

HM greets Russia, Philippines leaders

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent greetings to President Vladimir Putin on the occasion of the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Russia. His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Putin, and further progress and prosperity to the friendly Russian people. HM also sent greetings to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr of the Philippines on the occasion of his country's Independence Anniversary.



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MAN CITY TRIUMPH WRITTEN IN THE STARS



P15

MOCIIP STREAMLINES INVESTMENT PROCEDURES IN OMAN



P18

DESPITE WINNING CULINARY CONTEST, THIS FEMALE OMANI CHEF SAYS JOURNEY IS JUST BEGINNING



DHOFAR, MUSANDAM, AL BATINAH SOUTH WIN BIG PROJECTS

TOP THREE

THE BOULEVARD SPRAY



RO 40M

in Salalah's Itin, Dhofar

1,500 JOBS

AMES BAY DEVELOPMENT



RO 6.9M

in Khasab, Musandam

62 JOBS

THE REMAL PARK



RO 6.9M

in Nakhal, Al Batinah South

344 JOBS

AFRAH AL BALUSHI @afrahalbalushia

To spur urban growth in line with Oman Vision 2040, project proposals of three governorates were chosen in a contest.

The chosen proposals are the Boulevard Spray project in Dhofar, Ames Bay Development project in Musandam and the Remal Park project in Al Batinah South will be implemented in coordination between the government and the private sector, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning said on Sunday.

This was unveiled at an open meeting between the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning's officials and governors in Muscat on Sunday.

The Boulevard Spray project will be implemented at a cost of RO 40 million in Salalah's Itin. The project, which is expected to be complete in four years, will cover 470,000 square metres, and will feature fountains, restaurants, botanical garden, suspended walkways, theatres, shopping area, event space, exhibitions, etc.

The project aims to create an integrated entertainment venue for all local and international community groups in accordance with the customs and traditions of Oman. It aims to activate the



role of institutions and society to promote local tourism.

It will receive about 800,000 visitors during the fall season and 200,000 visitors during the rest of the seasons, and it will provide 1,500 jobs.

The RO 6.9 million Ames Bay Development in Musandam's Al Khalidiya area in the Wilayat of Khasab, which is scheduled to be completed in less than two years, will provide strategic link between the various regions of the governorate. It will develop infrastructure, stimulate tourism and create new investment opportunities in the governorate. It will receive 500,000 visitors annually and will provide 62 jobs.

The Remal Park project in the Khabbat Al Jaadan area in the Wilayat of Nakhal, in Al Batinah South Governorate, overlooking Wadi Al Abyadh, is expected to be ready in two years. Costing RO 6.9 million, the project aims to

develop sustainable tourism and will employ small and medium-sized companies, thereby achieving in-country value. It will include an amusement park, cable car, resort, food truck and shops, among others.

The project is expected to receive 15,000 visitors per week and will provide 344 jobs.

The MoHUP stated that the projects are in line with the royal directives that all units of the state's administrative apparatus should coordinate with the governorates in all matters related to the affairs of their governorates.

Eleven projects from all governorates were submitted for the contest.

After the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning evaluates the top three winning projects and approves them, the Ministry of Finance provides financial allocations for them.

Oman-Saudi efforts on Yemen hailed

RIYADH: The Sultanate of Oman on Sunday chaired the 156th session of the GCC Ministerial Council, which was held at the GCC Secretariat-General in Riyadh. Oman's delegation was led by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister.

The meeting focused on the path of implementing decisions of the GCC Supreme Council, aiming at enhancing the joint Gulf action. The GCC Ministerial



Council has welcomed the efforts made by the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to revive the political process

in Yemen, paving the way for a comprehensive and lasting solution.

At its 156th session meeting held at the headquarters of the General-Secretariat in Riyadh, the GCC Ministerial Council also valued existing contacts with all Yemeni parties, the outcome of the meetings that took place in Sanaa between April 8 to 13, as well as the ensuing positive atmosphere that prevailed later.

TURN TO P2



Fahd receives Egyptian minister

HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers receives Dr Mohammed Mokhtar Goma, Minister of Awqaf of Egypt in Muscat on Sunday. **REPORT ON P2**

PHOTO BY MOHAMMED AL RASHDI

Oman set to be world's largest hydrogen exporter

PARIS: The Sultanate of Oman is on its way to become one of the largest exporters of hydrogen in the world by 2030, a recent report reveals. The report, issued jointly by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and the International Energy Agency (IEA), demonstrated Oman's competitive potential as a hub for renewable energy and hydrogen.

Oman has allocated an area of more than 50,000 square kilometres in Al Wusta and Dhofar for green hydrogen projects to be floated in stages. This is in addition to 15,000 square kilometres in other governorates for clean energy projects. Oman plans to produce more than one million tons of green hydrogen by 2030. The plan provides for the exploitation (by the year 2050) of up to 30 per cent of the land allocated, to produce about 8 million tonnes. **SEE ALSO P15**



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OMAN, EGYPT DISCUSS ENDOWMENTS COOPERATION

HH Sayyid Fahd receives Egyptian Minister of Awqaf

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers today received Dr Mohammed Mokhtar Goma, Minister of Awqaf of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

At the beginning of the meeting, the guest conveyed greetings of the Egyptian leadership and best wishes to the leadership in the Sultanate of Oman, wishing the Omani people further progress and prosperity. He also asserted the attention accorded by the Arab Republic of Egypt to its distinguished relations with the Sultanate of Oman in several spheres.

After welcoming the guest, HH Sayyid Fahd reviewed the course of the advanced relations binding the two countries, thanks to the firm ties binding the two leaderships and their brotherly peoples.

Conversation during the meeting reviewed the relations of bilateral cooperation between the two countries and the joint interest in issues of concern to the Islamic world and stability of its countries, as well as the benign efforts exerted in various fields. The meeting also highlighted the real image of Islam at all levels.

The Egyptian Minister of Awqaf commended the wise, balanced policy pursued by the Sultanate of Oman, as well as its positive role in backing efforts of understanding and constructive dialogue among countries to support security and stability. He also underscored the importance of the talks he conducted with the Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs in Oman, as well as their positive reflections on the existing cooperation between the two countries.

The meeting was attended by Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf



and Religious Affairs and Khalid Mohammed Abdulhalim Radhi, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the Sultanate of Oman.

Also, Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najar, Minister of Social Development met with Dr Goma and his accompanying delegation. The meeting discussed a set of topics of mutual interest, particularly in

the areas of social work. It was attended by a number of officials at the Ministry of Social Development.

Meanwhile, an official session of talks was held in Muscat today between the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs and the Egyptian Ministry of Awqaf. The session covered means of

enhancing aspects of cooperation in areas of endowments and religious affairs, as well as exchanging expertise.

The Omani side was chaired by Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, whereas Dr Mohammed Mokhtar Goma, Minister of Awqaf chaired the Egyptian side.

During the session, the two sides discussed ways of exchanging expertise and information related to legislations, laws and systems in the fields of Awqaf and Religious Affairs.

They also stressed the importance of coordinating efforts and stances to demonstrate tolerance as a pillar of Islam. They further discussed the potential of exchanging scholars, preachers, researchers, training experiences, publications and research issued by both sides.

During the session, a visual presentation was given on the systems and programmes of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. — ONA



Oman-Saudi efforts on Yemen hailed

FROM PAGE 1
The council hoped that such steps will lead to action to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people, as well as a cease-fire.

Sayyid Badr underscored the GCC's firm determination to pursue the process of integration between its member states through more coordination in all fields, with the prime aim of realising the aspirations of GCC citizens.

The Ministerial Council also welcomed the outcome of the ministerial meeting of the International Coalition to Defeat ISIS (Daesh). In addition, the Ministerial Council welcomed the outcome of the Gulf-European Conference on Combating Extremist Ideology.

The GCC Ministerial Council took note of the outcome of a workshop organised on 29 May by Qatar on Islamophobia in the world.

PALESTINE
Commenting on the Palestinian cause, the GCC Ministerial Council affirmed its steadfast positions on supporting the sovereignty of the Palestinian people over all the Palestinian territories occupied since June 1967. It also voiced its unequivocal support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

IRAN
With regard to relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, the GCC Ministerial Council underlined the decisions of the GCC Supreme Council at its 43rd session held in December 2022, as well as solid foundations set for consolidating relations with Iran, notably by fully adhering

to the principles of good neighbourliness and mutual respect.

IRAQ
The GCC Ministerial Council affirmed its firm stands and decisions made with regard to Iraq. The Council also stressed the importance of preserving the integrity and territorial integrity of Iraq, its full sovereignty and the intactness of its Arab and Islamic identity.

SYRIA
The Ministerial Council also affirmed its permanent stance on preserving the territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. In this context, the GCC Ministerial Council voiced its full support for a political solution to the Syrian crisis in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions.

LEBANON
About Lebanon, the Ministerial Council also expressed the GCC's firm positions in support of Lebanon's sovereignty, security and stability.

SUDAN
Regarding Sudan, the Ministerial Council affirmed the GCC positions and decisions for preserving Sudan's security, safety and stability. It also affirmed its keenness on the intactness of Sudan's institutions.

GCC-EGYPT
The GCC Ministerial Council hailed the outcome of a meeting on GCC-Egypt partnership. It stressed the significance of the meeting held on June 5 and underlined the need to pursue the course of integration between the two sides in all fields. — ONA

Development projects to ensure sustainable cities

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The contest for development project seeks to encourage the governorates to set up sustainable cities that are compatible with the National Strategy for Urban Development. It is also expected to boost tourism, provide more entertainment avenues for the people, and generate jobs for the citizens.

Eleven projects from all governorates were submitted for the contest. The projects were evaluated by a committee comprising the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning; the Ministry of Finance; the Ministry of Economy; and the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit.

The committee that assessed the projects during the competition was headed by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning and it comprised members from the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economy and Oman Vision



2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit.

The committee hosted the governors and project operators and listened to their views as they outlined their respective projects.

The open meeting was held in



implementation of the Royal directives of His Majesty the Sultan requiring all units of the State's Administrative Apparatus to coordinate on a regular manner with the governors in all matters pertaining to their governorates.

The aim is to ensure integration in performance and avoid duplication.

During the meeting, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning made a visual presentation about the Sultan

Haitham City project. It elaborated on Royal directives to promote housing assistance programmes and the system of giving addresses.

The meeting dealt with the ministry's future plans and projects within the purview of the urban strategy, projects of the National Initiative for Integrated Residential Neighbourhoods (Sorouh), investment aspects related to land use contracts (usufructs), decentralisation and delegation of powers to directors-general in the governorates.

Other projects submitted by the governorates which took in the contest include the Shatti Al Qurum Park project in the Wilayat of Bausher in Muscat; the DownTown project in the Wilayat

of Al Buraimi in Al Buraimi; the Dakhiliyah Boulevard Project in Farq in the Wilayat of Nizwa, in Al Dakhiliyah; the Difaf Project in the Wilayat of Suhar in North Al Batinah; the Marine Innovation Pier Project in Al Aija in the Wilayat of Sur, in South Al Sharqiyah; Project Resources Market in Wilayat of Sinaw, in Al Sharqiyah North; Ibri Cultural and Entertainment Center Project in Wilayat of Ibri, Al Dhahirah; and Haima Facade Project in the Wilayat of Haima in Al Wusta.

The development projects aims to improve the standard of living of citizens, enhance economic activity and achieve decentralisation in the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

It will contribute to the optimal exploitation of the governorates' resources, balanced development that enhances the comparative and competitive advantage of the governorates.

The initiative will continue in the coming years.



Biparjoy expected to come down to category 2

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

No direct impact on the Sultanate of Oman's weather conditions as tropical cyclone, Biparjoy, located over the Arabian Sea intensified to CAT 3 cyclone and lay centred on latitude 18.4 N and longitude 67.7 E by Sunday afternoon, said National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre.

The only rain that is expected is through the possibility of local cloud formations, said the weather forecaster at Oman Met Office.

But most of the governorates would have advection of clouds.

The wind speed around the centre ranged between 96 to 105 Knots and at that point was 920 km away from the Sultanate of Oman's coast as it moved towards north of India and Pakistan coasts.

The coastal governorates of Oman experienced advection of high and medium clouds and Oman Met Office alerted again on the fact that maximum height could reach 3 to 6 metres along Al Sharqiyah South, Dhofar and Al Wusta with chances for sea water extension to the low level areas.

On Monday, according to the Oman Met Office, the tropical cyclone is expected to decrease to CAT 2, with the wind speed around the centre to range between 83 to 90 knots along with high and meeting clouds advection over most of the governorates, while the Arabian Sea will see wave heights ranging between 3 to 6 metres, and Oman Sea will experience wave height of 2 to 4 metres as well along the coast, with a possibility for inundation of sea water in the low lying areas.

OMAN WINS GOLD IN FIAP YOUTH BIENNIAL



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 11

Omani photographer Nouf al Siyabi emerged victorious with gold medal in the individual under 21 category at the 41st FIAP Youth Biennial held in Norway.

Nouf stated that the achievement propels her further in her photography career with progress

and motivation. She named her award-winning photograph 'Mystery', capturing a candid portrait of a young girl who gazes at the camera with an air of curiosity and wonder.

The Sultanate of Oman showcased its talent with an impressive participation in the competition, submitting a collection of 40 photos contributed by 25 photographers

across two age groups (under 21 and under 16).

The judges awarded Oman sixth place in the U-21 category with a score of 324 points, while in the U-16 category, Oman secured seventh place with a score of 353 points.

Moreover, the Sultanate of Oman received two honorary awards at the biennial, highlighting its prowess in the field of photography.

MoH launches Twitter account for public engagement

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) has taken a proactive step in enhancing communication with the public by launching a dedicated Twitter account. With the handle @OmaniMOH_CC, the ministry's call centre aims to facilitate inquiries, observations, and feedback from citizens and residents who benefit from health services.

This strategic move reflects the ministry's commitment to establishing multiple communication channels with the community, in line with its ambitious strategy to elevate the quality of healthcare services.

Leveraging the speed and interactivity of social media platforms, particularly through private messaging services, the ministry aims to promptly address each case received via Twitter or the existing call service.

Dr Abeer bint Abdullah al Maamariyah, Director of the Department of Patient and Review Services at the Ministry of Health, emphasised the importance of this dedicated Twitter account. Its launch is supported by the guidance of the Minister himself, ensuring accessibility for all segments of society.

Driven by a commitment to transparency and professionalism, the ministry strives to provide exemplary services to both citizens and residents.

Under the leadership of Dr Saleh bin Saif al Hinai, Supervisor of the Contact Centre at the Ministry of Health, the call centre serves as the vital link between the ministry and its service recipients, including citizens and residents. Through various communication channels such as email and telephone, the centre handles reports, complaints, proposals, and other health-related matters.

OHRC chairman, UAE counterpart discuss expertise in human rights

MUSCAT: Shaikh Abdullah bin Shuwain al Hosni, Chairman of Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) met on Sunday with Maqsood Kruse, Chairman of the National Human Rights Institute of the United Arab Emirates and his accompanying delegation, currently visiting the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on a set of topics that enhance the joint



work. They also discussed means of exchanging expertise to benefit

from the experiences of the two institutions in a manner that serves human rights. — ONA

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE DAY Experts look at AI applications

MUSCAT: Under the auspices of Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, the activities of the 'Artificial Intelligence Day' kicked-off on Sunday aiming at shedding the light on global developments in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications, and practical training on some generative artificial intelligence tools that can be employed in various fields of institutional work.

The Sultanate of Oman, thanks to its strategic vision and continuous efforts, is considered one of the leading countries in the field, through investing in research and development and adopting advanced technologies. The Sultanate of Oman is also working to promote innovation in artificial intelligence and transform it into powerful tools that enable digital transformation.

Dr Salim al Shueili, Director of the Artificial Intelligence Projects Department for Advanced



Technologies at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, presented the first paper in which he shed the light on global developments in the field of artificial intelligence and the national programme for artificial intelligence issued by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and the hoped-for institutional role in this field during the coming period.

Dr Faisal al Busaidy, Director-General of the Directorate-

General of Information Technology, presented a paper entitled 'Training on Using Artificial Intelligence Applications', which included a detailed explanation of the generative artificial intelligence programme Chat GPT, its mechanism, and practical applications on using it in the field of institutional work for senior leadership positions by focusing on applications related to the areas of work with a comprehensive practical guide in this field.

دِيْوَانُ الْمَلِكِ السَّلْطَانِي

DIWAN OF ROYAL COURT

Tender Notice (1)

Diwan of Royal Court Sultanate of Oman, Muscat, announces the following tender :

Tender No.	Tender Name:	Tender Document Value	Last Date of Purchasing Tenders	Last Date of Submitting Tenders
12/2023	Proposed Commercial Building Project at Plot No. (1134) at AL Amrat in Muscat	25	5/7/2023	10/7/2023

- Qualified Companies with previous experience in similar works can obtain the Tender Documents from the Directorate General of Administrative, Financial Affairs and Human Resources (Treasury Department), Diwan of Royal Court, Al Khuwair, Ground Floor, from 7:30 am till 12:00 pm right from the date of post by paying the document value.
- Each company's tender should be accompanied by a Tender Bond in the form of bank guarantee or certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount of (1%) of the Tender Value valid for (90) days from the date of submission. Any Bid not accompanied with the full Tender Bond will be excluded.
- The Tender Committee reserves the right to accept or reject any or all of the offers.
- Bids must be submitted in an envelope sealed with red wax addressed to His Excellency, the Chairman of the Tender Committee. The Tender name and number should be written on the envelope. Nothing should be written on the envelope to display the identity of the bidder or what refers to him.
- The bids should be deposited in the Tender Box, Seventh floor, Diwan of Royal Court (Purchases Department), Ghala and no bids will be accepted after 12:00pm.
- No Bids will be accepted after the last date of submission shown in the above table.
- The Tender Committee will award the tender to the company that has the largest percentage of Omanisation and possible purchases of national products.

Diwan of Royal Court is not obliged to award the tender to the lowest or any other offer.

For any further clarification and assistance, you may contact the following numbers:
24026308 - 24026307 - 24026309 - 24359451



CALL FOR CAUTION AS MORE DROWNING CASES REPORTED IN OMAN



521

DROWNING
INCIDENTS WERE
REPORTED IN
OMAN DURING 2021



211

TOTAL
DEATHS HAVE
REACHED IN
OMAN

KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabeeryousef](#)

Taking a dip in the sea or in a swimming pool inside a farm or even in a hotel to bask in the treated water is on top of the ‘to do’ list for many during the sweltering summer days but one shouldn’t give it a pass as it is as dangerous if proper attention is not paid.

A recent report released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) revealed that more than 521 drowning incidents were reported in Oman during 2021 with the majority of children who lost their lives being under the age of five.

Drowning is the third highest among other causes of death in the world. WHO data issued on World Drowning Day substantiates the statistics saying such deaths in Oman have reached 211 or 1.42 per cent of total deaths.

A senior official from the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority

(CDAA) said that the water rescue teams dealt with 521 calls of drowning accidents in 2021 and that Al Dakhiliyah Governorate recorded the highest number of deaths due to drowning.

In most of the cases, the victims were children due to the result of negligence and lack of supervision by guardians. It is reported that many of them either attempted to cross the swamps of water or running wadis or were playing in the swimming pools in farms and rest houses without knowing the danger involved resulting in loss of lives. Other reasons are swimming in undesignated areas such as dams, water channels and water-logged areas, leaving children unattended near water surfaces, and non-abidance by the safety instructions urged by the CDAA.

This is a worrying matter and for a country whose geographical landscape is characterised by a large number of valleys, necessary measures need to be taken to avoid any occurrences of drowning.

“Swimming is a skill that requires caution and should not be carried out in undesignated sites,” said Mohammed al Khadouri, a safety expert who gives training in safety and security.

“Crossing wadis (valleys) and low-lying areas despite the warning is a punishable offence and will attract legal proceedings and parents have a better role to play in saving their children from drowning,” he added.

Afrah Salim al Harbi, Swimming Trainer at Sheraton Muscat urged parents not to leave children unattended. “Children must be given a lifejacket to avoid drowning and it is better to teach a child to swim from a young age. With the availability of many swimming education centres in Oman, that has become easier now than ever,” Afrah said.

“Parents should be watchful of their children, especially below 12 years of age, just as they need to be vigilant about their children crossing wadis or playing in water ponds when taking a dip in the sea or any water ponds and

it is more crucial to be vigilant when it’s raining and flash floods are formed as many drowning incidents involving children have been reported from many wilayats during sudden rains.”

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of WHO, in its report on drowning, said that most of these deaths are preventable through evidence-based, low-cost solutions as every year hundreds of thousands of people drown around the world.

Joseph Ochai, Healthclub Manager at Al Falaj hotel Muscat gave a quick steps to ensure safety of children at swimming pools, sea and other water bodies. He said safety of lives in and around the beach and pool can never be over emphasised. “Always have a designated adult present and active watching when people are in or around water. Avoid distraction like using phones or reading. Pools should have secured fencing around all sides, along self-latching gates, to prevent unauthorised access, especially for children,” he said.



Omani research project examines adoption of global citizenship education

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 11

'Promoting Global Citizenship Education (GCED) in the Sultanate of Oman: An Analysis of National Policies' by principal investigator Dr Khalaf bin Marhoun al Abri, Associate Professor of Education Systems and Policies at the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University, is one of the innovative research projects funded by the Block Funding Programme of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

For this research project, Dr Khalaf al Abri and his team aimed to explore the extent of the adoption of global citizenship concepts and principles in Omani education by analysing the reality of including global citizenship concepts in national policies in Oman. More specifically, through

this paper, Dr Khalaf analysed school education policies and plans in Oman in light of the requirements and objectives of the global citizenship education, studied the reality of the application of education for global citizenship in primary schools in Oman, and monitored the challenges facing the application of education for global citizenship in primary schools in Oman.

The research team also developed proposals that would enhance education for global citizenship in Omani schools, monitoring the knowledge, behaviour and attitudes of both teachers and students in



Dr Khalaf Al Abri



Omani primary schools towards education for global citizenship, and implemented a training programme for Omani primary schools to promote education for global citizenship based on the

analysis of educational policies and plans as well as its practical application.

Dr Khalaf mentioned that the results of the study indicated the emergence of the principles of

global citizenship in the visions and missions of the Omani schools, however the study confirmed that these visions and messages must be reformulated in a new way, as there is a weakness in

their formulation, as well as their inclusion of these principles. The results also showed the Sultanate of Oman's interest in education for global citizenship through the inclusion in policy documents of the principles and elements of global citizenship, and its focus on building a global citizen.

According to Dr Khalaf, based on the results of the study, the research team developed a training programme for teachers, which was applied to a group of teachers in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the Omani National Commission for Education, Culture, and Science. The research team was able to promote this training programme at the regional level, as it was adopted by the Unesco office in Doha, and the programme was implemented in April 2023 for a group of teachers at Unesco affiliated schools in Kuwait.

MoE, OPAL looks at strengthening partnership

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 11

Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, on Sunday met with Dr Amer bin Awad al Rawas, Chairman of Board of Directors of Oman Energy Association (OPAL), and Eng Abdulrahman bin Humaid al Yahyai, CEO of the OPAL. The meeting comes with the aim of discussing ways to strengthen the partnership between the Ministry of Education (MoE) and OPAL in the field of vocational and technical



education in the post-basic education stage, considering that OPAL is the strategic partner in applying some engineering and industrial specialisations starting from the academic year 2024/2025 in a number of schools in the governorates of Muscat and Al Batinah North.

The ministry also intends to establish other similar partnerships with various economic sectors in the Sultanate of Oman during the coming years within the framework of the gradual expansion of the application of vocational and technical education in the rest of the

governorates.

It is worth noting that the ministry is continuing to take executive measures to implement vocational and technical education in the fields of business administration and information technology, starting from the next academic year 2023/2024.

Berlin 2023: Oman to take part in Special Olympics World Games



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Special Olympics Oman, will take part in the 16th edition of the Special Olympics World Games 'Berlin 2023' from June 17-25. A Host Town Programme will be held on the sidelines of the games from June 12-15. This programme aims to highlight the participation of persons with intellectual disability in society. After finishing this introductory programme, all delegations will move to Berlin to participate in the opening ceremony of the World Games and the various competitions that will kick off. Oman's delegation

comprises 36 players (persons with intellectual disability) and 9 unified partners. The delegation will participate in the following games: athletics, unified badminton, unified bocce, bowling, equestrian, futsal, golf, weightlifting, roller skating, sailing, swimming, table tennis, and unified tennis. Mohammed bin Salim al Rashdi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Special Olympics Oman, head of the delegation, said that various trials were conducted to select the delegation's players. He added that the players underwent intensive training programmes during the past months. Al Rashdi pointed out



that the delegation includes several new coaches and new players. He lauded the delegation's high morale and expressed his hope to achieve great results. Special Olympics Oman participated in previous versions of the Special Olympics World Games. It won 48 medals during the last edition of the games which were held in Abu Dhabi in 2019. Moreover, the Special Olympics World Games 'Berlin 2023' will include 26 Olympic sports. It will be participated by 7,000 players. The official opening of the games will be held on 17 June at the Olympia stadium in

Berlin. The events of the opening ceremony will include the opening song 'Are you ready' presented by the Norwegian duo Madcon. Several conferences will be held on the sidelines of the World Games. Those include the Global Athlete Congress (June 15-19), the Global Youth Leadership Summit (June 16-20) and the Global Forum for Inclusion - Partnering for Action (17-18 June) Oman's delegation will leave today (Monday) to Oberhausen, Germany, to participate in the Host Town Programme, which is held prior to the start of the Special Olympics World Games. — ONA

Job Opportunity

An Omani Company looking for a **Service Station Manager (Heavy Automobile)** in Duqm, Oman.

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E-mail your CV on fulfilling above criteria:
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TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Dhofar Services invites the specialize companies to participate and submit their offers for the below said tender in Dhofar Governorate.

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR) Including VAT (5%)
DISC/ 2023/102	CONSTRUCTION OF WATER NETWORK AT EXTENSION OF NORTH AWQAD BLOCK A IN SALALAH	26/06/2023	23/07/2023	RO. 525.000
DISC/ 2023/103	CONSTRUCTION OF WATER NETWORK AT EXTENSION OF NORTH AWQAD BLOCK C IN SALALAH	26/06/2023	23/07/2023	RO. 525.000

- To view the tender details, you can visit www.dhofarservices.nama.om / scan the QR code.
- The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 3.00pm.
- Bids shall be submitted online through using "isupplier portal". No hard copies are accepted.
- The company 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.
- For any clarifications contact us on:
Tel No. 23232554
email: purchase@dhofarservices.nama.om



Dhofar Integrated Services Company s.a.o.c.
CR Number 218/229 P.O Box 2609
PC 211, Salalah - Sultanate of Oman
Phone Number 23232523, Fax 23201183
www.dhofarservices.nama.om





Thousands evacuated as Philippine volcano spews ash, rocks



Residents board a military truck as they evacuate their village due to an eruption threat from nearby Mayon volcano, in Daraga. — AFP

DARAGA: Thousands of people living near a Philippine volcano have taken shelter in evacuation centres as officials warned on Sunday of health risks from ash and toxic gases spewing from the rumbling crater. Seismology researchers said they had recorded at least one volcanic earthquake in the past 24 hours and red-hot rocks were falling from Mount Mayon in the central province of Albay.

More than 12,800 people have been moved to evacuation centres, the Philippine civil defence office said, most from farming villages at or near the foot of the volcano.

“We’re away from our home, but it’s still better here because it’s too dangerous,” mother-of-two Rachel Ramirez, 30, said during her third day at a school near the town of Daraga that had been turned

into an emergency shelter. Mayon, about 330 kilometres southeast of the capital Manila, is considered one of the most volatile of the country’s 24 active volcanoes.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said rocks were falling from a disintegrating lava dome being pushed out of the crater by molten material below the earth.

The rocks were raining down on areas up to two kilometres away and sulphur dioxide emissions had tripled on Saturday, state volcanologists said.

“There is a concomitant health risk while being close to the eruption because of inhaling sulphur dioxide gas or the particulate matter of ashfalls,” Health Secretary Teodoro Herbosa told a press briefing on Sunday. — AFP

Fighting rages in Sudan’s capital after 24-hour truce expires

KHARTOUM: Heavy clashes and artillery fire erupted across Sudan’s capital Khartoum on Sunday and residents reported air strikes soon after the end of a 24-hour ceasefire that had brought a brief lull to eight weeks of fighting between rival military factions.

Witnesses said the fighting between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) was some of the heaviest for weeks, and included ground battles in the densely populated neighbourhood of Haj Youssef in Bahri, one of three adjoining cities, along with Khartoum and Omdurman, that make up the capital around the confluence of the River Nile.

Just after the ceasefire expired at 6 am witnesses said clashes and artillery fire resumed in the north of Omdurman. They also reported clashes in southern and central Khartoum, and in Shambat along the Nile in Bahri up to the strategic Halfiya bridge, which crosses to Omdurman.

“The truce made us relax a bit, but the war and fear are returning today,” said Musab Saleh, a 38-year-old resident of southern Khartoum.

Fighting has been concentrated in the capital, much of which has become a war zone plagued by looting and clashes. But unrest has also flared elsewhere including the western region of Darfur, already suffering from a conflict that peaked in the early 2000s.

Residents and activists have reported a further deterioration in recent days in El Geneina, near the



Smoke rises above buildings behind a nearly deserted street in Khartoum. — AFP

border with Chad, and new waves of attacks by Arab nomadic tribes with ties to the RSF.

Among those killed were a number of human rights activists, lawyers and doctors, according to the Darfur Bar Association, which monitors the conflict in the region.

The city has been largely cut off from telephone networks for several weeks.

Another affected city is El Obeid, capital of North Kordofan State southwest of Khartoum and on a major route to Darfur. Residents say it is effectively under a state of siege due to the conflict, with supplies of food and medicine cut off. The wider Kordofan region is an important agricultural area and source of livestock, oil seeds and gum.

“The situation is difficult. The RSF are spread out on the roads between the villages and they are looting, and there are gangs looting everywhere,” North Kordofan resident Mohammed Salman said. The 24-hour ceasefire that began on Saturday morning was negotiated at talks led by Saudi Arabia and the United States in Jeddah. — Reuters

Israelis protest judicial reforms, Arab crime deaths

TEL AVIV: Thousands took to the streets of cities and towns across Israel for the 23rd straight week, protesting controversial judicial reform plans as well as deadly violence hitting Arab communities.

The hard-right government’s reform proposals would curtail the authority of the Supreme Court and give politicians greater powers over the selection of judges.

In March, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had announced a “pause” to allow for talks on the divisive reforms.

In central Tel Aviv, where thousands have gathered according to an AFP correspondent, demonstrator Michal Gat said “our country is being captured by

extreme people... we’re being held hostage.”

“We have been here... with our kids, in the rain or hot weather” for 23 weeks, the 47-year-old hi-tech worker said.

“It’s super important for the Israeli people to keep Israel a democracy.”

Some protesters held signs criticising government inaction over a soaring crime wave that has affected the country’s Arab minority.

“We will not let Ben-Gvir get away with murders in the Arab society,” read one sign, referring to Israel’s far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir.

Since the start of the year, some 100 people have been killed in crime-related violence in Arab



People take part in a demonstration against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his nationalist coalition government’s judicial overhaul, in Tel Aviv. — Reuters

Israeli communities, according to NGOs.

Five Arab Israelis were shot dead at a car wash in Yafia, an Arab town near the city of Nazareth, police said.

Arabs in Israel have long complained of discrimination and police inaction against violence and crime that disproportionately affects their communities.

Organisers claimed more demonstrations across Israel including in the cities of Haifa and Rehovot.

Last month parliament approved Israel’s state budget, with Netanyahu vowing to “continue our efforts to reach understandings as broad as possible on the legal reform”.

Netanyahu’s government argues

the changes are needed to rebalance powers between lawmakers and the judiciary.

On May 30, elected officials and representatives of the Arab minority protested in Jerusalem and called on the government to increase security.

Netanyahu said that he was “determined to stop this chain of murders” and would see that happen by not only reinforcing police but also “with the help of the Shin Bet”.

The internal security agency does not normally investigate criminal activity.

Around 20 per cent of Israel’s population are Arabs, largely descendants of Palestinians who stayed on their land after Israel’s creation in 1948. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

CAIRO

3 Missing after boat fire in Red Sea

Three British tourists were missing on Sunday after a motor yacht caught fire in Egypt’s Red Sea, authorities said.

The Red Sea governorate said in a statement that “15 English passengers, 10 members of the crew, and two tour guides” had been rescued, and that the search for the three missing was ongoing. Video circulating on media and online showed a white motor yacht named “Hurricane” with flames erupting from it.

Initial reports blamed the



fire on an electrical fault in the engine room, officials said.

The boat was on a six-day cruise and due back on Sunday when the blaze broke out while it was about 25 kilometres north of the coastal town of Marsa Alam.

— AFP

TEHRAN

Khamenei urges cooperation with nuclear watchdog

Iran’s supreme leader on Sunday urged continued cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog.

“Cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency within the framework of safeguards regulations should be maintained,” Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said during a meeting with Iranian nuclear scientists, experts and officials.

In his Sunday speech, the supreme leader said agreements could be reached in certain fields, but stressed that “the existing



infrastructure of the nuclear industry should not be touched”.

Iran’s Atomic Energy Organisation “need not succumb to the pressure of unfounded claims and demands based on bullying”, Khamenei said, without specifying the demands or claims.

HANOI

4 Officers killed in police station attacks

Four police officers were killed and two others injured in shootings at two police headquarters in Vietnam’s Central Highlands on Sunday, authorities said.

Sixteen people were arrested in connection with the shootings in Cu Kuin district of Dak Lak province, according to the official website of the ministry of public security (MPS). Two people being held hostage by the attackers were freed, it added, while another person being held managed to free himself.



The attacks on the police headquarters of both Ea Tieu and Ea Ktur communes occurred in the early hours of Sunday.

The MPS said four police officers were killed while on duty and had been given posthumous promotions. — AFP



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In brief

WASHINGTON



BUSY HIGHWAY COLLAPSES IN PHILADELPHIA

A fire caused part of a busy US highway overpass to collapse in Philadelphia early on Sunday, authorities said, as reports attributed the accident to an oil tanker that burst into flames under the bridge.

The collapse took out four traffic lanes along an elevated section of the heavily travelled motorway, though no injuries were immediately reported.

Images broadcast on television showed flames and billowing smoke coming from the crumbled section of Interstate 95 in the northeastern city's Tacony neighbourhood, with parts of the elevated roadway having fallen onto the lanes below. — AFP

ROME



POPE RECOVERS NORMALLY FROM SURGERY

Pope Francis did not deliver his Sunday blessing in public but his recovery from surgery was progressing normally and he has begun physical therapy to help his breathing, the Vatican said.

As previously announced, the 86-year-old pope did not say his Sunday traditional noon Angelus prayer in public and watched Mass on television, the statement said.

Doctors had recommended he avoid putting strain on his abdomen after a three-hour operation at Rome's Gemelli hospital.

Francis will stay in hospital for at least all of this week. Audiences have been cancelled until June 18. — Reuters

BEIJING



3 DIE, FARMLAND DAMAGED AS STORMS SWEEP

Three people died in eastern China after strong winds toppled a shipyard crane, authorities said on Sunday, as storms caused damage across the country, including large swaths of farmland.

The deaths of security staff in the city of Wuhu occurred after the 450-tonne crane keeled over on Saturday into the security post where they were stationed, the authorities said.

In Nanjing, the capital of Jiangsu province in eastern China, large trees were felled on Saturday, crushing vehicles and blocking roads, local media reported.

— Reuters

Zelensky says counteroffensive against Russia underway

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said that a counteroffensive against Russian forces was underway, while declining to give specifics on his troops' operations.

"Counteroffensive and defensive actions are taking place in Ukraine: at which stage I will not talk in detail," Zelensky said, commenting after Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed that Kyiv's operation was already failing.

"It's interesting what Putin said about our counteroffensive. It is important that Russia always feels this: that they do not have long left, in my opinion," Zelensky said.

He added that he was in daily touch with military commanders, including armed forces chief Valery Zaluzhny, and "everyone is positive now — tell that to Putin!"

On Saturday, Kyiv's forces conducted counteroffensive operations in at least four front-line areas, according to the Washington-based think tank the Institute for the Study of War (ISW).

"Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces have tactical advantages in conducting assaults at night due to Western-provided equipment with superior night optics systems," ISW said.

To shore up that stockpile, Zelensky secured fresh pledges of military aid while meeting with visiting Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau over the weekend.



Ukrainian soldiers stand in front of a building with a Ukrainian flag on it, during an operation that claims to liberate the first village amid a counter-offensive, in a location given as Blahodatne, Donetsk Region. — Reuters

Canada has been one of Kyiv's key allies since the Russian attack.

It has provided Ukraine with significant military aid, trained more than 36,000 soldiers and adopted sanctions against Moscow.

On Saturday, the Canadian leader said he would provide Can\$500 million in fresh military assistance to Kyiv, and pledged that Canada would be part of the multinational effort to train

Ukraine's fighter pilots.

Trudeau also urged international organisations to come to the aid of those in Russian-occupied territories after flooding from the breached Kakhovka dam forced thousands to flee their homes.

Kyiv announced on Sunday that Ukrainian forces have retaken a village in the war-torn country's southeast, the first reported gain of the offensive.

Ukraine's ground forces said in a statement that soldiers of the 68th separate ranger brigade had "liberated the settlement of Blagodatne" in the eastern region of Donetsk.

The ground forces released a video showing soldiers carrying a Ukrainian flag into a destroyed building.

Another military spokesman, Valeriy Shershen, said in televised

remarks that the retaken village was located on the border of the region of Donetsk and the southern region of Zaporizhzhia where Moscow has reported heavy Ukrainian assaults over the past week.

He said Ukraine's forces captured several Russian and pro-Russian troops, adding that the Ukrainian flag was hoisted over Blagodatne. — AFP

French town pays tribute to those who chased off knife attacker



Anne's mayor Francois Astorg delivers a speech during a rally in support of the victims and their families in Anancy. — AFP

ANNECY: Hundreds of residents of the French town of Anancy gathered on Sunday to honour the people who rushed to stop a man accused of stabbing six people, including four toddlers, at a playground last week.

Under the radiant sun, in the same park where the tragedy unfolded Thursday, people laid flowers, while on a nearby bench someone had written the names of the child victims inside a heart.

"It's a strong sign of unity and solidarity that we're all here together," said the city's mayor Francois Astorg.

"We are together. We will face this together," he added, while also paying tribute to those who responded to the attack "with courage and professionalism."

They include two municipal agents who tried to stop the attacker with a shovel, a young man renting out pedal boats and

a maths teacher who both tried to step in, and a tourist who chased the attacker. A childminder also rushed in to rescue two wounded children.

French President Emmanuel Macron met the civilians being hailed as heroes for chasing the alleged attacker from the playground where the stabbings took place.

On Saturday, public prosecutor Line Bonnet-Mathis paid tribute to those who, "by their action, were able to preserve human lives". She also acknowledged the work of the emergency services.

She also announced that the attacker detained over the stabbings had been charged with "attempted murder".

The attack left the normally peaceful lakeside town in shock. Hundreds of people have laid flowers, soft toys and heart-shaped balloons at the site of the

attack.

The attacker, named Abdalmasih, "did not wish to speak" during his 48 hours in police custody nor before the magistrates leading the investigation, Bonnet-Mathis told reporters.

After two psychiatric evaluations, he was deemed "compatible with police custody", and doctors had determined he did not suffer from delusions.

However, she added, it was too early to diagnose or rule out other psychological pathologies.

Bonnet-Mathis also said that the victims of the attack were no longer in a life-threatening condition.

The children, aged between 22 months and three years, were initially hospitalised in a serious condition, while one adult was also seriously wounded and another lightly hurt. — AFP

Rain to help clear Canada's air soon, but days away from Quebec fires

WINNIPEG: Rain is likely to help clear up smoky air in eastern Canada starting on Sunday but may not reach the forest fires raging in the province of Quebec until days later, a government meteorologist said.

There were 426 fires across Canada, 144 of them in Quebec. Canadian forest fires regularly occur in the summer but the scope of the current conflagration — and its early arrival — are unprecedented.

The fires on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts have burned 4.4 million hectares so far, forced thousands of Canadians from their homes and spread smoke that has left residents from Toronto to New York gasping for breath.

Federal meteorologist Gerald Cheng told reporters that rain was expected on Sunday in southern Ontario and southwestern Quebec, which will likely help clear smoke.

The rain looks set to reach more northern parts of Quebec — where the biggest fires are burning — starting on Tuesday but only 10-20 mm of precipitation is expected, Cheng said. "Our concern is that it's not a lot of rain," he said.

Officials say that by Monday there will be around 1,200 firefighters, including more than 100 from France, battling blazes across Quebec, a heavily wooded province of 8.5 million people that covers more territory than



Smoke rises from Cameron Bluffs wildfire on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. — Reuters

Germany, Spain and France combined.

"In the next few days there is a risk the situation will stay critical. But the arrival of French firefighters is really going to help," Quebec Forestry Minister Maite Blanchette Vezina said.

More than 13,000 people have been evacuated from towns in the north of Quebec.

In the Pacific province of British Columbia, weather improved as firefighters battled a large 20,000-hectare blaze in the remote foothills of the Rocky Mountains near the eastern border with Alberta.

Winds that had been blowing westward toward the mostly evacuated community of Tumbler Ridge, about 1,000 km northeast of Vancouver, turned to the east. Temperatures also cooled, allowing firefighters to get closer to the fire, said Karley Desrosiers, information officer for the B.C. Wildfire Service.

— Reuters

Majlis Ash’shura elections a joint responsibility



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The announcement of the list of candidates for the tenth term of the Majlis Ash’shura signals the beginning of the next four-year session. There are 883 candidates running for the council seats, including 33 women, compared with 637 candidates in the ninth session, a significant increase of 245 candidates.

This participation and engagement are the most important pillars of the State’s decision making, as well as one of the correct paths that we must take in answering any demands or enhancing the consultative work in the country. This necessitates a proactive contribution to rendering this experiment a success through enhancing sound participation and proper selection of candidates. Such civil experiences are built and advanced by the society and citizens in particular when they make precise and correct choices, which requires a keen attention in the coming period.

Undoubtedly, the Sultanate of Oman’s democratic experience is gradually advancing based on the

evolution of society and national and global factors, and on many fronts represented by numerous civil society organisations. Our experience is better than that of neighbouring countries. However, some individuals make judgements that undermine the development of their own national experiences by adopting non-scientific criteria and comparisons that are lacking crucial elements that should be taken into account.

At the Shura, municipality, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, clubs, organisations, syndicates, and other forums the public is involved in decision-making. Such participation is growing gradually, reflecting the favourable climate for participation provide by the State. However, the success or failure of this engagement is determined first and foremost by the voter’s selection of the right candidate.

We cannot improve any democratic experience until we improve the selection process. When individuals improve their engagement in elections, democratic experiences will naturally increase and

THE VOTERS SHOULD PICK EFFICIENT PERSONS, REGARDLESS OF TRIBE, WILAYAT, OR GOVERNORATE.

evolve, and vice versa.

As we are approaching the elections, it is important to emphasise that the person who deserves to be elected to the Shura is the one who possesses the power of reasoning and good manners. S/he should also be capable of carrying out all responsibilities and ready to bear the pain and anguish of public service.

The voters should vote for efficient persons, regardless of tribe, wilayat, or governorate. Candidates fiercely campaign to win the confidence of people to reach the council. However, there are individuals who are more worthy of representation and the responsibilities that come with it. This is something we must remember: we are the ones who choose the members of the council, and we must bear the consequences of our actions. We hope that we will witness perfect elections in every manner, and to eventually welcome distinguished council members who, within the confines of this institutional framework, perform exemplary parliamentary work that genuinely improves our democratic experience.

US capital sputters as federal workers stay home

DANIEL AVIS

Washington’s role as the US capital makes it reliant on government workers for its economic success — and many are choosing to stay home, perhaps for good, leaving vast federal offices empty and the city struggling.

From restaurants hosting federal lobbyists to world-class cultural centres, the city’s fortunes have long been tied to the government employees who operate the machinery of the state.

Now, more than three years after the Covid-19 pandemic forced the United States government to rely on telework, long-term remote work is having painful consequences for the local economy.

Washington’s workers are coming into the office less than half what they were before the pandemic, according to Kastle, which manages entry badges for 40,000 companies across the country.

“The DC office market is dying,” Chris LeBarton, director of market analytics at the real estate data company CoStar said in an interview at the company’s offices downtown.

“If you can’t get the federal government back to Washington, DC, even at three days a week, good luck,” he said.

While many federal employees relish working from home, the impact on the city’s commercial real estate sector — also hit by a toxic combination of high interest rates and tighter bank lending — has been severe.

The federal government occupies almost a quarter of commercial property in the downtown area, historically the “economic engine” of the city, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) said by e-mail.

The city is forecast to lose close to half a billion dollars in revenue over the next three years due to “declines in property tax revenue from large office buildings, driven by enduring remote and hybrid work,” according to an estimate from the office of Washington’s chief financial officer, Glen Lee.

The city’s newly-re-elected Democratic Mayor, Muriel Bowser, has urged the White House to take “decisive action” to either bring federal workers back to their desks, or allow other businesses to make use of the office space the government currently uses.

In April, the White House’s Office for Management and Budget called on federal agencies to substantially increase in-person work at federal offices while “still using flexible operational policies as an important tool in talent recruitment and retention.” — AFP



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MODERN DIGITAL REVOLUTION WILL CHANGE THE CONTOURS OF PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE. MECHANISMS OF SCIENTIFIC THINKING IN THE MODERN DIGITAL AGE MAY EMERGE IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

The philosophy of science in digital age

The digital age presupposes a reality that has never been seen by humans. This fast-changing reality was tantamount to a shock in the scientific and cultural milieus whose adaptation to changes occur at an accelerated pace that almost destroys any emerging philosophy of science.

The orientations and outcomes of science are no longer obscure. They are taking a path that scientists hope would elevate civilisation. However, this cannot be considered in an absolute manner because other features, however narrow, are shaking existence and stability. Digital race led by artificial intelligence that seeks to advance life but may move towards a catastrophe without proper regulations and ethics.

In this article, I’ll attempt to fathom the movement of philosophy and its mental tools in specifying the essence of science and its orientations at the peak of the technological progress. Here I’ll try as far as possible to move away from conventional philosophical interpretation so as not to fall in the trap of narrow imitation.

The first scientific stages of Homo sapiens, for me, is not confined to the agricultural revolution. I would confine it to the preliminary interpretation of the initial shape of science or ‘proto-science’ as called by Bertrand Russell in his book Wisdom of the West. At this point we see the manifestations of human thinking. In the absence of science, man endeavoured to find answers to existential questions beginning with primitive mental cognitive tools that led to the emergence of myth. This brought only little or no benefit to humanity and contributed to civilisational tardiness. Then came the ancient rationalism which began with the Greek and moved to Romans and Muslims before arriving in the West.

This piecemeal rationalism contributed to the establishment of many philosophical doctrines that led in some eras to the emergence of the rational and experimental schools of philosophy that led to the development of science from many bases. Competition among philosophical schools led to the liberalisation of science from the grip of superstition underpinned by the primitive tools of magic and metaphysical interpretations that are devoid of both rational and tangible cognitive certainty.

For me, the schools of philosophy

such as that of Spinoza and Descartes played a role in the transition of science and its interpretational tools from the old stage of rationalism of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle without disregarding the contributions of Muslim philosophers like Al Kindi, Averroes, Al Farabi and Ibn Sina. Those Muslim philosophers contributed to the modern rationalism of Spinoza and Descartes by preserving the Greek legacy and reviving it after it was nearly vanished due to the Christian hegemony that wanted to put science and mind back to their rudimentary level.

We cannot ignore the importance of Kantianism which tried to strike a balance between the rationalist and experimentalist schools of philosophy to establish modern methodological constants for science, despite the moral tendency of this methodology, with the help of mathematical logic which led Newton to set up the modern conceptualisation of the cosmos and its mechanical movement thus establishing the principle of scientific determinism till the emergence of quantum mechanics and relativism which constituted a transformation to the most complicated philosophical angle namely scientific relativism and indeterminism.

At that time, more profound philosophical questions were raised about cosmic and existential topics the answers to which were scattered between randomness, coincidentalism and finalism. Many philosophical conundrums reflected the mechanism of relative thinking in science such as the essence of quantum pattern and the behaviour of the electrons therein, randomness in genetic mutations with their finality and existence with its essential ends.

Such enigmatic questions have entered into relativism as no determinism could be useful in establishing a clear-cut scientific pattern prompting us to try and understand the philosophical track of science with the emergence of the modern digital revolution represented by artificial intelligence.

Philosophy, alongside its tools that aim at determining the tracks and ends post the modern digital age, is no more a captive to uncertain relativism. Philosophy has not returned to its stern inevitability, as well. Rather, it is moving to more logical branches with mathematical forms that attempt to bring together philosophical patterns

that strive to ensure the scientific movement without hindering modern scientific trends which began taking off the conventional dress of science to overtake the state of randomness and initiate a modern phase that tries to link science with its modern main derivatives (brain, mind and machine) to its modern digital mathematical pattern (artificial intelligence) and, by so doing, targeting to realise the nominal logarithmic logic.

Some threads of the philosophy of science are now becoming clear. The modern philosophy of science aims to identify the scientific essence with its digital nature and its epistemology that deals with the understanding of machines in the same way as it deals with the understanding of humans in terms of the principle of thinking i.e mental and emotional (psychological). With the twining between man and machine, we see that this modern philosophical essence is starting a new phase which can be called the digital philosophy that attempts to approach the machine not only in its thinking patterns but also its emotional ones in the presence of effective human overlapping which is about to get away from the scene.

In the presence of mathematical logic which operates in the digital space, it has become a pure mental and experimental necessity to raise the difficult questions that have previously relied on inductive reasoning with a conventional experimental nature that helps identify the appropriate scientific model thus representing the answer to that difficult question. However, the philosophy of science, in the presence of a digital brain capable of self-learning in all fields of life, will take a different direction befitting the digital object that will assume the leadership of science and its emerging revolution, at that time its algorithms will adopt a more professional philosophy that suits machine and its special mathematical logic.

I am not claiming that the conventional philosophy will fall apart, but rather it will function in its former scientific angles that did not enter the digital world. However, this type of science and its philosophy, in the presence of a comprehensive digital world, will be far away from the futuristic scene, not even in a gradual manner because the machine will be present in all manifestations of science including our delicate biology.

Turning thoughts into business

Getting a quality education is the first step towards having a dream of what one's future might look like! Parents always spare no effort to enroll their children at good schools that provide best learning environment. They strive to ensure their children have a better education so they get a respectful job. Most parents, if not all, are concerned about their children's future which they wish to be far better than what they had.

In most cases, good education is linked to a decent life to people. That's why every student leaves no stone unturned to get the most of his or her study and score high grades as much as possible.

Usually outstanding students get the best jobs. They are the most wanted candidates.

Other credits that could promote the excellence and skills of those students are their projects. Perhaps their graduation projects are of importance or interest to some concerned government or private bodies in the country. In fact, some of these projects are really insightful and bring remarkable ideas that could be turned into real businesses. Hence, students owning such kinds of projects are sought-after and would be of high demand of course.

In return, there are some concerned and proactive organisations that are very keen to support graduates and get their projects turned into a real business. Not only private entities, but various government authorities as well shoulder the responsibility of adopting students' projects. Sometimes private and public sectors join forces to back student.

It is undoubtedly very thrilling to see private and public bodies take charge to support students and youth in different walks of



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SOME STUDENT PROJECTS ARE REMARKABLE IDEAS THAT COULD BE TURNED INTO REAL BUSINESSES

life. Probably, they are supported financially to get their projects completed. However, what is next? Is there any government or private body interested in getting some of those useful projects and creative ideas turned into real business?

There are many unique projects of graduates from different higher educational institutions for which so much of money and time were spent. Often there are no further investment to capitalise on the project to bring a business or at least selling the concept to a corporate.

Otherwise, those students could be given the opportunity to work on their projects over some time spent in a proper incubation, monitoring and mentoring perhaps. During this period of incubation, students or graduates could be provided with financial, technical and consultative support to execute their projects.

Such an incubation process brings the opportunity to graduates to put their research and projects, which they have worked on over their years of study into action. They make a real business out of these researches that could be a source of income to them someday. However, only constructive and innovative projects and ideas could compete to get real support until the ideas come true.

During COMEX and Ghedex exhibitions, a number of excellent projects and startup companies were presented by school and high educational institutions students. Some of which are business-oriented like cafés, gift shops, software and IT applications developers. Those should be accorded great support to establish a business or a start-up out of their projects. This reflects a real investment in youths' insights, skills and abilities as well as paving their ways towards a brighter future.

LEAFY MUSEUM



Visitors walk at the Storm King Art Center in New Windsor, New York, US, on Sunday. King Art Center is a 500-acre outdoor museum located in New York's Hudson Valley, where visitors experience large-scale sculpture and site-specific commissions under open sky. – Reuters

How AI can even the climate playing field

With the world on track to exceed 1.5° Celsius of warming in the next decade, we can expect climate hazards to intensify, driving millions more into famine, causing trillions of dollars in damage, and disproportionately harming those countries that contributed the least to the problem. Worse, a global biodiversity crisis is upon us: ecosystems are being eroded to the point of collapse, and species extinctions are accelerating at a frightening pace. Here, too, the poor are disproportionately affected.

To address this dual crisis at the pace and scale needed, the international community must change its approach. Historically, global agreements to address climate change and biodiversity loss have been negotiated separately, even though the two issues are closely interlinked. Moreover, the process has been marred by structural disparities, power imbalances, and prioritisation of national and commercial interests over the global common good.

Neither human societies nor the natural systems that support them can work well in silos. Complex, dynamic interacting challenges require solutions based on systems thinking and a full accounting of all the data. But the relevant data sets are massive and undergo constant change. We cannot possibly navigate them on our own. We need a co-pilot.

Following recent breakthroughs,



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BY GIVING LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES ACCESS TO THE MOST ADVANCED DATA ANALYSIS AVAILABLE, AI COULD ALSO HELP CORRECT THE POWER IMBALANCES THAT STYMIE GENUINE PROGRESS ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY.

artificial intelligence could play this role. The technology has proved most useful for analysing massive data sets, identifying patterns, and predicting behaviour. It could well be the key to solving the intersecting climate, biodiversity, and inequity crises, starting at the international negotiating table.

For example, AI could vastly improve international negotiations by illuminating the hitherto-neglected connections between biodiversity and climate issues. Such findings would justify a more formalised, interlinked relationship between the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity – the two bodies that have been negotiating agreements separately.

AI could also shed light on the broader effects of agreements like the Paris climate accords and the many inchoate sectoral initiatives focusing on issues like water, energy security, and oceans. As matters stand, at least 250,000 treaties have been negotiated in the interest of deepening global cooperation, yet the broader effect of all this diplomacy has been underwhelming.

The predictive capabilities and analytic precision of AI could help solve this challenge. By processing enormous amounts of data from these treaties, AI can identify any conflicts, contradictions, or

gaps, thereby helping to prevent duplication of efforts, resolve disagreements, and ensure that no crucial issue remains unaddressed.

One example of this potential can be seen in the realm of trade agreements. The Legal Analytics Lab at Georgia State University is using AI to identify the specific legal clauses that have the most influence on trade disputes and to understand how treaty language affects outcomes of international disputes. Similarly, AI could be used to analyse environmental treaties to determine which factors or clauses lead to successful environmental outcomes, or to identify potential conflicts between treaties.

Moreover, AI can also facilitate the creation of a global treaty database, where negotiators can quickly search existing agreements for similar provisions, consult precedents, and avoid contradictions. Such a system would ensure the harmonisation of treaties, fostering a more effective global diplomatic ecosystem.

Finally, by giving low- and middle-income countries access to the most advanced data analysis available, AI could also help correct the power imbalances that stymie genuine progress on climate change and biodiversity. Partnerships between leading AI developers and developing countries could create tools for assembling all relevant

data on a country's biodiversity, climate, and economy in an accessible format.

While richer countries typically attend global negotiations with droves of high-powered lawyers and analysts, lower-income countries often struggle to send a single representative. This disparity was evident at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP27) last year. Although the meeting achieved a more representative balance than previous COPs, the biggest delegation, from the UAE, had more than 1,000 people, while more than 100 countries had 50 or fewer delegates, with several sending just one or two. With AI, countries as small as Bhutan (which had 15 delegates at COP27) could suddenly have the same data and analytical power as countries with armies of experts.

But it is not just about numbers. Low-income countries are still catching up in terms of technology and research expertise, and this asymmetry is being exacerbated by the global digital divide. According to the UN Conference on Trade and Development, the United States and China together account for 50 per cent of the world's hyperscale data centres, 70 per cent of the world's top AI researchers, and 94 per cent of all funding for AI startups.

We can overcome the effects of such concentration by making AI

co-pilots available to developing countries, rather than waiting for them to develop their own homegrown technologies. Doing so would allow delegates to assess negotiated agreements' implications for their own country's laws, capacities, and interests in real time, vastly improving their decision-making.

Of course, AI is no silver bullet, and as Bill Gates recently noted, it comes with some risks. AI cannot replace human creativity, intuition, and intelligence. While it can be used to analyse data with unmatched speed and accuracy, it cannot make ethical judgments or determine whether outcomes are fair. Moreover, the algorithms that inform AI may themselves be subject to deeply rooted biases. Ethical and political decisions will still require empathic human intervention.

To navigate the AI revolution, we must understand the technology's potential and its limitations, as well as our own responsibilities for ensuring its fair and ethical use. We must guard against biased data and remain vigilant against potential hacking and manipulation. If we can do that, we can forge ahead towards the goal of building a sustainable and equitable future – even at a time when hope is losing its hold in the public imagination.

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sport

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Manchester City's John Stones celebrates with the trophy. — Reuters

ISTANBUL: Manchester City finally expanded their domestic domination across the continent as they beat Inter Milan 1-0 with a second-half Rodri goal to win the Champions League for the first time and complete a rare treble on a nervous Saturday evening.

Pre-match talk of a stroll to European soccer's most-cherished crown was off the mark, however, and it took a precise Rodri finish after 68 minutes to crack Inter's resistance.

Even then City's massed ranks had their heads in their hands as Inter threatened to drag a cagey final into extra time with goalkeeper Ederson making two superb late saves.

An eruption of joy greeted the final whistle with City's players sprinting towards their fans in the Ataturk Stadium.

"You have to be lucky... It was written in the stars. It belongs to us," said City manager Pep Guardiola. "With this competition, the treble is so difficult."

City not only won their first European trophy since claiming the now-defunct European Cup Winners' Cup in 1970, they also became only the second English team to win a treble of Premier League, FA Cup and Champions League, matching Manchester United's sweep in 1999 when City were in the third tier.

Inter, bidding to lift the trophy for a fourth time, stifled Guardiola's side with a superbly-executed display of traditional Italian catenaccio, especially in the first half in which City's Kevin De Bruyne went off injured.

City may have experienced a horrible sense of deja vu as chief playmaker De Bruyne also failed to finish the final two years ago when City fell short against

MAN CITY TRIUMPH WRITTEN IN THE STARS



(ABOVE) Manchester City's Phil Foden celebrates with the trophy. — Reuters



Manchester City's Ruben Dias celebrates with the trophy. — Reuters



Manchester City's German midfielder Ilkay Gundogan (C) lifts the European Cup trophy. — AFP

Chelsea. Even City's Norwegian goal-machine Erling Haaland found himself shackled, but in the end Spanish midfielder Rodri, starting his 52nd game of the season, came to the rescue.

LIVING DREAM

"Emotional. A dream come true. All these guys around here waited I don't know how many years. They deserve, we deserve," Rodri told BT Sport as Guardiola hugged his players and City's fans sang the name of Sheikh Mansour, whose takeover of the club in 2008 has turned City into serial trophy winners.

"It wasn't easy. What a team we faced, the way they defend and counter-attack. Finals are like this. Emotions and nerves are there. We competed like animals."

City have now won 17 trophies since the 2008 takeover, although there is a cloud on the horizon with the club faced with more than 100 charges of alleged breaches of Premier League financial regulations dating back

to 2009. On Saturday alongside the Bosphorous, that was the last thing City's joyous fans cared about as they serenaded their side with club anthem Blue Moon a collection of hits by Oasis, whose brothers Noel and Liam Gallagher are staunch City fans.

In finally guiding City to the European Holy Grail after gut-wrenching near misses, Guardiola became the first manager to achieve two trebles in European football, having done the Spanish equivalent with Barcelona in 2009.

He has delivered 12 major trophies for City since 2016 and, with the Champions League jinx broken, any sense of inferiority they may have felt to established European royalty like Real Madrid, Bayern Munich and Liverpool has been swept away.

"We want more," Rodri warned.

PLAYERS DELIVER

Guardiola's side fluffed their lines in Porto two years

ago against Chelsea. This time he and his players delivered, although it was never going to be straightforward.

Simone Inzaghi's side disrupted City's rhythm in the first half with their back three of Matteo Darmian, Francesco Acerbi, Alessandro Bastoni superb behind a tireless midfield guard.

Haaland had an effort superbly saved by Andre Onana, but Guardiola fretted on the touchline — even more so when De Bruyne was forced off in the 36th minute.

City were sloppy at times with passes going astray, one of which by Manuel Akanji playing in Lautaro Martinez who selfishly failed to pick out substitute Romelu Lukaku.

Inter's fans grew increasingly vocal as City's were silently consumed by nerves but all that changed when Bernardo Silva found space in the blue and black wall and he cut a pass back to Rodri who took a touch and drilled the ball home. — Reuters

Oman all set for ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifier at Harare

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket team arrived in Zimbabwe capital Harare on Sunday, with high confidence for the ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifier after a successful preparatory tour in South Africa. The ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Qualifier will be held in Zimbabwe (Harare and Bulawayo) from June 18 to July 9.

Following the trip to Durban in South Africa, where Oman played five warm-up matches and won four, the national team head coach Duleep Mendis picked his final 15 for the Qualifier.

It may be recalled Oman had selected 17-member squad for Durban warm-up tour.

Oman played all five games against a competitive South African side, Hollywoodbets Dolphins, that included a few South African international cricketers.

Oman had included three wicketkeepers in the squad and as expected, dropped one from the final 15. Adeel Shafique failed to make the cut. He was joined by uncapped young all-rounder Rafiullah on the side lines as the pair missed the Qualifier.

During the Durban trip, Oman had a few matches interrupted by rain but got off to a winning start to the tour with a 36-run win over Dolphins. The hosts bounced back to register a convincing seven-wicket win in the next match, but Oman took the third game in their favour with an easy eight-wicket win and continued their winning streak as they posted an 82-run win in the fourth match and concluded the tour with a five-wicket win on the DLS method.

During the five matches, Oman's star batter Jatinder Singh scored three half-centuries while the other batters who were among runs were Kashyap Prajapati, vice-captain Aqib Ilyas, skipper Zeeshan Maqsood, Sandeep Goud, and Ayaan Khan. In the bowling department, pacers



Oman captain Zeeshan Maqsood during warm-up game against Dolphins in Durban

Bilal Khan and Kaleemullah along with Fayyaz Butt and Ilyas were among the wickets.

Maqsood's 81 was the top score during the five-match series while Bilal's 4/23 was the best bowling figures achieved in the concluding game while the main pace spearhead had also picked four wickets in the opening game.

Ahead of the Qualifier, skipper Maqsood sounded confident and said: "We are ready for the challenge and it's a big opportunity for all of us to showcase our potential. We will give our best."

The ten-nation Qualifier will decide the remaining two spots for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup in India 2023.

Oman grouped with Sri Lanka, Ireland

Oman has been clubbed with former World Cup winners Sri Lanka, Ireland, Scotland and neighbours UAE in Group B. Hosts Zimbabwe, West Indies, Netherlands, Nepal and United States make up Group A.

Oman will begin their campaign on June 19 in Bulawayo against Ireland followed by a game against UAE on June 21. On June 23, Oman will take on 1996 World Cup winners Sri Lanka before concluding the league stage with a match against Scotland on June 25.

Each side will play the other teams in their group at once with the top three from the groups progressing to the Super Six stage.

Boland strikes as ruthless Australia thrash India in WTC final

LONDON: Scott Boland sparked a dramatic collapse as a dominant Australia hammered India by 209 runs to win the World Test Championship final at The Oval on Sunday.

India, set a record 444 to win, resumed on 164-3.

But they collapsed to 234 all out, losing seven wickets for 70 runs inside 24 overs before lunch on the fifth day.

Boland did the initial damage with two wickets in an over, including the prize scalp of Virat Kohli, on his way to figures of 3-46 in 16 overs.

Off-spinner Nathan Lyon (4-41) then polished off the tail.

Victory meant Australia had now captured the one major men's cricket title that had previously eluded them.

"That was good fun, it was nice," Boland told Sky Sports. "It felt pretty good to get Kohli out.

The 34-year-old seamer has now taken 33 wickets in eight Tests at the remarkably low average of 14.57.

"I have been playing state cricket for Victoria for 12 years. I have done some hard work and it is nice to play international cricket and get some wickets," said Boland.

This result left India, defeated by New Zealand in the inaugural 2021 WTC final in Southampton, still searching for the first piece of global silverware in a decade.

India's target of 444 was way in excess of the highest score made



Australia's Pat Cummins celebrates with the ICC Test Mace on the podium along with teammates after winning the World Test Championship final. — Reuters

by any side to win in the four innings in 146 years of Test history. the West Indies' 418-7 against Australia at St John's in 2003

Australia were in charge of this final from early on with both player-of-the-match Travis Head (163) and star batsman Steve Smith (121) making hundreds in a first-innings total of 469 after India captain Rohit Sharma won the toss.

'Let ourselves down'

"It was a tough one," said India skipper Rohit Sharma at the presentation ceremony.

"We bowled pretty well in the first session. Then we let ourselves down a little bit with how he bowled."

Rohit, who lauded Smith and Head for their centuries, added: "In the second innings, we didn't apply ourselves with the bat."

India were also attempting to top a ground record stretching back more than a century, with the highest successful fourth-innings chase in a Test at the Oval the 263 posted by England in a one-wicket win over Australia back in 1902.

And yet thousands of their fans, as they had done during the first four days, still streamed into the ground hoping their side might pull off an extraordinary win, with chants of "Kohli, Kohli, Kohli" rang out round the ground as the former India captain and Ajinkya Rahane walked out to bat.

Kohli had added just five runs to his overnight score when, on 49, his edged drive off a wide ball from paceman Boland was brilliantly caught by Steve Smith, diving to his right at second slip. — AFP

DIJANA, STEYN SCORE DOUBLE IN COMRADES ULTRAMARATHON

DURBAN: Tete Dijana and Gerda Steyn completed a South African double by winning the men's and women's road races at the Comrades ultramarathon in the southeastern KwaZulu-Natal province on Sunday.

Both posted best times in the gruelling annual event, which draws fields of up to 20,000. It began in the inland city of Pietermaritzburg and ended in the Indian Ocean port of Durban.

Defending champion Dijana covered the 87.701-kilometre (54.494 miles) 'down run' course in 5 hours 13.58 minutes, bettering the 5:18.19 set by fellow South African David Gatebe.

Steyn crossed the finishing line at Kingsmead cricket stadium in 5:44.54, shaving nearly 10 minutes off the benchmark set by Frith van der Merwe 34 years ago.

Winning, being the first South Africans home and achieving best times, earned Dijana and Steyn 1.2 million rand (\$64,100/59,500 euros)



South African long distance runner Tete Dijana reacts after winning and setting a new record in the 89 kilometres Mens Comrades Marathon between Pietermaritzburg and Durban on June 11. — AFP

each.

Piet Wiersma (5:14.01) from the Netherlands and South African Edward Mothibi (5:17.34) came second and third in the men's event.

Eighth-placed Russian Aleksei Beresnev (5:24.41) was the only other non-South African among the



Gerda Steyn reacts after passing the finish line winning and breaking the record in the 89 kilometres Women's Comrades Marathon in the time of 05:44:54 between Pietermaritzburg and Durban on June 11. — AFP

top 10 finishers.

"The pace at the start did not suit me — it was too fast, too soon. I waited until halfway through the race before making my move toward the front," Dijana told AFP.

"Winning more than one million rand will come in very handy

— most of it will go toward the education of my children."

Steyn was followed by compatriots Adele Broodwyk (5:56.26) and Carla Milinaro (6:00.23) in the women's race. Fourth-placed Dominika Stelmach (6:06.02) was the best foreigner.

"Knowing my husband and children were on the route watching inspired me. The energy from the crowd was also fantastic. I had to dig deep to get that record," said Steyn.

Runners clock best times rather than records as the distance of one of the oldest ultramarathons in the world varies each year, with factors like road construction affecting the length.

The race this year was referred to as a 'down run' because Pietermaritzburg is 596 metres above sea level and Durban only eight.

Traditionally, the race alternates between 'up' and 'down' runs, but this was the second in a row to begin in Pietermaritzburg. — AFP

OCC Achieves Remarkable Results in International Tournaments

AHMED AL KAABI

MUSCAT, JUNE 11

The Oman Chess Committee (OCC) has concluded the international tournament participation with outstanding performances. The Oman Chess Committee fielded in the Zone 3.1 World Cup Qualification Tournament in Iran capital, Tehran, and two international Sharjah Masters tournaments held in Sharjah, UAE.

In the Zone 3.1 World Cup Qualification Tournament, the Oman national teams showcased their skills, with Mahad al Omari and Adnan al Jahwari representing the men's category for the first time. In the women's category, Maria al Balushi and Kawthar al Maamari made their debut in international

appearances.

The participations in these prestigious tournaments reflects their selection as key representatives of Oman in future events, as well as aimed to prepare, qualify, train, and gain invaluable experience.

The Oman national team continued their journey at the Sharjah Masters tournaments in Sharjah, competing with four players, namely Mohammad al Saeedi, Mohammad al Amri, Abdulsalam al Mashaikhi, and Said al Maamari. Notably, Mohammad al Saeedi achieved an impressive fourth-place finish in the Future Championship group for category C, classified under 2000 rating points, with a stellar performance when he garnered 6.5 points, with five victories and 3 draws



in 9 rounds, competing against 62 players from 19 countries. Additionally, Mohammed al Omari was able to achieve 5.5 points. While Abdul Salam al Mashaikhi, and Saeed al Maamari showcased their skills by earning 5 points for each.

The Oman Chess Committee's

participation extended to the Dubai International Championship, represented by Musallam al Amri, the reigning Oman individual champion. Facing tough competition from 86 players representing 24 countries, under a rating of 2200, Al Amri displayed determination and

achieved 3.5 points throughout the 9-round.

These international participations align with the committee's plans to qualify talented players. Moreover, preparations are already underway for upcoming tournaments, the Abu Dhabi International Championships, Asian Amateur Championships, West Asian Junior Championships, Asian Junior Championships, and Qatar International Masters Championship.

The Oman Chess Committee has assembled a strong lineup of players for these forthcoming events. Anas al Daroushi will represent Oman in the U-16 category, while Abdulrahman al Zadjali and Hamoud al Busaidi, will compete in the U-14 category.

While along with Mohammed al Mahrouqi in the U-10 category, the talented Qusay al Wardi will make his first official participation in the U-8 category, coaching by Bashir al Qadimi, while Mohammad al Hashmi, the head of the national team delegation.

The national team has also participated in several internal preparatory namely, club championship for different age groups held in May, Clubs Chess Championship and the World Schools Championship in Turkey last April among 32 countries.

In their pursuit of developing young Omani in technical fields, Oman Chess Committee the participation of referees Khalid al Hadidi and Hamdan al Hinai in managing the Arab Championship in Jordan.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

UNDISPUTED KING OF TENNIS



PARIS: Novak Djokovic, who won a record-equalling 23rd Grand Slam title on Sunday, is driven on through controversy by his determination to be the greatest ever.

The Serb's victory over Casper Ruud in the French Open final took him past great rival Rafael Nadal at the top of the list of all-time men's major champions.

For 36-year-old Djokovic, it matters to be the best, and he has a strong sense of his historical place in tennis.

But he also keeps ploughing on through the highs and lows because it is "a great school of life".

While Nadal and now-retired Roger Federer are widely admired, Djokovic continues to divide as well as unite.

His staggering achievements on the court have often been overshadowed by blunders and missteps off it.

The latest was in the first week of the French Open when he wrote "Kosovo is the heart of Serbia" on a courtside TV camera lens as ethnic tensions were again rising in the Balkans.

On court, he was booed for fist-pumping as semi-final rival Carlos Alcaraz wilted with cramping.

"I don't mind. It's not the first; probably not the last. I'll just keep winning," said Djokovic.

His most controversial moment was his refusal to be vaccinated against Covid, which culminated with Djokovic last year being deported from Melbourne on the eve of the 2022 Australian Open.

His uncompromising stance on the vaccine also saw him barred from the United States and unable to play in the US Open.

Even before that, the Serb was seemingly doomed never to be held in the same esteem as Federer or Nadal, the undisputed people's champions.

There are those who see something too calculating in the Djokovic make-up

— an intense, brooding presence prone to affectation.

His infamous default from the US Open in 2020 for petulantly swiping at a ball that hit a female line judge gave a glimpse of his fiery character.

And some of his personal stances have drawn criticism — one claim that raised eyebrows was his belief that it was possible to alter the composition of water and food through positive thinking.

TICKING CLOCK

However, the career achievements and resolve of a player who was the first to smash through the \$150 million prize-money barrier cannot be doubted.

Djokovic, who left Belgrade when he was 12 to train in Munich and escape Nato's bombardment of his home city, captured the first of his 23 majors at the Australian Open in 2008.

It was three years before he added his second.

He dropped gluten from his diet, his lithe physique allowing him to chase down lost causes, transforming him into the rubber man of tennis with a rock-steady defence.

In 2011 he enjoyed a spectacular year, winning three of four Slams and becoming world number one for the first time.

In total, he has 10 Australian Opens, seven Wimbledon, three US Open titles and now three French Opens.

He is the only man to have won all four majors on at least three occasions.

And time appears to be on his side in the quest to be considered the greatest of all time.

Federer is retired now while Nadal, 37, is sitting out the rest of the season due to a hip injury which might well see him permanently sidelined.

Djokovic shows few signs of losing his physical edge — 11 of his 23 Grand Slams have come after he turned 30. — AFP

Serbia's Novak Djokovic jumps as he celebrates his victory over Norway's Casper Ruud during their men's singles final match on day fifteen of the Roland-Garros Open tennis tournament at the Court Philippe-Chatrier in Paris on Sunday. — AFP

LEADING GRAND SLAM MEN'S SINGLES CHAMPIONS

Novak Djokovic won a third French Open title on Sunday

23	NOVAK DJOKOVIC (SRB)	22	RAFAEL NADAL (ESP)		20	ROGER FEDERER (SUI)	14	PETE SAMPTRAS (USA)
12	ROY EMERSON (AUS)	11	ROD LAVER (AUS), BJORN BORG (SWE)		10	BILL TILDEN (USA)		



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MSX-listed companies post \$466 million net profits for Q1



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 11

The total net profits for listed companies in Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) increased by 17.4% in Q1 2023 to reach \$466.4 million compared to \$397.2 million in Q1 2022 following higher profits for the banking, telecom, and the diversified financial sectors, Kamco Invest reported.

In Q1 2023, the banking sector witnessed net profits growth of 19.4% to reach \$290.9 million up from \$243.6 million during the same period in 2022.

In the banking sector, seven out of the eight constituents reported growth in their net earnings while Ahli Bank reported a 26.2% decline in profits that reached \$14.4 million during Q1 2023. HSBC Oman led the banks in terms of absolute growth in y-o-y profits that reached \$31.7 million against \$14.0 million.

Comparatively, NBO reported the largest absolute profits among the banks in the sector at \$37.3 million up from \$26.6 million in Q1 2022.

HSBC Oman's quarterly profits growth was primarily driven by a 42.8% growth in net operating income and lower operating expenses.

NBO's strong performance was induced by increasing net interest income, and decreasing net impairment.

The total net profits of the telecoms sector in Q1 2023 increased by 4.4% y-o-y to reach \$62.3 million as compared to \$59.6 million in Q1 2022. Omantel posted a net profit of \$55.1 million in Q1 2023 recording a 14.6% y-o-y growth from \$48.0 million in Q1 2022.

Omantel's improved quarterly net profit was attributed to an increase in gross margins in the retail and wholesale segment, a decrease in finance costs and an increase in dividend income from Zain group.

On the other hand, Q12023 net earnings for Ooredoo Oman fell 38.0% y-o-y to \$7.2 million.

In the food, beverage & tobacco aggregate for Q1 2023 reached \$6.8 million as compared to \$0.2 million in Q1 2022.

The profits jump was mainly due to the return to profitability of Salalah Mills and A'Saffa Food Company. The Q1 2023 net profits of Salalah Mills reached \$1.1 million bouncing back from a loss of \$0.3 million whereas A'Saffa Food Company bounced back from a loss of \$1.2 million in Q1 2022 to a net profit of \$2.0 million in Q1 2023.

Oman's IP strategy to promote growth and innovation

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JUNE 11

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) joined forces with the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit to host a highly successful workshop, which began at Hormuz Hotel in Airport Heights on Sunday.

The 10-day-long workshop will help bolster Oman's intellectual property (IP) system and support the adoption of a comprehensive national IP strategy, marking a significant step forward for IP-related initiatives in the country.

During the workshop, Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry, underscored the importance of the national IP strategy.

He explained that the strategy, meticulously crafted by the Ministry, aims to establish a robust national IP system that effectively manages IP, enforces laws and rights, creates valuable IP assets, stimulates the commercial exploitation of IP, and transforms intellectual assets into



commercially and industrially valuable resources.

The strategy also aligns with Oman Vision 2040's objective of achieving economic diversification and promoting sustainability in entrepreneurial activities. The workshop pursues multiple primary objectives, each vital to the advancement of Oman's IP landscape.

Firstly, it sought to promote the growth of Oman's IP sector, recognising its immense potential as a catalyst for economic development.

Secondly, the workshop aims to garner support for the adoption of a unified national IP strategy,

ensuring a cohesive approach to IP management and enforcement.

Thirdly, it aimed to fortify Oman's IP system, bolstering the protection and enforcement of IP laws and rights.

Furthermore, the workshop aims to leverage Oman's intellectual capital and assets to fuel economic growth and generate employment opportunities. By nurturing sustainability in entrepreneurial endeavours, the workshop aimed to transform intellectual assets into valuable commercial and industrial resources, endowing Oman with a competitive edge in the global marketplace. Ultimately, the workshop's overarching

ambition is to contribute to economic diversification, aligning with the goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040. The National IP Strategy aims to unlock the full potential of Oman's intellectual capital, literary and artistic works, traditional knowledge, genetic and biological assets, as well as innovations spanning various scientific domains. Additionally, the strategy actively promotes the commercial exploitation of IP rights and fosters technological advancement and innovation.

These efforts align harmoniously with Oman Vision 2040's aspiration of achieving economic diversification.

Oman extends bid deadline for Salalah mining sites

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JUNE 11

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals in Oman has announced that public bids are now open for mining sites dedicated to building materials in the Wilayat of Salalah (Dhofar Governorate). The registration period for the bids began in April and will now close on July 30, 2023.

There are three designated sites, located in Salalah city within the Dhofar Governorate, that cover a total area of approximately 5 km². These sites are specifically reserved for extracting building materials, such as sand,



gravel, and rocks.

The government of Oman recognises the significance of the mining sector and has revised the system for obtaining mining concession areas to resemble the procedures

followed in the oil and gas industry.

Certain sites have been set aside for local investors, while others will be made available to foreign investors as well. Interested investors can find more information about the bidding process on the website of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

"We are pleased to announce the opening of public bids for mining sites in Wilayat Salalah. This is an important opportunity for investors to participate in the development of the mining sector in Oman. We encourage all interested parties to submit their bids by the deadline of July 30, 2023," the Ministry added in a post.

Omani fintech is taking 'saving circles' digital

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, JUNE 11

Saving or money circles, locally known as 'jammiyat', are collective financial agreements where members contribute to a pool of money with a rotating payout schedule over a fixed amount of time. The practice is widespread in the region, as many prefer it to other means of financing.

However, due to its informal nature, the practice comes with many risks.

Local fintech startup Zumr is hoping to provide a solution to this problem.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Co-Founder and CEO of Zumr, Shamsa al Salami (pictured), explained how the service works.

"Zumr is a microfinance fintech, working under the Central Bank of Oman; it is one of the fintechs that is part of the CBO accelerator programme powered by Omantel," she shared.

The service will allow users to create or join pre-existing money



circles online, with the ability to select the amount of monthly contributions, payout dates and the duration of circles.

According to Al Salami, the service will provide two types of circles: closed and open. Closed circles allow individuals to create their own circles and invite members.

"The closed circles allow you to invite your friends and family, create the saving circle and then join it. You will be the admin, you will be in charge of the members you are onboarding."

Open circles, on the other hand, will allow users to join circles with unknown participants.

According to Al Salami, the platform will guarantee the security of users' funds.

"We guarantee those members are trusted because we run a background check on every and each member before we onboard them," she shared.

The platform, she said, aims to regulate and organise the practice of money circles. "Saving circles have existed for almost 2000 years. They are hugely popular, and have become part of our culture. However, they are

not regulated and they are not organised."

She continued to explain that a lot of participants of money circles end up not receiving their money back.

Additionally, the platform aims to create financial inclusion.

Al Salami stressed that money circles can provide an alternative for individuals who do not qualify for other financing options such as bank loans. The platform is currently in a testing phase and is expected to launch soon.

Asyad Line’s REX shipping service expands to include Jeddah Islamic Port

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JUNE 11

REX shipping service, operated by Asyad Line — a subsidiary of the Omani integrated logistics provider, Asyad Group — expands its service to include Jeddah Islamic Port, Saudi Ports Authority (Mawani) recently announced.

The REX shipping service was introduced in May and utilises two vessels with a total capacity of 2,800 TEUs to establish connections between the ports in India and Oman.

Asyad Line is a subsidiary of Asyad Group, which is one of Oman’s largest integrated logistics providers. It is an Omani carrier with a strong regional focus. It is fully-fledged liner operator, establishing the business as the first choice operator in the container transportation between the Arabian Peninsula and India.

Its primary operations serve most ports in the region including Suhar, Duqm and Salalah



(Oman); Jebel Ali, Port Khalifa, Ras Al Khaimah and Sharjah (UAE); Dammam, Riyadh (Saudi Arabia); Hamad (Qatar); Shuwaik (Kuwait) and Khalifa bin Salam (Bahrain).

It also include Mundra and Nhava Sheva, with ICDs (Inland Container Depot) in New Delhi, Ludhiana, Ahmedabad (India), among others.

clearance.

The inclusion of Jeddah Islamic Port in the REX shipping service is expected to enhance the connectivity between the ports in India and Oman and provide more efficient logistics solutions for customers.

The REX shipping service is designed to provide reliable and cost-effective transportation solutions for customers in the region. With the inclusion of Jeddah Islamic Port, the service is expected to become more competitive and attract more customers. REX Shipping is an important player in the shipping industry.

The company has a strong presence in the Middle East and Asia and offers a wide range of services including container shipping, bulk shipping, and project cargo transportation. The company has been expanding its operations in recent years and has established itself as a leading provider of logistics solutions in the region.

Omani rial actual exchange rate index increases by 5 per cent



MUSCAT: The actual exchange rate index of Omani rial rose by 5 per cent by the end of March 2023, registering 113.7 points compared to 108.3 points by the end of March 2022, according to statistics released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Local liquidity increased by about 503 million RO 21,052,600,000, an increase of 2.4 per cent. Total source cash fell by 5.2 per cent to reach RO 1,632,400,000 by the end of March compared to RO 1,722,100,000 by the end of March 2022.

Cash supply in a narrow sense consisting of total cash outside the banking system, as well as current accounts and on-demand deposits in local currency rose by 0.3 per cent to RO 6,027,100,000 compared to RO 6,007,200,000 by the end of March 2022.

On the other hand, the total foreign assets of the Central Bank of Oman fell by 10.7 per cent to reach a value of RO 6,476,500,000 by the end of March compared to the same period last year of RO 7,251,700,000.

Private sector deposits in commercial banks and Islamic windows at the end of March amounted to about RO 17,731,800,000 marking a 1.4 per cent rise compared to the same period in 2022 with RO 17,491,800,000.

Total loans and financing for commercial banks and Islamic windows increased by 6.9 per cent by the end of March to RO 29,899,100,000 compared to RO 27,956,500,000, while the average interest rate for total loans fell by 1.9 per cent as at the end of March 2023. — ONA

Taageer Finance launches loyalty rewards programme ‘Mumayyaz’



MUSCAT: With its ongoing commitment to excellence and innovation at every step, Oman’s premier Finance and Leasing Company (FLC), Taageer Finance is pleased to announce the launch of its highly-anticipated ‘Mumayyaz’ loyalty rewards programme.

Launched at Comex 2023, one of the region’s leading technology exhibitions, Mumayyaz has been conceptualised with the aim to strengthen customer relationship and retention.

A first-of-its-kind offering from an FLC, the Mumayyaz loyalty rewards programme is designed to reward and recognise customers who have demonstrated a proven track record.

Under this programme, Taageer’s valued customers receive Platinum, Diamond or Gold cards that make them eligible for exclusive privileges such as pre-approved loans, preferential interest rates, and exclusive priority lounge access at the company’s Head Office in Al Khuwair, to name a few.

Explaining the relevance of Mumayyaz, Shahin bin Mohammed al Balushi, CEO of Taageer Finance stated, “We are proud to be the Sultanate of Oman’s first finance and leasing company to launch a loyalty rewards programme, thereby strengthening our commitment

to providing innovative, top-notch financial experiences tailored to the needs of our discerning clients.

It has always been Taageer’s endeavour to ensure that its customers always deserve the best, and through this programme we aim to provide increased opportunities for them. Mumayyaz is a token of our appreciation for our clients, and is in line with our efforts to enrich their experience beyond conventional service.”

Taageer Finance offers a diverse range of financial and leasing solutions for businesses and individuals. Headquartered in Al Khuwair in Muscat, the company boasts of an extensive nationwide network, through branches at Wattayah, Suhar, Al Kamil W’al Wafi, Barka, Nizwa, Salalah and most recently Al Seeb.

By offering customers a cutting-edge digital platform, upholding the highest corporate governance standards, implementing resilient systems and procedures, and utilising state-of-the-art technology, Taageer has established itself as a trusted ally for customers.

This includes the integration of Point of Sale (PoS) machines at all branches to facilitate a streamlined cashless payment process, as well as the efficient processing of customer requests through its mobile application.

OBA holds meeting with IMF

MUSCAT: The Oman Banks Association (OBA) in cooperation with the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) organised a meeting between the International Monetary Fund (IMF) team visiting the Sultanate of Oman and some of the chief executive officers (CEOs) of banks operating in the Sultanate of Oman.

The meeting was held on June 11, 2023 in Muscat. This is the third meeting between IMF and OBA organised by the CBO since last year.

A number of important topics were discussed at the meeting, such as, economic growth and macro-economic indicators, banking sector performance, environment social governance (ESG), climate change risk,



fintech, and many other topics including policies, regulations, and recent developments in the financial and banking sector.

OBA continues to engage stakeholders to encourage constructive dialogue among financial institutions, regulators, local and international financial agencies to promote the Omani banking sector.

Oman Banks Association is a non-profit professional association created to represent the banking sector, promote Omani banking activities, coordinate with regulators on matters of policy and strategy, and support banking excellence in Oman.

Alizz Islamic Bank launches ‘Manahil Alizz’ internship programme

MUSCAT: Alizz Islamic Bank proudly announced the launch of the ‘Manahil Alizz’ internship programme during a celebratory event which has been designed to empower and prepare third year university and college students and augment their capabilities by equipping them with the essential skills and knowledge required to successfully enter and thrive in the job market.

The programme aims to not only enhance their leadership, personal development and project management skills but also teach them how to overcome challenges in the business sector and find suitable solutions.

The programme will broaden the students’ perspectives and equip them with skills beyond



their academic specialisation. This holistic approach is demonstrated through a comprehensive range of lectures and classes encompassing topics such as Islamic economics, Islamic banking, endowment (waqf), voluntary work, and other relevant disciplines.

Additionally, the 3-month programme boasts a distinguished group of both internal and external experts,

male and female students from various universities and colleges across the Sultanate of Oman.

The selection process involved nominations from their respective academic institutions and Alizz Islamic bank has meticulously prepared a suitable framework, comprehensive curriculum and high-level classes and sessions to enhance their educational skills using the latest modern techniques.

This approach ensures that knowledge is accessible to all students, obtained flexibly and easily equips them to understand the corporate working environment, banking sector characteristics and fostering innovative thinking that enables them to become decision-makers and effective initiators in addressing key industry needs.



Oman set to become one of the largest hydrogen exporters in the world

PARIS: A joint report issued by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and the International Energy Agency confirmed that the Sultanate of Oman is on its way to becoming one of the largest hydrogen exporters in the world by 2030.

The report reviewed the competitive potential of renewable energy and hydrogen in the Sultanate of Oman.

This comes during the visit of an Omani delegation headed by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, to the agency's headquarters in the French capital, Paris.

The Sultanate of Oman has allocated an area of more than 50,000 square kilometres in the governorates of Al Wusta and Dhofar to green hydrogen projects in stages and 15,000 square kilometres in other governorates for clean energy projects, aiming to produce more than 1 million tonnes of green



THE SULTANATE OF OMAN HAS ALLOCATED AN AREA OF MORE THAN 50,000 SQUARE KILOMETRES IN THE GOVERNORATES OF AL WUSTA AND DHOFAR TO GREEN HYDROGEN PROJECTS IN STAGES AND 15,000 SQUARE KILOMETRES IN OTHER GOVERNORATES FOR CLEAN ENERGY PROJECTS, AIMING TO PRODUCE MORE THAN 1 MILLION TONNES OF GREEN HYDROGEN BY 2030 TO EXPLOIT 30 PER CENT OF THE LAND CURRENTLY ALLOCATED IN 2050 TO PRODUCE APPROXIMATELY 8 MILLION TONNES, WITH AN INVESTMENT VALUE OF \$140 BILLION.

hydrogen by 2030 to exploit 30 per cent of the land currently allocated in 2050 to produce approximately 8 million tonnes, with an investment value of \$140 billion.

During the past period, the Sultanate of Oman has taken important steps to keep abreast of global shifts in energy and

climate issues, by announcing its commitment to zero-carbon neutrality by 2050, announcing the features of its green hydrogen strategy, finalising the review of regulatory and legal frameworks and developing policies to advance green energy transformation projects and plans. — ONA

Sri Lanka lifts import limits on 286 items as crisis eases

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka lifted import restrictions on 286 items, the Finance Ministry said on Saturday, a fresh sign the South Asian nation is starting to emerge from its worst economic crisis in decades.

The island off India's southern coast plunged into crisis last year as its foreign exchange reserves ran out. The government limited imports on more than 3,200 items, including seafood, electronics, and even musical instruments.

Its fortunes have improved over the past nine months as Sri Lanka secured a \$2.9 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), moderated its once-soaring inflation and embarked on rebuilding its foreign exchange reserves.

Sri Lanka's reserves grew 26% to a 17-month high of \$3.5 billion in May, helped by stronger remittances and tourism earnings. The currency has risen about 24% this year, central bank data showed. "With the economy stabilising, import restrictions on 286 items have been lifted from Friday midnight," the Finance Ministry said in a statement.

Restrictions on 928 items will continue, including vehicle imports, which were banned in March 2020.

A wide range of items from railway carriages to radio broadcasting receivers are included in the latest list released from restrictions. Sri Lanka will also slash prices of 60 essential drugs by 16% from this week.

Despite the easing of the crisis, the country still needs to complete debt talks with creditors by September, in time for its first IMF programme review, and implement key economic reforms to put its recovery on a sustainable path.

The IMF expects Sri Lanka's economy to shrink about 3% this year after a 7.8% contraction last year, but the government forecasts a return to growth next year. — Reuters

MTCIT receives Saudi delegation

MUSCAT: Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) received a delegation from the General Authority for Transport of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to promote cooperation in the exchange of educational experiences, training and maritime employment.

The visit came as part of the operationalisation of the memorandum of understanding signed between the Sultanate of Oman and Saudi Arabia on mutual recognition of seafarers' certificates of competence and eligibility signed last September.

During the visit, the limitations on qualification certificates and the requirements for holding inevitable and qualifying courses were discussed, including a review of the Sultanate of Oman's experience



in building a seafarers' certificate management system and quality standards for the training and qualification of seafarers, the certification mechanism, the maritime service requirements, as well as the mechanism for conducting medical examinations for seafarers and the examination system.

The Saudi delegation also

visited the Maritime College of Oman to view the system of registration, admission and accredited educational programmes and mechanisms for the formation, approval and updating of educational curricula, as well as the training facilities and the identification of testing systems, assessment mechanisms and maritime training. — ONA

Cheaper food commodities prompt calls for retail price cuts

LONDON: Prices of many food commodities have been falling in recent months but in many countries food inflation has remained stubbornly high, prompting calls for retail prices to be cut.

France's finance minister Bruno Le Maire said on Friday he had secured a pledge from 75 top food companies to cut prices on hundreds of products.

The UN food agency reported earlier this month that its world food price index fell in May to its lowest level in two years driven by a slump in prices for vegetable oils, cereals and dairy.

Huge harvests of crops such as soybeans in Brazil have helped to drive down prices with supplies of many crops becoming more plentiful while global economic



woes have also exerted downward pressure on commodity prices.

The price of food ingredients such as wheat or soybean oil, however, is just one element in the cost of producing and selling food. Food processing and packaging also plays a major role and can be impacted by factors such as higher wages as workers demand pay rises to compensate for inflation. — Reuters

MoCIIP streamlines investment procedures in Oman

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) issued yesterday Ministerial Decision No. 361/2023 on streamlining investment procedures and facilitating investors.

The decision provided that the Investment Services Centre of the Ministry through the 'Invest in Oman lounge' would easily terminate all investor procedures and facilitate the issuance of the necessary approvals, permits and licences for investment projects and make available the necessary data and information.

The decision established the Centre's labour rules and regulations, which should include measures to simplify and facilitate the procedures for the registration of companies, institutions and investment projects, and to issue the necessary approvals,



permits and licences for the commencement of economic activities.

The resolution explained that some places in the Centre can be reserved for private sector companies and institutions to

provide their services to investors, such as telecommunications companies, banks and finance companies, committing to secure electronic connectivity with government agencies to exchange applications, data,

documents, approvals, permits and licenses for the investment project.

The decision also specified that the issuance of the necessary approvals, permits and licences for investment projects and

the allocation of land and real estate to them shall be either through the automatic licensing system, namely, the acquisition by the investment project of the approval, permission or licence to notify the Centre of the form prepared for this, or by the pre-licensing system, namely the obtaining of the approval, permit or licence from the competent authority.

The Investment Services Centre aims to facilitate and streamline investor procedures to maximise competitiveness, increase strategic investments, encourage and promote domestic investment and bring value-added foreign investment to the national economy.

The 'Invest in Oman lounge' is a unified window of integrated services to provide all services to investors and showcase investment opportunities that

exceed RO 1 million and are available to the Omani, Gulf and foreign investors.

The lounge embodies the concept of complementarity of the roles of government and private entities concerned with investment through the presence of 19 governmental and private entities working to serve investors, thus providing a model to serve investors through all stages of investment from the stage of discovering investment opportunities, through the establishment and settlement of the project until the end of the project.

Through the lounge, the investor will be able to identify the investment environment, incentives and industrial, free and economic zones in the Sultanate of Oman, and ensure smooth and fast procedures according to a clear mechanism. — ONA

Building relationships for success: A guide to business networking for entrepreneurs and startups



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The author is a renowned coach, trainer and consultant.

Hello, dear readers. Have you ever wondered what makes a business successful? Is it a unique idea, unparalleled strategy, or perhaps financial backing? While all these factors hold significance, there is an

often-underestimated element — business networking.

The power of networking
At its core, networking is about creating and nurturing relationships that are mutually beneficial. It involves forming ties with diverse individuals - from industry veterans to other enthusiastic entrepreneurs.

These connections become a rich resource, a veritable gold mine of insights, opportunities, and potential collaborations. When you, as an entrepreneur or a startup, build a robust business network, you unlock doors to opportunities that might not have been accessible otherwise.

A casual conversation at a networking event could lead to a strategic partnership that drives your business growth. A fortuitous introduction could attract a high-

profile client that significantly boosts your reputation. The shared experiences, wisdom, and insights you gain from networking can empower you to evade pitfalls, identify lucrative opportunities, and steer your enterprise in the right direction.

Techniques for successful networking

The question then arises: How does one network effectively? It begins with a genuine curiosity and interest in others.

When you approach people, ask about their business, their journey, the challenges they have encountered, and the triumphs they have celebrated. Asking the right questions not only showcases your interest but also presents an opportunity to glean valuable insights.

Networking is not a one-

off activity; it is a continuous process that entails nurturing relationships.

A check-in message or email, a shared article of interest, or a congratulatory note on an achievement goes a long way in maintaining these connections. These seemingly small gestures keep the relationship vibrant and can lead to fruitful collaborations when least expected.

Case study: Airbnb

Let's exemplify this with the story of Airbnb. When co-founders Brian Chesky and Joe Gebbia came up with the idea of turning their loft into a lodging space, they entered a competitive market. Networking played a pivotal role in Airbnb's initial days.

They leveraged their relationships to secure their first investors, which helped establish

their footing.

Furthermore, their networking efforts enabled them to connect with influencers in the tech industry, raising Airbnb's profile and drawing early adopters.

Networking in a digital era
In the contemporary digital age, networking isn't confined to industry events and personal meetings. Social media and professional platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook have emerged as powerful networking tools.

Engaging with posts, sharing relevant content, starting discussions, and directly reaching out to industry personnel are excellent ways to forge and sustain relationships. The key to successful networking, whether online or offline, is authenticity and genuine interest.

Conclusion

As we conclude, let's revisit the question I posed at the beginning: Do you now perceive the potent influence that networking can wield on your business?

Regardless of the nature or scale of your startup, networking can catalyse your growth trajectory. It's time to leverage the power of relationships and harness the opportunities that lie therein.

As always, I encourage you to continue reading my articles. The next piece, "Disrupting the status quo: A guide to innovation and disruptive technologies for entrepreneurs and startups," promises to be a stimulating read that unravels how you can wield innovation to transform your startup.

Thank you for your time and happy networking.

China prods consumers to save less and spend more

DAISUKE WAKABAYASHI

In the latest attempt to boost consumer spending, China's largest state-run banks lowered interest rates on deposits this week. The rate cuts, the second such reductions since last year, reflect a growing concern that the world's second-largest economy has not rebounded as strongly as expected after lifting its restrictive 'zero-Covid' measures.

Six commercial banks all announced that they had lowered the rate for demand deposits, essentially a checking account, to 0.2% from 0.25%. The banks cut the interest rates on deposits covering a fixed period of time.

The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, the country's biggest lender by assets, cut the five-year deposit rate to 2.5% from 2.65% and lowered the three-year rate to 2.45% from 2.6%, according to the bank's website.

A reduction in the deposit rates is one lever that policymakers can use to stimulate spending. The hope is that the lower rates will give consumers an incentive to spend or invest money instead of parking their savings in the bank.

The move is an indication that consumer spending, a key driver of economic growth, remains sluggish. After China scrapped its Covid restrictions late last year and reopened the economy, there were expectations that pent-up demand would push consumers to start spending freely — but that has not played out in many sectors of the economy.

Larry Hu, chief China economist at the finance firm Macquarie Group, said the change in deposit rates "paves the way for more easing measures." He added that the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, may lower the benchmark lending rate or take other steps to stimulate the economy in the coming months. Lowering how much banks pay out on deposits can offset some of the financial pressure when China's central bank lowers the lending rate, he said.

China has predicted that its economy will recover from one of the slowest years of growth in decades last year and that gross domestic product will grow at around 5% in 2023. But economic weakness continues to persist.

In the first three months of the year, China's economy grew at 4.5%, helped by a pickup in spending on dining out and luxury goods. But the outlook appears less promising. China's second-quarter gross domestic product figures are expected to be announced next month.

The youth unemployment rate is at a record high. The real estate market, a critical sector of the economy for investment and job creation, continues to slump with little sign of a recovery on the horizon.

Betty Rui Wang, senior China economist at the Australia-based bank ANZ, said confidence in the economy is weak across Chinese households and private-sector businesses. She said post-Covid demand helped to push the economy in the early part of the year, but there have been signs that May was a turning point. "It's losing momentum," said Wang. — NYT

Lessons from the original Industrial Revolution



EDWARD CHANCELLOR

The author is a Reuters Breakingnews columnist

There is much excited chatter that automation will unleash a Fourth Industrial Revolution, building on earlier upheavals caused by the arrival of steam power, electricity, and semiconductors.

Yet in Britain, which gave birth to the first of those transformations, economic growth has stalled. If policymakers wish to escape the low-productivity trap, they should study the conditions that sparked the first period of sustained economic growth some three hundred years ago. These are brilliantly described by Martin Hutchinson, a former Breakingviews columnist, in his new book *Forging Modernity: Why and How Britain Developed the Industrial Revolution*.

Perhaps the most striking part of this tale is what it lacks. For a start, there were no government plans to boost growth. Large-scale infrastructure projects, such as toll roads, bridges, canals and later railways, were almost exclusively privately funded.

The stock market played little role: For more than a century after the Bubble Act of 1720 it was illegal to establish a joint-stock company without parliamentary consent. Needless to say, entrepreneurs in the 18th century weren't educated at business schools. Nor did the great inventors study science, technology, engineering or mathematics at university. In fact, several pioneers of the Industrial Revolution were self-taught.

There are many reasons why economic growth took off in England. For a start, the country enjoyed both limited government and the rule of law, which held



worker cuts newly manufactured bars of steel at the United Cast Bar Group's foundry in Chesterfield, Britain. — Reuters

public corruption and rent-seeking in check. After the execution of King Charles I, monarchs no longer granted monopolies to their favourites.

The British aristocracy was commercially minded: Charles "Turnip" Townshend improved crop yields, while the Duke of Bridgewater financed the first commercially successful canal.

A spirit of scientific inquiry was fostered by the Royal Society, established in 1660. It is from this date that Hutchinson identifies a new spirit of innovation and entrepreneurialism throughout the country.

The Industrial Revolution can be viewed as the world's first successful energy transition. By the early 17th century, England was running out of domestic supplies of wood and demand for coal was growing.

Canals, constructed to transport coal, massively lowered energy costs in the new manufacturing centres of Manchester and Birmingham. They also generated huge profits for their early financiers, such as Bridgewater.

The first generation of steam engines were built to pump water out of the coal mines. And the first railway engines were used to transport coal from the mines. As Hutchinson writes, "The makers

of the Industrial Revolution took an environmental/resources problem — the increasing shortage of wood — and solved it through technological innovation and, by doing so, increased the productivity of industry."

There were ancillary benefits. Josiah Wedgwood located his porcelain works next to the Trent and Mersey Canal, so that his fragile wares could be brought to market safely and cheaply. As steam engines improved, they found new uses. For instance, driving pumps in Samuel Whitbread's brewery and providing power for Richard Arkwright's textile mills.

All these developments were unplanned and unforeseen, as Adam Smith described in "The Wealth of Nations," published in 1776. The great statesmen of the era, including Prime Ministers William Pitt the Younger and Lord Liverpool, understood their job was not to stand in the way of what Smith called the "invisible hand."

However, this was not an era of unfettered free trade. The Corn Laws impeded the import of foreign grain, protecting domestic agriculture and pushing up the cost of labour.

Hutchinson argues that high wages encouraged capital investment, further boosting

productivity. Further laws prevented the import of printed cotton, penalising Indian manufacturers.

Tariffs on sugar, produced by slaves in the West Indies, contributed a sizable share of the government's revenues in the early 1800s.

The task of financing the Industrial Revolution fell to banks that were scattered across the country, some 800 in all. These partner-owned "country banks" raised capital for new ventures, financed receivables and paid workers' wages with their bank notes.

Hutchinson estimates that most entrepreneurs lived within a day's ride of half a dozen such institutions. "If an idea could work," he writes, "and could be begun on a modest scale, it could be financed. The localism and pluralism of England's country bank system made it a major contributor to the Industrial Revolution."

All is not lost. Policymakers seeking to reverse the country's relative economic decline should start by considering the words of the early English economist and merchant, Dudley North: "We may labour to hedge in the cuckow, but in vain; for no people ever yet grew rich by policies, but it is peace, industry and freedom that brings trade and wealth, and nothing else." — Reuters

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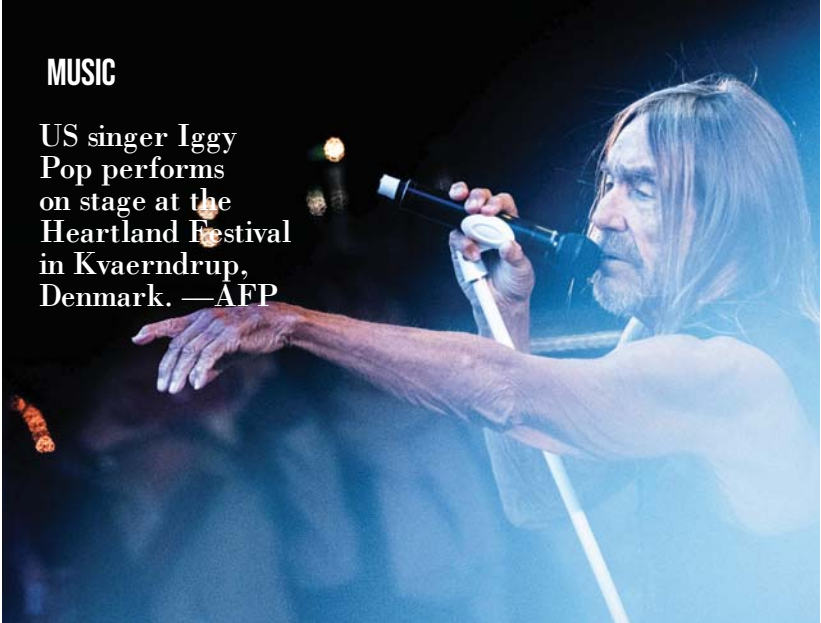
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ART
A photograph shows a 4-metre-high 3D print of Johannes Vermeer's painting "Girl with a Pearl Earring", displayed at the Mauritshuis museum in The Hague. — AFP



MUSIC
US singer Iggy Pop performs on stage at the Heartland Festival in Kvaerndrup, Denmark. —AFP



ENTERTAINMENT
Palestinian-Lebanese filmmaker, director and producer Mai al-Masri poses with the poster of her new documentary film 'Beirut Eye of the Storm' at the Sursock Museum theatre in Beirut. — AFP



LIFESTYLE
Fishermen work near the shore of Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Every day at dawn, Manoel Rebous tows his small motorboat from the sand into the sea at Copacabana. — AFP



FASHION
A visitor looks at clothes during the Yves Saint Laurent "FORMES" exhibition at the Yves Saint Laurent museum in Paris. — AFP

art & life

MONDAY | JUNE 12, 2023 | DHUL QA'ADA 23, 1444 AH

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Despite winning culinary contest, this female Omani chef says journey is just beginning

While Omani chef Sara al Hashar won a gold medal in a recent culinary competition in Oman, she explained that her journey is just beginning and she's determined to make her personal mark in the culinary industry.



ART AI statue designed by Michelangelo on show in Sweden

A HISTORICAL DREAM team of five master sculptors, including Michelangelo, Rodin and Takamura, have trained artificial intelligence (AI) to design a sculpture dubbed "the impossible Statue", now on show in a Swedish museum.

"This is a true statue created by five different masters that would never have been able to collaborate in real life," said Paulina Lunde, a spokeswoman for Swedish machine engineering group Sandvik that used three AI software programmes to create the artwork.

Shaking up traditional conceptions about creativity and art, the stainless steel statue depicts an androgynous person with the

lower half of the body covered by a swath of material, holding a bronze globe in one hand.

On show at Stockholm's National Museum of Science and Technology, the statue measures 150 centimetres (4 feet 11 inches) and weighs 500 kilograms (1,100 pounds).

The idea was to create a mix of styles from five famed sculptors who each made their mark on their era: Michelangelo (Italy 1475-1564), Auguste Rodin (France 1840-1917), Kathe Kollwitz (Germany 1867-1945), Kotaro Takamura (Japan 1883-1956) and Augusta Savage (US 1892-1962).

"Something about it makes me feel like this is not made by human being," Julia Olderius, in charge of



concept development at the museum, said.

Visitors will note the muscular body inspired by Michelangelo,

from each of the artists.

"In the end we had 2D images of the sculpture in which we could see the different masters reflected. Then we put these 2D images into 3D modeling," Olderius said.

But is it art, or technological prowess?

"I don't think you can define what art is. It's up to every human being to see, 'this is art, this is not art'. And it's up to the audience to decide," Olderius said.

Amid debate about the role of AI in the art world, Olderius said she was optimistic.

"I don't think you have to be afraid of what AI is doing with creativity or concepts or art and design," she said.

"I just think you have to adapt to a new future where technology is a part of how we create concepts and art." — AFP



and the hand holding the globe inspired by Takamura.

Sandvik's engineers trained the AI by feeding it a slew of images of sculptures created by the five artists.

The software then proposed several images in 2D which it believed reflected key aspects

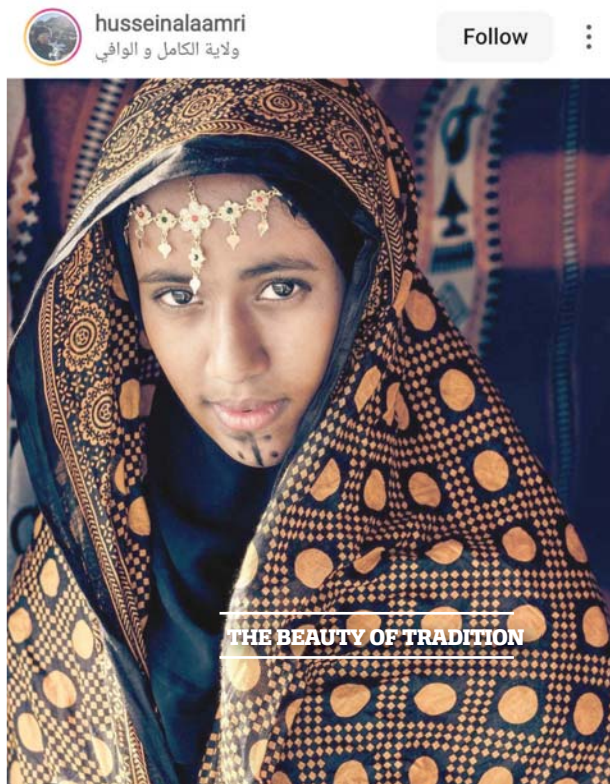
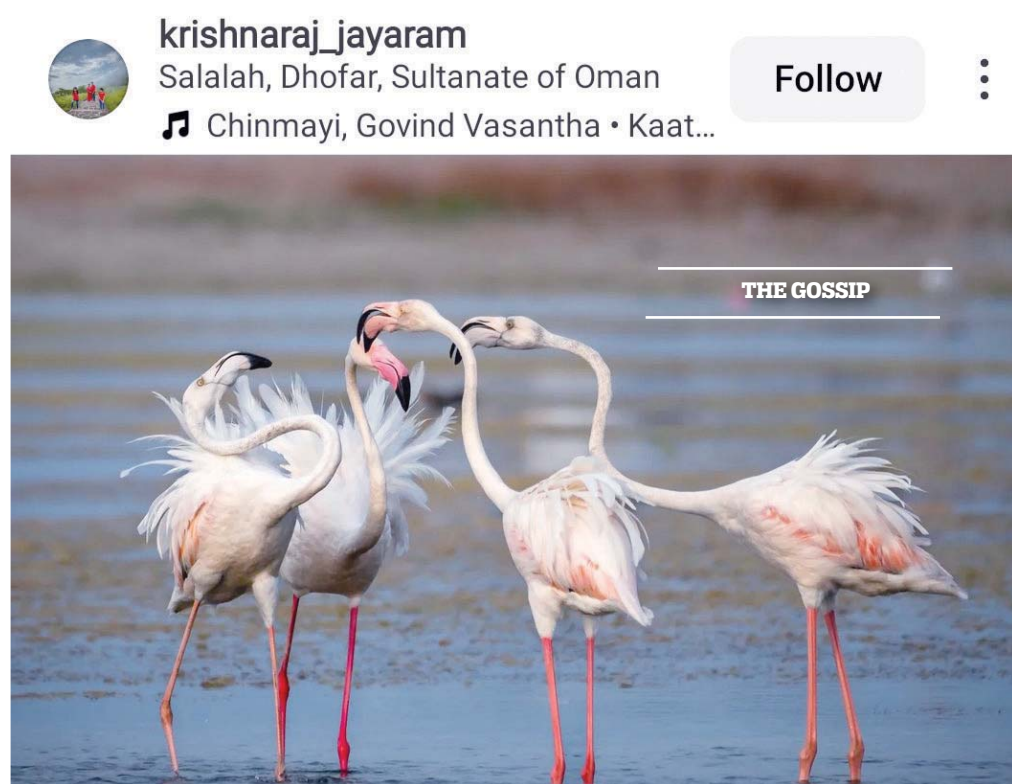


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INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

By Al Anood Al Wahaibi

After joining one of Oman's biggest culinary competitions and coming out as one of the big winners in the pasta-cooking category, Chef Sara al Hashar was truly surprised, as her main motivation for taking part was to gain more experience.

But winning the accolade just inspired her more to believe that the career shift she took was worth it. While becoming a chef is not a traditional career for Omani women, she's determined to make her personal mark in an industry heavily dominated by men.

Sara graduated from university with a bachelor's degree in finance, but cooking is something she's always loved, and it wasn't until she completed her finance degree that her true passion came to the surface.

Exploring various career options in 2017 and 2018, she realised that cooking brought her immense joy and fulfilment. Inspired by her mother's unwavering support to pursue her dreams, she decided to save up and enrol in Le Cordon Bleu, a popular culinary school in London originally founded in Paris that now has several culinary courses worldwide and has produced remarkable chefs such as Dione Lucas, Julia Child, Mary Berry, Gaston Acurio, Lanshu Chen, Virgilio Martinez, and Ming Tsai.

"I didn't start my career in Oman; I started in London, so my influence, cooking style, and approach come greatly from what I experienced in my school and some places I briefly worked at in London during my studies and also from trying different foods in restaurants or markets, but I've always tried to link our traditional food and ingredients to what I saw in London," she shared.

She added, "London has the biggest cultural food hub in the world in my opinion as it has food from many different parts of the world, whether it's high-end Michelin-starred or street food. I've always gotten my inspiration from there and am trying to link it to our cooking styles and flavours in Oman."

While London and Oman may be worlds apart not only in location but also in culture, Sara managed to find a common ground for both, and she loved that she was able to safely use



both backgrounds to her advantage. In fact, one of her first jobs in London was working part-time for Roti King — a Malaysian Tamil street food restaurant that she used to frequent because missing Oman, it was a great place to get her favourite daal and roti which is the Malaysian way of saying paratha.

"I managed to impress the general manager with my skills, and even though they were hiring for full-time roti chefs with years of experience, I was so surprised that they created a part-time job for me, which allowed me the 20-hour work aligning with my visa," she shared.

Beyond cooking, Sara said she loves creating unique experiences and is always looking for amazing opportunities to collaborate not just with chefs but also with artists who can help her shape better storytelling through her food.

"In Oman, I loved having the opportunity to work with Zawraq Collective for a pop-up they called 'Sofria' and another event called Yuzu Fable. The series revolved around whether food can be an art. It was such an incredible experience because I created and implemented the whole menu revolving around the produce of a local organic farm called 'yuzu agricul-



ture" founded by three incredible brothers who are very passionate about growing incredible organic produce," she said.

"Working with the Zawraq team, the artists, and the yuzu brothers gave me such a huge boost of confidence and passion to continue the journey," she added.

Recently winning the gold medal in a culinary competition organised by HORECA, a renowned hospitality and food service exhibition in the Middle East, Sara said, "There were a series of complications with my applications, but after ironing out the details,

remind myself why I started this journey," she said.

"I'm a very stubborn person, and when I want something, I go and do it no matter what anyone says. For those who want to pursue a career in cooking, make sure you actually want to be in the culinary industry. It's tough, and you have to be hardworking and resilient. It's fun when you want to go through that, but I've seen people come and go, and I've seen the market in Oman always changing, so you have to believe in what you do to be able to put your mark in the industry," she said.

MUSIC

California Love: Tupac honoured with star in Hollywood

SLAIN RAP LEGEND Tupac Shakur was honoured with a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame on Wednesday, almost three decades after the best-selling artist was gunned down in a drive-by shooting.

The ceremony paid tribute to a rapper who died at age 25 after a brief but spectacular career, in which he went from backup dancer to self-styled gangsta and one of the most influential figures in hip-hop.

"It fills my heart with honour to stand here today representing the Shakur family," said Shakur's sister Sekyiwa "Set" Shakur at the unveiling in Los Angeles.

"Tupac knew deep down that he was always meant for something great. And as his little sister, I had the privilege to watch that greatness



unfold."

Known for his emotionally intense lyrics and on-stage flair, Shakur sold more than 75 million records, with hits including "California Love" and "Changes." Shakur also became a key figure in a vaunted rivalry, egged on by promoters, between East Coast and West Coast hip-hop.

Though born in New York, Shakur moved as a teenager with his family to California. He became one of the most identifiable figures in the West Coast scene, before he was shot dead in September 1996 in Las Vegas.

The circumstances of Shakur's death remain murky. Wednesday's ceremony came nine days before what would have been his 52nd birth-

day. Shakur's identification as a gangsta rapper came towards the end of his brief life, when he had repeated brushes with violence and went to prison on sexual assault charges.

But Shakur — whose mother Afeni was active in the Black Panther movement and named him after Tupac Amaru, a revolutionary Inca chief — also used his lyrics to raise issues facing Black Americans, from police brutality to mass incarceration.

Shakur and his mother are the subjects of the television documentary series "Dear Mama: The Saga of Afeni and Tupac Shakur." Director Allen Hughes and producer Jamal Joseph were among those attending Wednesday's ceremony. — AFP

ART

Rare Chinese Buddha statue up for auction at Bonhams in Paris

A RARE CHINESE Buddha statue, found in a French family home and part of a set thought to have been lost, is expected to fetch 1 million euros (\$1.1 million) when it is auctioned on June 13 in Paris.

According to auction house Bonhams, the piece is a very rare wood figure, a religious work depicting the Buddhist Bodhisattva Guanyin made in the 12th-13th century under the Jin dynasty.

Over a metre high, the piece was last sold in the 1930s to a family in Boulogne, a suburb near Paris. The family wishes to remain anonymous.

Large sculptures such as the one to be sold were originally made for Buddhist temples.

The head of Bonhams Chinese art Caroline Schulten said the family was



unaware of its value until they called her up for an estimate.

"It was passed down in the family to the present generation, and it had been sitting in a private home," she said.

"What has happened since then (the last sale) is that it has lost the fingers of the one hand...because they were clearly there when it was sold in 1932. So in between, I was told there were children playing football around it, so things happened, quite clearly," Schulten added.

Bonhams auction house says there are likely only a handful of such pieces left in the world, which are mostly in museums. "This is one of the few that has survived, so it's quite possible that there are more pieces from this group that are still around in France or maybe in Belgium or Switzerland. And it's quite exciting to think that maybe the sale of this figure or the publicity around it will generate more people looking at home and realising that 'We've got a figure like that,'" said Schulten. — Reuters



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CULTURE

‘Joys of life’: Hong Kong food traditions endure in city of flux

BENT OVER A LOW bench in his cluttered Hong Kong workshop, dark-framed glasses perched on his nose, Lui Ming deftly assembles a bamboo steamer, a utensil essential to Cantonese cooking.

It's a craft the 93-year-old has been perfecting for seven decades, and steamers like his are an indispensable part of yum cha, the Cantonese brunch involving tea and dim sum — perhaps the most prized culinary ritual in the city.

The circular bamboo baskets are ferried in small trolleys around yum cha restaurants, filled with bite-sized dumplings and other delicacies.

"My only hobbies are yum cha and Cantonese opera," Lui tells AFP while twisting thin strips of bamboo to build the single most important dim sum-



the world and dried on-site — in South Africa, Japan, Brazil and Australia — before being shipped to Wong's shop on Des Voeux Road.

More colloquially known as "Dried Seafood Street", it and its neighbouring side streets are home to nearly 200 vendors hawking dried scallops, bird's nest, abalone, sea cucumber and more.

Pulling out a dried fish bladder from an ornate gold box, Wong says it is priced at 168,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$21,500) due to its age and size.

"For businesses that do well, they can make 800 million to a billion Hong Kong dollars a year in revenue."

MODERNISE CANTONESE FOOD

Ten minutes away, ArChan Chan deftly flips dried shrimp in a carbon steel Chan Chi Kee wok to make her



making tool.

"Those are the joys of my life."

Hong Kong is equally acclaimed for its fine dining restaurants and its street-side eateries, and the enduring use of handwoven steamers in both is part of a set of unique food traditions that have shaped its culinary landscape for generations.

As in many modern metropolises, the flow of commerce in the finance hub brings constant change, but Hong Kong's cuisine remains wedded to a network of traditions that residents view as staunch markers of local identity.

"Bamboo steamers absorb moisture and there won't be condensation (on the lid)," Lui explains, adding that metal or plastic versions would never pass as part of an authentic yum cha experience in Hong Kong.

But he does add steel around the bamboo rim to make his steamers

more durable and improve insulation, an innovation he says he pioneered.

"For steaming buns, there is no substitute."

HONG KONG INSTITUTIONS

Lui's shop is located on Shanghai Street, a historic stretch of road in Hong Kong's Kowloon district that is a treasure trove of kitchenware and utensils.

One block north is Chan Chi Kee cutlery — a family-run Hong Kong institution more than 100 years old.

Retired craftsman Mr. Chan, who is part of the clan that runs the shop and now in his 80s, spends much of his time there.

He started forging cleavers when he was around 15 years old as part of the already-established family business.

"I was given a piece of metal and shaped it into a knife," he says, giving only his surname.

"It was on the mountainside in the squatter huts... But eventually there was not enough space — they built housing there."

Today, Chinese chefs from around the world visit Chan Chi Kee's storefront on Shanghai Street to buy hand-crafted cleavers and woks.

"At least 80 per cent of Chinese restaurants in Hong Kong use our knives," Chan said.

But rising property prices and the city's shift away from manufacturing has pushed the bulk of production for the knives, woks and steamers to Guangzhou, China — though a small select stock is still "Made in Hong Kong". Increased wages have also contributed to soaring costs, says Wong Yan-wai, a dried seafood trader for over three decades.

"Most dried seafood is not processed in Hong Kong because of the high cost," Wong, 53, said.

The fresh seafood is caught across

version of the classic Cantonese dish known as stir-fry king.

The 37-year-old chef at Ho Lee Fook, located in the glitzy Central district, is one of the city's most celebrated women chefs and among a handful of young innovators redefining Cantonese food.

"One of the biggest challenges I have is how to modernise Cantonese food," ArChan says.

The answer lies in sourcing quality ingredients while making small tweaks to dishes' flavour profiles, such as adding fermented aged garlic soy to a classic razor clam dish.

In her sleek kitchen, ArChan lifts the lid of a bamboo steamer to unveil three glistening vegetable dumplings, ready to be served.

"There is such a big wealth of knowledge," she tells AFP. "I want to be able to learn and absorb as much as possible and just to pass it on." — AFP



RESEARCH

Study looks into management of public and private media organisations

A RECENT SCIENTIFIC study has uncovered the methods employed in managing journalistic institutions in the Sultanate of Oman in both the public and private sectors. The study examines the differences between the government-owned newspaper "Oman" and the privately-owned newspaper "Al Watan" as part of the requirements for obtaining a PhD degree in Media and Communication Sciences by researcher and journalist Dr Khalid bin Rashid bin Mohammed al Adawi. This was achieved through the use of the mixed methods approach to gain a deeper understanding of the research problem, clarify ambiguities, dispel confusion, and shed light on the way forward, with the aim of comprehending this study more profoundly and elucidating its obscure points.

The importance of studying, analysing, and diagnosing the management approaches of print media institutions lies in reaching the most effective possible methods for developing the behaviours of employees within those institutions. It is also crucial to



identify the major challenges and obstacles that hinder workflow and examine their effects, whether positive aspects that serve as strengths for the employees or negative aspects that can be addressed.

This study sought to identify the reasons behind the performance shortcomings in managing the media institution by examining management aspects within two media institutions, namely "Oman" and "Al Watan". Is this underperformance due to traditional leadership styles in the administrative management of the journalistic institution and how they are practiced, or are there other causes? This central question places us at the core of the overall management of the media institution.

The research study aimed to analyse the reality of management approaches and practices in the journalistic institutions in the Sultanate of Oman. It sought to diagnose the struggles faced by the press institutions in the Arab world as a whole and specifically in the Sultanate of Oman, resulting from the performance setbacks caused by traditional methods and practices in "journalistic administrative leadership." Additionally, the study aimed to uncover the prevailing perceptions regarding management approaches and practices in the journalistic institutions in Oman, among both the leadership and the employees under their management. It also focused on the administrative challenges directly associated with coordinating the production work of these press institutions.

This academic study is considered the first specialised Omani study that examines the reality of management approaches in journalistic institutions in the Sultanate of Oman. It identifies modern management practices in local journalism, explains them, and analyses them.

The study also demonstrated that there are six societal, institutional, and professional influences on the work methods and management of Omani newspapers. Both "Oman" and "Al-Watan" newspapers have witnessed significant developments in their management. Each newspaper has achieved printing and even distribution independence. "Al-Watan" newspaper has acquired private printing presses and distribution networks throughout the Sultanate of Oman. Similarly, "Oman" newspaper now prints in the Ministry of Information's printing presses and has outlined a project to acquire a private printing press as part of future investments.

The study's findings indicate that both newspapers, the subjects of the study, place great importance on recruitment and training for their staff, whether in the editorial department or in management and technical departments. This is done with the aim of elevating and further developing the institutions, as well as keeping them up to date. An annual budget is allocated specifically for training and development purposes.

Specialised managerial competencies are considered important within these institutions, and their importance is not significantly different from other journalistic institutions. The management criteria, particularly in accounting and finance, are standardised. However, the specificity of newspaper institutions lies in their employment of competent individuals who practice standardised management. Additionally, newspaper institutions have distinct characteristics, such as adhering to a 7-hour workday rather than an editorial production system.