI and digital performances included Omantel, Petroleum Development Oman and Al Mouj Muscat.

Winning two prestigious awards namely Best Service Delivery Telecom and Best Intelligent Automation Project in Telecom, Talal bin Said al Maamari, CEO, Omantel said, "As far as automation is concerned, delivering high value to our customers through operational excellence is vital to us. Some of the opportunities lie in accelerated digitisation of products and services as we transition towards the future."

Similarly, bagging the Best Intelligent Automation Project in Oil and Gas and Intelligent Automation Leader of the Year Oil and Gas awards, Saud Zakwani, Head of Data Science, Petroleum Development Oman said, "With hyper-automation and continuous improvement a key priority, intelligent automation is the common winning strategy being leveraged by organisations to transform processes and deliver bottom line impacts.

At PDO, we are combining traditional automation methods with intellectual assets and data science to achieve agility and be a dynamic organisation."

Investments in CX technology are all set to soar as 74% organisations in the Middle East plan to invest more than \$200,000 in 2022, revealed the Intelligence Report launched on the sidelines of the Customer Experience Live and Intelligent Automation Shows Middle East held in Dubai over two days that concluded on May 25.

Organised by Customer Experience Live, a unique digital platform, the event dedicated to the regional CX industry saw over 600 senior leaders gather and share insights on how they transformed CX and automation into a growth lever for their organisations.

Providing key insights on regional CX industry the report states that 62 per cent companies plan to revisit their long-term CX strategies while 40 per cent plan to make significant investments within a year.

Speaking at the launch, Ayusha Tyagi, Managing Director, Customer Experience Live, said, "As organisations seek to increase customer understanding, improve loyalty and reduce churn rate, 48 per cent believe that digital transformation implementation or expanding AI, chatbots, analytics and cloud capabilities are of utmost importance to meet consumer demand and enhance the experience."

Omantel signs MoU with Microsoft to accelerate innovation

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 25

Omantel signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Microsoft to collaborate on driving business value and accelerating ICT innovation to support the telco's digital transformation strategy, streamline and improve services across the Sultanate of Oman.

Microsoft will work with Omantel to develop the necessary foundational capabilities required for their workforce, assist with streamline operations and business support systems, transform customer experience, optimise next-gen networks and accelerate innovation and growth.

The rapid acceleration towards a progressively digital society and changing customer expectations are driving an increased need for innovation to ensure a fully connected environment, said an official of Omantel.

"This strategic collaboration with Microsoft will serve to reinforce our ICT transformation efforts to build a connected community fortified by innovation in the Sultanate of Oman, enabling an improved customer experience for both consumers



and enterprises alike."

Microsoft Oman and Bahrain Country Manager, Saif bin Hilal al Hosni said; "As a trusted digital transformation and digitisation partner, we are committed to helping our customers accelerate innovation and build new revenue streams by leveraging powerful advanced technologies such as 5G. By uniting our innovations with Omantel's expertise we will be able to ensure greater resilience and efficiencies for consumers and businesses across Oman.

This new agreement builds on our longstanding partnership with Omantel to accelerate technology adoption and empower people

and organisations in the country to achieve more."

Under the new agreement, Microsoft will engage with regional and international solution providers to bring the latest global innovations in digital transformation, digitisation, cloud adoption, big data and data science, AI, cybersecurity, capacity building and skilling to the Sultanate of Oman.

Microsoft and Omantel will partner on the development of ideation workshops with technical and business stakeholders to evaluate various technology ideas and proposals within a high-level implementation roadmap

and collaborate on the delivery of technology awareness sessions centred around new Microsoft technologies in sports innovation, go to market planning and development of the start-up and entrepreneurship ecosystem in Oman.

Omantel will provide support for the required cloud infrastructure to host the technology workshops and proof of concept, facilitate the connection with business and technical stakeholders in target departments and provide technical and financial support — as needed — for the potential implementation of the different solutions.

SHORT TAKES

Huawei launches innovative cloud services

MUSCAT: At the 31st edition of Comex 2022, Huawei, a leading global provider of information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and smart devices, officially launched its innovative cloud services in the Sultanate of Oman.

The company also highlighted how Huawei Cloud can accelerate digital transformation in the public and finance sectors through 'Everything as a Service' model, which can minimise operational expenditure, increase efficiency and further accelerate the construction of agile capability systems.

Frank Dai (pictured), President, Huawei Cloud Middle East, said in his keynote speech, "Huawei believes



that cloud transformation is inevitable. It is the future of ICT and the foundation of digital transformation.

Huawei adheres to an 'Everything as a Service' model and provides multiple types of cloud to meet customer requirements across various sectors. Huawei is committed to working with partners and customers in Oman to accelerate digital transformation across industries", he added.

CBO, CMA ink pact to support collaboration on fintech innovation and technology



MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) and the Capital Market Authority (CMA) signed an agreement to support collaboration in the field of innovation and technology in the financial sector (FinTech) on May 24, 2022.

Tahir bin Salim al Amri, the Executive President of CBO, signed the agreement with Shaikh Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi, Executive President of CMA, in this regard. The collaboration programme will enable the two organisations to enhance and promote innovation in the sector by using new technology. It also aims at developing the regulatory and supervisory processes and the exchange of expertise, as well as creating an environment that facilitates and fosters innovations in providing financial services in the Sultanate of Oman.

It was signed on the sidelines of CBO and CMA's participation in the 31st edition of Oman's Information Technology and Communication Exhibition (COMEX) 2022. A special zone titled, "FinTech and Banking Pavilion", features a number of participating financial and banking institutions.

Promising prospects for renewable energy in Oman

MARYAM AHMED AL NOFLI

The energy sector of the Sultanate of Oman has been identified as a promising sector for economic diversification during the 10th five-year development plan (2021-2025). It is also the first operational plan for Oman's Vision 2040 in which renewable energy is one of the pivotal pillars to provide support for meeting the escalating energy requirements of the country.

Indeed, the development of various advanced technologies, mechanisms and government incentives encouraged many countries to pursue renewable energy policies.

However, the growth of renewable energy utilisation is generally poor in the Middle East, particularly in the Sultanate

of Oman. It may be due to subsidised electricity tariffs, lack of appropriate fiscal promotion strategies and poor support for private installation, besides a general distrust of renewable power.

As part of the Sultanate of Oman's strategy for renewable energy integration and enhancing economic diversification, the National Energy Strategy (2020-2030) aims to ensure energy security, sustainability, affordability and better utilisation of local energy resources.

The country has realised that the utilisation of renewable energy sources can be viewed as a key element for national level energy suppliers, besides, a strategic opportunity to contribute to global initiatives against climate change, CO2 emissions and depletion of fossil fuel reserves.

Today, the Sultanate of Oman's



electricity demand is met mainly by fossil fuels, especially natural gas.

According to current research, several factors such as the rise in fossil fuel cost, reduction in capital cost of renewable energy conversion systems and development of reliable technologies can play a role in reducing the cost gap between power from fossil fuels and renewable energy.

Oman's exceptional geographical location, which is accessible by land, air and sea, draws the attention of major energy investors and related sectors.

Moreover, Oman has been found as one of the countries which have high solar irradiance. The desert areas are more solar-intensive than coastal regions. Due to humidity, dust and low rain, solar energy can only be produced

by means of photo-voltaic systems (PV) for electricity production in northern and rural desert areas.

PV systems are highly suitable for electricity generation in rural desert areas since solar energy would reduce diesel fuel consumption.

However, Oman has limited potentials for electricity production from wave, tidal and geothermal resources. Regardless, renewable energy is a key element for sustainable development and job creation.

According to the present strategy, the country intends to obtain at least 2,660 MW of renewable power from 2021 to 2027. Of this total, solar PV and wind account for 79 per cent and 21 per cent respectively. The first of two new wind-based power projects are expected to be operational by 2024. Further, a considerably larger project of 200

MW is expected in Duqm by 2024.

Last November, the Sultanate of Oman's first wind farm (Dhofar 1 Wind IPP), a 50 MW complex was launched in Harweel, Dhofar Governorate. The Barka WTE IPP, a Waste to Energy project with a maximum capacity of 160 MW and a projected completion date of 2025, is part of the renewables pipeline.

Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWP) foresees the potential for a 600 MW Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) project with thermal storage in Duqm.

Dhofar Governorate may also see more wind projects by 2025. All these constructive steps taken in the energy sector demonstrate the prospects of sustainable energy generation and utilisation in Oman. *(The writer is staff at University of Technology and Applied Sciences — Shinas)*

Globalisation under the spotlight at Davos

The question of whether the coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine have sounded the death knell for globalisation has dominated the World Economic Forum in Swiss resort Davos.

Some believe the crises have unleashed an opportunity for a transformation of international trade and supply chains as the world economy slows down.

Once advocated by anti-globalisation movements, far from the quiet rooms at Davos, talk of “deglobalisation” is back in the face of supply chain disruptions linked to the Ukraine conflict and lockdowns in China.

In the hope of building stronger networks unaffected by crises like war, deglobalisation would mean bringing production back closer to home, thus allowing the movement of goods across shorter distances.

The issue has become acute after Covid-19 and the misery at Shanghai port.

The Chinese city has become a symbol of global supply chain woes after its factories were closed for weeks and containers piled up as China sticks stubbornly to a zero-Covid strategy, causing delivery delays worldwide.

And since Russia’s war against Ukraine, global food prices have hit an all-time high as the two countries make up a huge share of the globe’s exports in several major commodities, like wheat.

Such snags are leading many, including the world’s biggest companies, to consider what production should look like in the future.

Globalisation is “temporarily pausing”, Loic Tassel, president for Europe at the consumer goods giant Procter & Gamble, said.

“The price to pay or the time to wait is not compatible anymore with our industry,” Tassel said, giving the example of Shanghai, which is the world’s busiest container port.

“We are now bringing into the equation the cost and resilience of the supply chain, it was not in our mind three years ago,” he said.

But rather than talk about “deglobalisation”, Pamela Coke-Hamilton, director of the Geneva-based agency International Trade Centre, preferred to speak about diversification and relocalisation — where supply chains are closer and in areas where conflict is far away.

“The change will come by the shifting to near sourcing value chains,” she said. — AFP

IN THE HOPE OF BUILDING STRONGER NETWORKS UNAFFECTED BY CRISES LIKE WAR, DEGLO-BALISATION WOULD MEAN BRINGING PRODUCTION BACK CLOSER TO HOME, THUS ALLOWING THE MOVEMENT OF GOODS ACROSS SHORTER DISTANCES



‘OIL EYES’ ON YOU

Demonstrators from the climate change activist group Extinction Rebellion demonstrate outside of Methodist Central Hall in central London, where the Annual General Meeting (AGM) for Shell is taking place. Oil giant Shell was on Tuesday forced to temporarily suspend its annual general meeting because of disruption from climate change activists. — AFP

Oman and Brazil work to strengthen economic relations



HAIDER AL LAWATI
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The author is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for the CBO and OCCI.

THE VISIT WOULD OPEN UP NEW AREAS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN OMANI AND BRAZILIAN COMPANIES IN SEVERAL FIELDS

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry received a high-level Brazilian economic delegation headed by Flavio Augusto Rocha, Minister of Strategic Affairs of the Republic of Brazil, and a number of officials in government institutions and private companies. He spoke with me on several issues that dealt with relations and future work.

On the objectives of the Brazilian economic visit to the Sultanate of Oman, he stressed the importance of the visit, which is the first for the economic and commercial delegation to the country, and expressed his admiration for what he saw and what the Sultanate of Oman achieved in all spheres of economic development.

He also described the Sultanate of Oman as a model country, noting that the country has a well-deserved reputation in international forums for its foreign policies, and for its pursuit of peace and reconciliation in the resolution of international disputes in accordance with the principles of the United Nations.

The minister also stressed that the aim of this visit is to strengthen contacts with private institutions to explore commercial,

agricultural and fisheries business opportunities, and forge new partnerships between Brazilian and Omani businessmen.

He added that the visit would open up new areas of cooperation between Omani and Brazilian companies in several fields. He said that Brazil and the Sultanate of Oman have close relations, and that the two parties are working to diversify sources of income and enhance cooperation with the world, where there is homogeneity in this matter by offering more initiatives that serve society.

He also stressed the interest of business owners and investors to learn about investment opportunities in both countries.

Like the Sultanate of Oman, Brazil too is working to attract foreign investments in various productive projects, he said. In this regard, he noted that the 99 investment projects unveiled by Omani authorities recently, would be an opportunity for Brazilian companies to explore as well.

For its part, Brazil has succeeded in attracting \$129 billion worth of investments in specific projects over the past few years, said Rocha.

“We would like to attract Omani investments in some feasible projects, especially food, that both parties can

benefit from in the future through develop strategic policies for these investments and opportunities in several sectors, including energy, mining and others,” he stated.

The minister explained that the value of Brazilian exports to the Sultanate of Oman amounted to \$1.546 billion in 2021, while Omani exports to Brazil during the same year amounted to about \$692 million.

In the field of training, Brazilian institutions and companies have employed innovative approaches in their offerings, he said.

“We have educational and training fields for young people and other groups, and we help everyone who want to obtain training, and we can enhance these trends with Omani companies in education and training at various educational and university levels, where we have many experiences.”

Commenting on future cooperation between the two countries, he underlined the potential to support Oman’s economic diversification. He also stressed the importance of forming an Omani trade delegation to visit Brazil, which he hoped would witness first-hand the progress made by Brazil in various fields of economic sectors.

Have we reached the limits to growth?



MICHAEL JACOBS

The author, professor of Political Economy at the University of Sheffield, is a co-author of Growth, Degrowth or Post-Growth? (Forum for a New Economy, 2022).

Fifty years ago this spring, one of the most influential books of the twentieth century was published. Written for the Club of Rome by Donella Meadows and colleagues at MIT, The Limits to Growth used new computer models to forecast an uncontrollable collapse in the global population and economy if prevailing patterns of environmental resource use and pollution continued.

Exponential economic growth could not go on forever; at some point in the next 100 years, it would inevitably run up against Earth’s finite environmental limits. A half-century later, with a climate and environmental crisis upon us, the debate triggered by The Limits to Growth has returned with a vengeance.

In 1972, the book came under immediate fire from economists who claimed that its authors failed to understand basic economics. If a resource becomes scarce, its price will rise, they pointed out.

Other resources will then be substituted for it, and it will be used more efficiently. Technological innovation will lead to new, cleaner methods of production. Far from leading to social collapse, economic growth was thus self-correcting, not to mention the only way for countries to develop out of poverty.

So confident were mainstream economists that The Limits to Growth was wrong that one of them, Julian Simon, made a bet with the environmentalist Paul R. Ehrlich about the price of five metals over the following decade.

Ehrlich bet that their prices

would rise as they became scarcer, Simon predicted that they would become cheaper as other materials were substituted for them. Simon won the bet on all five.

But the scarcity of metals, or even fossil fuels, was never really what The Limits to Growth was about.

As ecological economists Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen and Herman Daly pointed out, the reason physical limits to growth exist is that the planet’s biosphere cannot grow exponentially. Cut down trees faster than they can grow, and deforestation will result.

Take more land for agriculture, and species will disappear. Pump carbon dioxide into the atmosphere faster than it can be absorbed, and the planet will heat up.

Simon may have won his ten-year bet, but over the past half-

century the predictions in The Limits to Growth have proven remarkably robust.

More recent scientific research has shown that, for a range of core life-support systems, including the climate, we are fast approaching, or in some cases may now have exceeded, the “planetary boundaries” within which humanity can safely prosper.

Mainstream economists recognise this, of course. But they note that economic growth is measured in terms of national income and output (GDP), and there is not a simple relationship between these indicators and environmental degradation.

Using renewable energy, recycling waste, and shifting consumption from goods to services can make economic growth much less environmentally

damaging.

We can, therefore, have “green growth”: Higher living standards and a healthier environment, too. Over the past decade, green growth has become the official objective of all the major multilateral economic institutions, including the World Bank and the OECD.

Rich countries’ CO2 emissions have indeed fallen in recent years, even as their economies have grown. But much of this apparent decoupling of GDP growth from environmental damage has been achieved by transferring emissions to China and other emerging economies that now produce most manufactured goods.

And in other areas, including deforestation, fish stocks and soil depletion, there has been little or no absolute decoupling.

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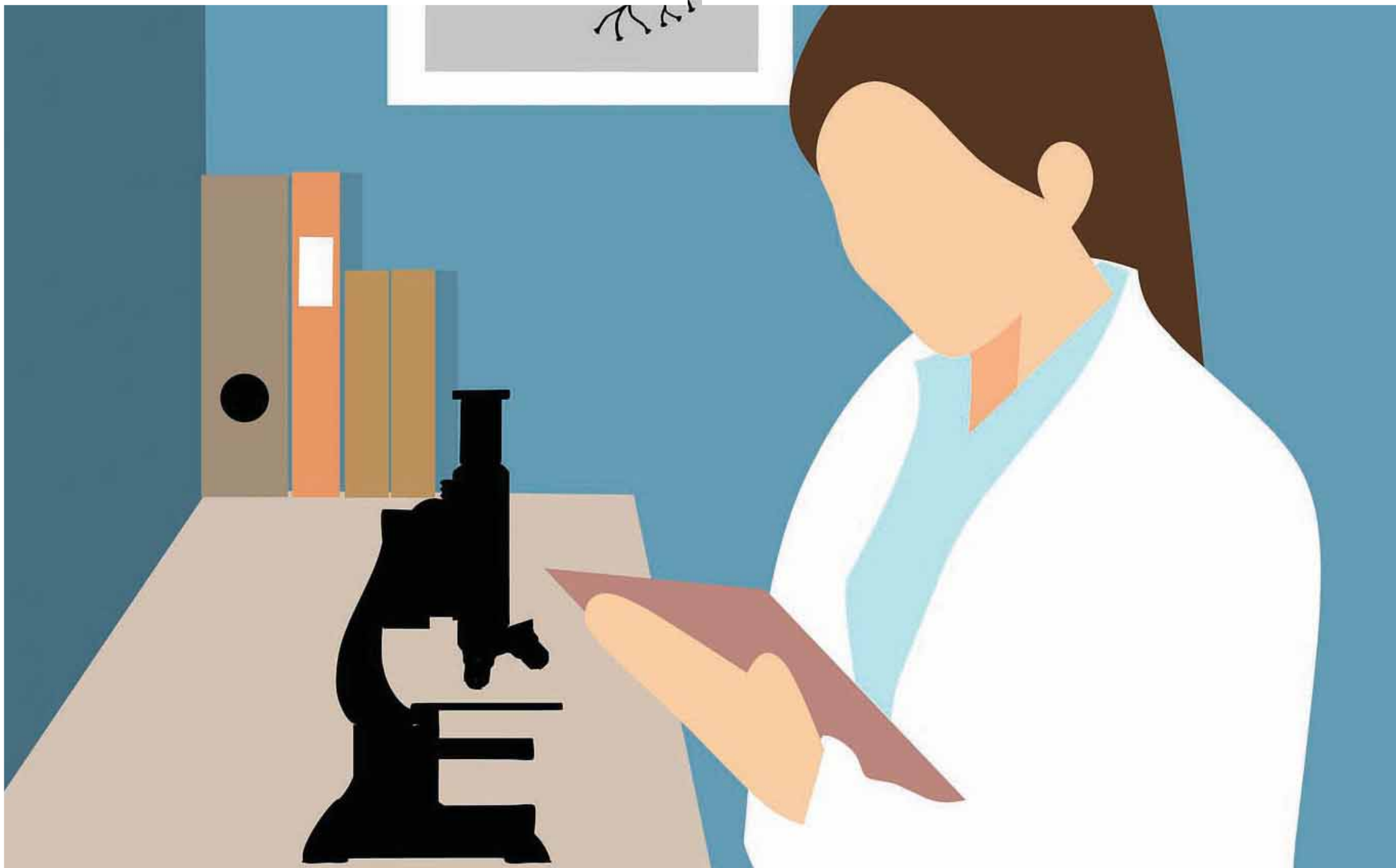
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Omani students working on solution to global plastic problem

By Arwa al Hashimi

With proper support and mentorship, the next great minds providing solutions to global environmental problems may come from Oman and based on recent performance, Neam al Harrasi and Duaa al Hashimi may just be two of the talented young environmentalist leading the way.

Both girls recently brought laurels to the Sultanate of Oman by winning fourth place at the

prestigious Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF 2022).

The ISEF 2022 was held in the United States of America, Georgia from May 7 to 13 with the participation of 1,700 pre-college students from over 80 countries showcasing different innovations and ideas in science, chemistry, bioengineering and other scientific fields.

It all started in 2019 when the students were working on a project to make bioplastic to solve many environmental problems that are destroying the

environment and badly affecting living creatures. In the last two years, even with the challenges of Covid-19, the students dedicated their time to developing their project trying to improve it to come up with the appropriate form of biodegradable bioplastic that can make an excellent replacement for industrial plastic.

This bioplastic is made from environmentally safe and natural materials and was tested on fruits and vegetables. The result was that this type of plastic succeeded in preserving them for a longer period than industrial plastic. Being biodegradable, the plastic can be converted into fertiliser which means that they have more uses than just fruit preservation.

They participated in the Cognitive Development Programme in the Sultanate of Oman which is a programme for

students in mathematics, science and environmental geography concepts. They got the first in Oman and they were nominated to participate at the ISEF Fair thereafter.

To develop the project, Duaa and Neam invented the smart refrigerator that sprays liquid bioplastic on fruits and vegetables to keep them fresh for longer. The refrigerator enables its users to control its humidity and temperature via phone.

The girls faced many challenges during their creation process but they only have eyes for the prize. As school students, they didn't have the same access to large materials as large plastic companies so they were forced to work with what they had. They were making the plastic manually until they got a proper machine. They have started to do all their work in the school laboratory and after a

while, they got support from Sultan Qaboos University and other related companies to continue their research and experiments. Not to forget that finding the proper sample of the bioplastic wasn't an easy task and it took a lot of time.

Such a remarkable achievement is a cause of pride for the girls and Oman as a whole. The girls both admitted that all of their achievements weren't possible without the help of teacher Thikra, the girls' supervisor who was always there for them along the journey.

Both girls are dreaming of creating their own company to produce biodegradable bioplastic that would help prevent further soil degradation and water pollution and produce products that would become great alternatives for harmful industrial plastic.

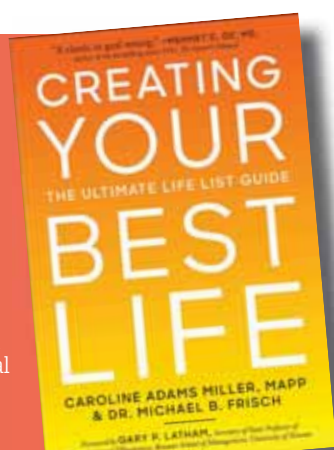


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'Play' takes the art of elite sport and creates a mesmerising show exploring themes

of competition, spectating, emotional connections and the fantastical in a production which is both sophisticated and personal.

A thrilling production for the whole family to enjoy. The performance will take place at the Royal Opera House Muscat. Enjoy an evening concert on Thursday, May 26 or Friday 27 at 7.30 pm and a matinee performance at 4 pm on Saturday, May 28.

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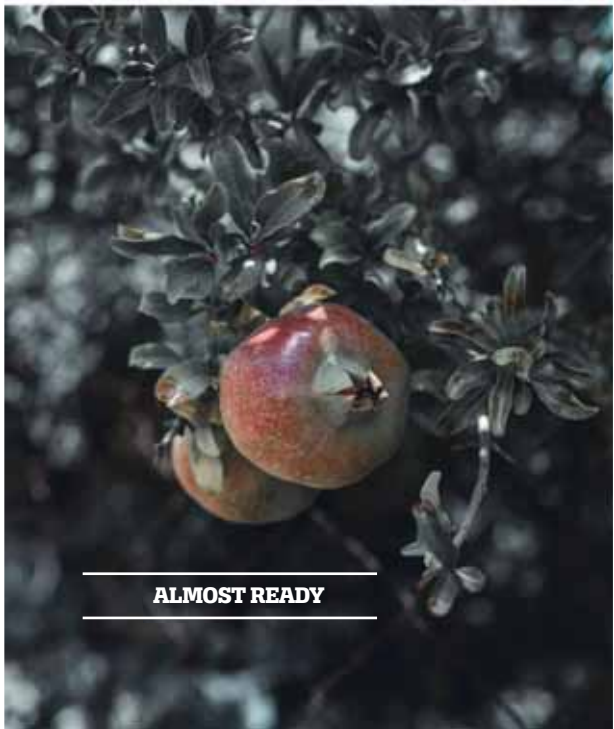
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AROUND THE WORLD

CULTURE

'End of an era' as New York removes last of its iconic payphone booths



MARKING THE end of an era, New York City on Monday removed the last of its storied payphone booths, which have fallen victim to the ubiquity of free Wi-Fi and cell phones in recent years.

But Superman fans can take comfort in the fact that Manhattan will keep four of the defunct booths, made famous as the impromptu changing rooms for journalist Clark Kent as he transformed into the Man of Steel.

Over the decades, the phone booths have featured widely in pop culture, from comic books to Hollywood blockbusters and TV shows.

That ended Monday morning, when, in front of assembled media, Manhattan borough president — the equivalent of the mayor — Mark Levine had the last booth housing two Bell System payphones at the corner of 7th Avenue and 50th Street dismantled and lifted on to a flatbed truck.

Levine said on Twitter he was "on hand today to say 'Bye Bye' one last time to the famed (infamous?) NYC pay phone."

"I won't miss all the dead dial tones but gotta say I felt a twinge of nostalgia seeing it go," he added.

Fixed-line payphones began disappearing from the streets of New York in the early 2000s as cell phone use spread, and then vanished even faster in the 2010s with the explosion of smartphones.

The final blow came when, in 2015, Manhattan went ahead with the installation of thousands of LinkNYC hotspots offering Wi-Fi and free local calls.

Those new kiosks are to be gradually connected to the emerging 5G network.

"Truly the end of an era but also, hopefully, the start of a new one with more equity in technology access," said Levine, referring to neighborhoods in northern Manhattan, such as Harlem, that are less well covered by telephone and internet networks.

According to local media, Manhattan will keep four of the old-fashioned phone booths on the Upper West Side, on West End Avenue at 66th, 90th, 100th and 101st streets. — AFP

ENTERTAINMENT

Kenya video gamers face uphill battle to make their mark



FOR YEARS, THE virtual world of video games was the only place where Kenyan gamer Brian Diang'a felt safe from his abusive, unhappy home in Kibera, Africa's largest slum.

"Gaming was my only escape," Diang'a said, describing a childhood mired in poverty and violence.

Popularly known by his online avatar Beast, the 28-year-old discovered video games when he was nine.

"My dad had become an alcoholic and he would come back home in a drunken stupor and beat up my mom. Home became somewhere I did not want to be."

His daily visits to gaming dens worried his mother, who believed they were a bad influence on her son and a distraction from his schoolwork.

"I would receive a beating from my mom every time she found me in these gaming parlours," Diang'a said.

Far from being a gateway to the world of drugs and crime, his childhood pursuit has instead taken him to tournaments and offered lucrative opportunities to work with tech brands.

Today, he earns around 50,000 Kenyan shillings (\$430) a month in a country where youth unemployment remains a huge problem.

Diang'a never imagined that his childhood passion could lead to a professional career, until 2013.

"I bumped onto YouTube videos where I saw gamers abroad playing Mortal Kombat — a game that I frequently played to pass time — and getting paid up to \$5000 to compete," he said.

So he decided to try and join their ranks.

UNCONVENTIONAL CAREER

Diang'a is one of several Kenyan gamers trying to find their feet in a multi-billion dollar industry that is slowly making its way onto international platforms such as the inaugural Commonwealth esports championships, which is expected to feature Kenyan participation.

But they are outliers in a society that has traditionally seen academic performance or exceptional athletic ability as the only route to success.

Law graduate Sylvia Gathoni said her gaming accomplishments still surprised her parents.

In 2018, Gathoni, who plays Tekken under the name Queen Arrow, became the first Kenyan gamer to be signed by an international team, and is currently contracted to US-based UYU.

"The older generation has been wired to think that to be successful you have to go through a specified path which is — go to school, work hard in your academics and then pursue a particular career," Gathoni said.

Instead the 25-year-old has travelled around the world to take part in international tournaments featuring some of the biggest names in the industry including France's Marie-Laure Norindr, better known as Kayane.

NO STRUCTURE

But the sector still faces major hurdles in Africa.

The continent has struggled to capitalise on its large youth population — 60 per

cent of Africans are aged under 25, figures that usually attract sponsors drawn to the prospect of a young, growing fan base.

Many players battle slow Internet speeds and time lags compared to their overseas counterparts, who live in developed countries where the vast majority of game servers are located.

Gamers and their dens also encounter police scrutiny in Kenya where the law does not differentiate between esports and gambling.

"In my research, I found that the law needs to catch up with technology — there are a lot of loopholes," said Gathoni, who hopes to specialise in esports law so she can get involved in policy-making.

Furthermore, while Kenyan gamers regularly meet to play informal tournaments and win cash prizes, the absence of any structure makes it difficult for them to pursue the sport professionally. "There's no structure at the moment, it is simply a group of friends who come together to play," said tournament organiser Ronny Lusigi.

"For video gaming to transition into esports, it has to be organised and competitive," he said.

Diang'a, who now mentors young gamers in Kibera and organises tournaments around Kenya, hopes to see video gaming "explode in Africa".

"Gaming kept me sane while everything was falling apart. I want to see more people enter this culture of gaming," he said. — AFP



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

Monkeypox!

WE HAVE ALL BEEN closely following the outbreak of monkeypox in Europe — a rare but potentially severe viral disease with dozens of confirmed or suspected cases in the UK, Spain and Portugal.

In a way, the virus behind monkeypox is very close to the virus that caused smallpox. But it is less deadly and less transmissible and may cause symptoms including fever and rash. In fact, it is endemic to West and Central Africa, where it was first discovered in laboratory monkeys in 1958. But the wild animals that harbour the virus may also be rodents.

On the other hand, these monkeypox outbreaks are also unique because they occur in the third year of the coronavirus pandemic, wherein people and societies are prepared to be more aware of the outbreak of the disease.

Monkeypox is a test of the lessons the world has learned (or not learned!) from the Covid-19 pandemic. To be clear, monkeypox is not like the Covid-19 pandemic, but rather it is a different disease caused by different viruses with different characteristics.

Therefore, according to previous studies, it does not spread easily and does not spread through the air over long distances. Instead it is transmitted through contaminated surfaces or long proximity to other people, which is why most outbreaks of the disease have been small.

Of course, one vaccine against smallpox may also be effective in preventing monkeypox at a high rate.

In spite of this, monkeypox patients usually receive only supportive care, but there is a potential treatment that exists and has been developed (Tecovirimat) to treat smallpox for example, it would probably work for monkeypox too!

Here, I must stress that monkeypox may not spread the way the coronavirus did, but for those who catch it, it remains a severe disease. If some-

one gets sick, they often get sick for two to four weeks.

It is therefore essential to identify people early, get treatment and identify contacts, especially since the common symptoms are: a rash that looks like an extreme version of smallpox. But unlike smallpox, a monkeypox rash is usually preceded by a fever.

On the other hand, what is curious here for me is that the incubation period between infection and symptoms is long — for monkeypox — ranging from five to 21 days and it is not uncommon to see this number of cases in more than three countries at the same time.

It is true that many of the current cases of monkeypox have appeared in men who are considered gay, or men who have sex with men, which is indeed an unusual pattern not encountered in previous studies or heard of in previous monkeypox outbreaks. Does this raise questions about a new method of transmission, especially since sex here involves close and prolonged contact?

In the end, more cases may continue to be revealed during the coming period, especially since the current infections may have been the result of those large groups of people gathering recently in a major event such as the one we heard about and their transmission of the virus to their countries or that it was previously spread without anyone realising it and then during that gathering or party has become contagious. The most important thing is that it will not be similar to the situation we lived through with the coronavirus pandemic. Perhaps the best thing to do now is to make sure that society is aware of what monkeypox looks like.

Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla is a physician, medical innovator and a writer.

art & life

Local Scene

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THURSDAY | MAY 26 | 2022



With love, from Iran

By Kabeer Yousuf

Oman is her foster mother and her love for the country is incessant as it grows perpetually that she is continuously drawing the portraits Oman and Iran

rulers.

Meet Iranian artist Nakisa Samadi who has created a collection of graphic artworks of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik al Said, inspired by his personality, and his love for his country and fellow beings.

"I'm truly touched by the efforts of

the Sultanate of Oman in promoting peace and harmony al which have been recognised internationally. And as an artist, I'm so influenced by the charismatic leadership of the country that I draw paintings of Oman and portraits of the ruler," said

Her brush and pallette first drew the then ruler, His Late Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said after a long study of the art and culture scenarios of Oman. Her works grab the royal interest in cultural matters and all her works are subtly conveying this message.

Nakisa uses a range of specialised graphic techniques and hyperrealism in her pursuit of art. She makes use of acrylics, patina and golden leaf, besides other media, over graphic images to create the collection on His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

"My aim is to express my admiration

and devotion to the two towering personalities of the Sultanate of Oman," she adds.

Her efforts bore fruits last year and for the first time, her works were exhibited in Oman. A two-day exhibition opened by Her Highness Sayyidah Hujaija al Said was organised at Mysk by Shaza in Al Mouj Muscat aimed at shedding light on the diplomatic ties between Oman and Iran.

"The two friendly countries have enjoyed good neighbourly relations since many decades and we are grown with the strong bonds," Nakisa said.

She has high regards for Omanis for their interest in art and culture and their unified love and loyalty for their leader His Majesty Sultan Haitham.

"Their attention to art technique and style surprised me. Please accept my gratitude to all Omani people for their lovely reaction to my artworks."

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