

Iran nuclear deal in 'days'

EU Foreign Policy chief Josep Borrell said on Saturday that a new deal on Iran's nuclear programme would be sealed within days. "We are very close but there are still some issues pending", Borrell told reporters on the sidelines of the Doha Forum in Qatar. "I cannot tell you when or how, but it is a matter of days." Iran has been engaged in talks to revive the accord with Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia directly and the United States indirectly since April 2021.



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SWIA TEK BECOMES NEW WORLD NO 1 WITH MIAMI WIN



P13

DRONES DEPLOYED TO UNLOCK DUQM SEZ'S MINING POTENTIAL



P20

AN ANCIENT MOSQUE THAT TELLS GREAT STORIES



MUSCAT

LORD MAYOR OF LONDON DUE

Vincent Keaveny, 693rd Lord Mayor of the City of London, will be visiting the Sultanate of Oman from March 28. On the eve of his visit, Keaveny issued a statement, "The UK and the Sultanate of Oman have enjoyed a close friendship for centuries. The relationship has strengthened and developed over the years, with the most recent milestone being His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's visit to the UK in December 2021." **SEE P3**

MAJLIS SET TO HOST TRANSPORT MINISTER

Majlis Ashishura will be hosting Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, to deliver his statement at the council's ninth regular meeting of the third annual session (2021-2022) today. The Majlis has specified the topics of the statement which include the transport, communications and information technology sectors. **SEE P5**

READ IN
OPINION



UKRAINIANS USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO STIR RESISTANCE
MEGAN SPECIA

DON'T LOOK BACK! YOU'RE GOING THE OTHER WAY!
RAY PETERSEN

INSIDE



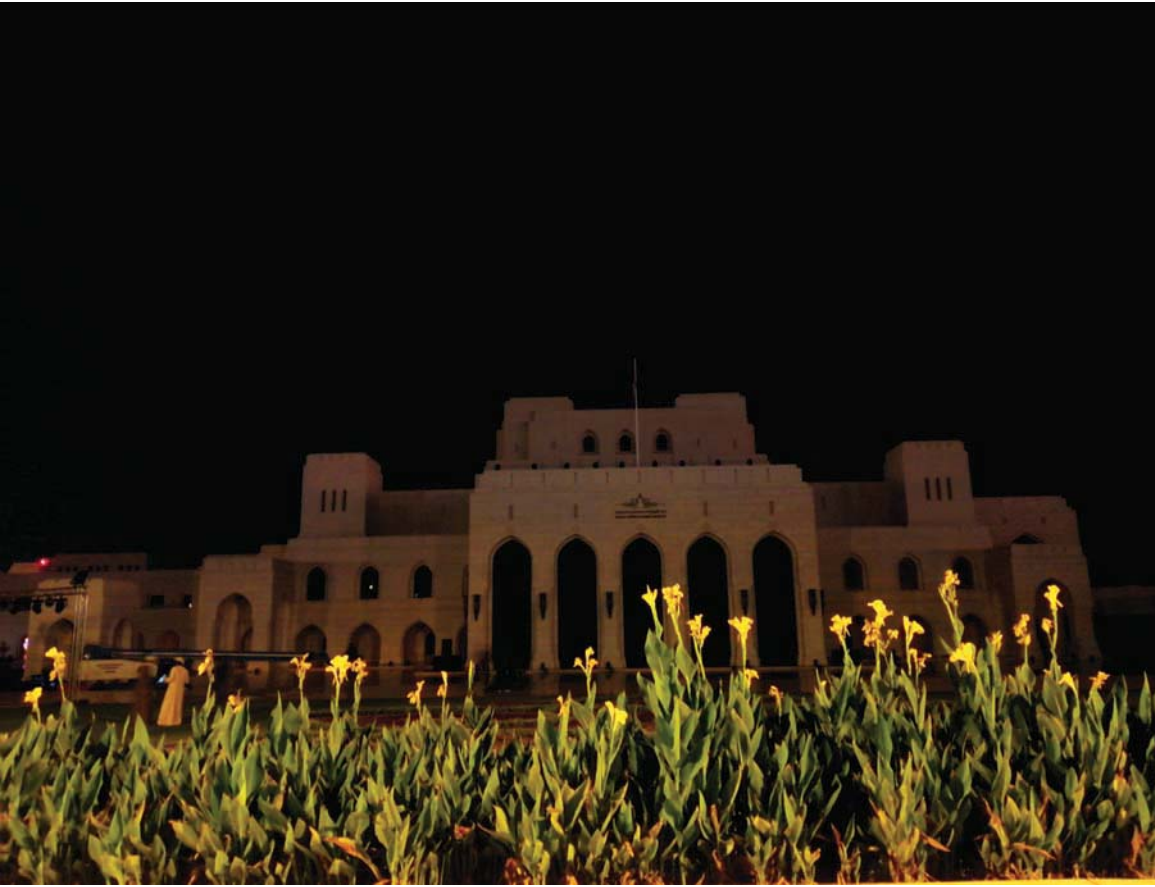
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MISINFORMATION HAS BECOME 'WWIII', SAYS OFFICIAL



CLIMATE JUSTICE REQUIRES WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

OMAN JOINS WORLD IN OBSERVING EARTH HOUR



The Sultanate of Oman joined the rest of the world in solidarity with future of the environment observing Earth Hour by keeping the lights off at major public buildings and ministries from 8.30 pm to 9.30 pm on Saturday. **DETAILS ON P2**

Airfare drop likely as normal flights ready to take off

KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabeeryousef](#)

With more airlines announcing revised schedules from March 27 after an ease in movement of international commercial flights between the Sultanate of Oman and India, airfares are likely to drop in many sectors.

Reduction in fares is expected gradually as the reciprocal travel arrangement, a temporary arrangement between the two countries aimed at restarting commercial passenger services when regular international

flights are suspended as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Sultanate of Oman and India entered into an 'Air Bubble Agreement' in mid-2020 after controlled air services were reinstated to facilitate the movement of citizens of both countries.

FALL IN THE FARES
"We are expecting a 40 per cent fall in the fares in the days to come as number of flights are going to be increased between India and the Sultanate of Oman and other countries as Covid-19

has receded", an airline expert said, adding that India had similar agreements with many other countries including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Japan, Germany, Australia and Kenya.

While IndiGo, the Indian budget carrier, will be starting nearly 100 international services and Singapore Airlines is giving final touches to its proposed 17 per cent rise in services, it is known that Lufthansa and Swiss International Airlines have already announced to double the number of services they were flying.

Biden says 'not sure' Russia changed Ukraine strategy

WARSAW: US President Joe Biden on Saturday cast doubt on signals from Russia that it is planning to focus its war aims in Ukraine only on controlling the eastern Donbas region.

Asked what he thought about Russia's change in strategy after meeting refugees in Warsaw, Biden responded: "I am not sure they have".

Biden met top Ukrainian ministers in an emphatic show of support on Saturday, as Russia signalled it may scale down its war aims after failing to break Kyiv's resistance in a month of fighting and deadly attacks on civilians.

Foreign Minister Dmytro

Kuleba and Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov made a rare trip out of Ukraine to meet with the US leader, in a possible sign of growing confidence in their fightback against Russian forces.

The talks discussed Washington's "unwavering commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity", State Department spokesperson Ned Price told reporters.

Biden, who later met Polish President Andrzej Duda, also stressed the "sacred commitment" to Nato's collective defence, in a clear reassurance to Ukraine's neighbours rattled by the conflict. **SEE ALSO P6**

TENTH PLAN TO SEE MORE PROJECTS

SAMUEL KUTTY
[@samkuttyvp](#)

With oil prices at a record high, the Sultanate of Oman will use the surplus revenues to support the government spending on more projects and reduce public debt.

"Any surplus resulting from the high oil revenues will be used as much as possible to settle the country's debt while looking at spending on development", the government has said.

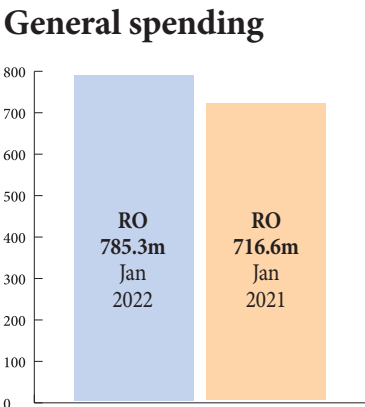
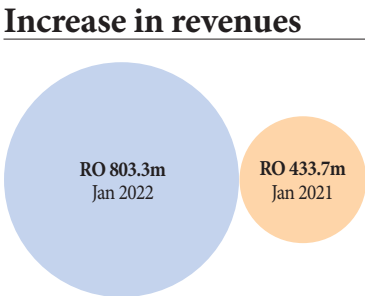
It said that additional projects with priority for basic facilities, including hospitals, new school buildings, maintaining the existing ones and new roads, will be included in the Tenth Five-Year Development Plan.

Thanks to the high prices of Oman crude, the Sultanate of Oman achieved a budget surplus of RO 18 million in January 2022, compared to a deficit of RO 282.9 million in January 2021.

At the same time, revenues increased by 85.2 per cent to RO 803.3 million in January 2022, compared to RO 433.7 million during the period last year.

Figures released by the Ministry of Finance show a 9.59 per cent rise in general spending, which was RO 785.3 million in January this year, compared to RO 716.6 million in January 2021.

Crude prices hit a record high, touching nearly \$127 a barrel on



March 9 following the Russia-Ukraine war, which widened the gap between stagnating supply and growing demand.

In Royal directives following His Majesty's meeting with shaikhs from the governorates of North Al Batinah, Al Dhahirah and Al Buraimi, the Ministry of Finance announced a number of additional projects which were added to the Tenth Plan. The projects include building of Alnama Hospital in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, Samayil Hospital in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate and Alfalah Hospital in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate.

OMAN DESERT MARATHON BACK AFTER TWO YEARS



The Oman Desert Marathon is returning to action for its eighth edition after a gap of two years forced by the pandemic. The Oman Desert Marathon 2022 will be held on November 26, organisers Tamkeen Sports announced. The marathon is a four-stage ultra race of 35 km, 50 km, 38 km, 42 km to discover the most remote and untouched sands and the highest dunes of the Oman Desert on the tracks of the ancient caravans. **DETAILS ON P10**



Oman takes part in Doha Forum

DOHA: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Foreign Ministry, is taking part in the 20th edition of the Doha Forum patronised by Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of the sisterly State of Qatar, under the

title ‘Transformation into a New Era’.

The Sultanate of Oman’s delegation is headed by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister.

Attended by leaders, ministers,

senior officials and academicians from the world over, the two-day forum focused on a number of axes including the geopolitical alliances, international relations, financial system, economic development, defence, cybersecurity, food

security, sustainability and climate change.

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, held bilateral consultations with heads of the participating delegations on the sidelines of the forum. — ONA

More projects added in 10th Five-Year Plan

FROM P1

While funds will be allocated for completing the compensation payments for properties affected by the Al Batinah Coastal Road project, construction of 76 schools will be completed during the 10th Plan.

Also included are phase one of the Khasab Airport and development of waterfront of Dahariz Beach in Dhofar Governorate and enhancing tourist facilities and water ponds at Wadi Bani Khalid in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate.

In addition, construction of a number of road projects, including Dibba-Lima-Khasab



road and linking it to Kumzar in Musandam Governorate, dualisation of Ansab-Jafnayn road phase 2, completion of Al Batinah Coastal Road phase 1, improving roads of Burj Al Sahwa roundabout and intersections of Al Mawaleh and expansion of Muscat Expressway.

Two more tourism sites for development

SAMUEL KUTTY

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Thanks to the new Royal Directives, tourism, which is one of the targeted sectors in the 10th Five-Year Plan, is all set to get further momentum.

According to the announcement made by the Ministry of Finance, two more tourism projects — waterfront of Dahariz Beach in Dhofar Governorate and water pools at Wadi Bani Khalid in the Governorate of North Al Sharqiyah have been added to the 10th plan for development.

While the plan, spanning the years from 2021 to 2025 kicked off its implementation as part of the Oman Vision 2040, seeks to achieve real GDP growth at the rate of not less than 3.5 per cent on average throughout its period, it set a target of 3 per cent for tourism in the country’s GDP.

The Tourism Strategy, at the same time, aims to attract more than five million international visitors by 2040, in addition to same-day visitors and domestic tourists, making tourism one of the most significant income generators in the country.

Under the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik,



One of the most popular hangout zones for locals and tourists alike, the beach of Dahariz, situated between the Arabian Sea on one side and a lagoon on the other, provide a truly unique landscape to the beach and its surrounding areas.

plans for investment will target the vital aspects of the tourism sector, develop tourism destinations, enable the growth of tourism supply chains, offer investment support and assess priorities related to the growth of tourism and heritage in

the country. In May last year, Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, announced that 14 tourist sites across the country were identified for development.

Dahariz Beach in Dhofar Gov-

ernorate to be added to the list of tourist destinations for development is located just a few minutes away from Salalah.

One of the most popular hangout zones for locals and tourists alike, the beach of Dahariz, sit-

uated between the Arabian Sea on one side and a lagoon on the other, provide a truly unique landscape to the beach and its surrounding areas.

The beach is quite popular all year round, but does see a surge in visitors during the Khareef season.

The pools in Maqal, Wadi Bani Khalid in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, are characterised by their continuous flow throughout the year. The water of these ponds, which is about 8 kilometres from the centre of the state, is distributed over a few aflaj, such as Al Haili and Al Farda, to irrigate fields and agricultural orchards and to provide the water stock needed to irrigate the plantations and palm trees in the valley.

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), the contribution of tourism together with travel and hospitality totalled around RO 1.293 billion in 2019, up from RO 1.233 billion a year earlier.

The value added of tourism amounted to RO 717.9 million in 2019, accounting for 2.5 per cent of the GDP – a contribution that needs to be significantly ramped up if the government’s goal of achieving a 6-per cent GDP share by 2040 is to be met.

Oman and Bangladesh sign visa waiver pact

DHAKA: The Sultanate of Oman and the People’s Republic of Bangladesh signed an agreement on mutual visa waiver for holders of diplomatic, official, special, and service passports in Dhaka last week.

The agreement was signed by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary for Diplomatic Affairs, and Dr Tarun Kanti Sikder, Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Home Affairs in Bangladesh.

The foreign ministry officials also held a session of political talks. They reviewed bilateral relations and means of enhancing joint cooperation in economic, business and investment fields. They also exchanged views on current regional and international matters. The Omani side was headed by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy while the Bangladeshi side was headed by Masud Momen, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

— ONA

Nation turns off lights in global solidarity to mark Earth Hour

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

The Sultanate of Oman joined the rest of the world in marking the Earth Hour by keeping the lights off at major public buildings and ministries from 8.30 pm to 9.30 pm on Saturday.

This year the global Earth Hour movement was themed “Shape Our Future.”

“The idea behind Earth Hour goes beyond just turning off the lights for 60 minutes. It reminds us of our shared responsibility towards protecting the environment. That’s why, we encourage everybody to challenge themselves to think about the decisions they make in their daily lives and the actions they can take to contribute in its preservation, like saying no to single-use plastic, avoiding littering and looking for chances to recycle”, said HH SayyidaH Tania al Said, President of ESO.

“2022 is set to be a critical year for the future of our planet. We



are calling on world leaders to take this unique opportunity and secure a nature-positive world by 2030 so that there will be more nature by the end of the decade than there is today”, said Marco Lambertini, Director General, WWF International.

“Now is our biggest chance to course correct towards a safer and better future for all. We need transformational changes to the way we produce and consume food, energy and other natural resources. By taking part in Earth Hour, we want to do our part



putting an end to nature being taken for granted”, Al Said said.

“We are proud to partner with WWF in our shared mission to stop the degradation of the earth’s natural environment and build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature. This is our

time to celebrate nature and help shape our future for generations to come.”

Organised by WWF, Earth Hour is the world’s largest grassroots movement for the environment. It has inspired worldwide initiatives for the protection of nature,

climate and the environment, helping drive awareness, action and policy change. The movement also offers the opportunity for the global community to make their voices heard in this pivotal year and demand a nature-positive future.



MoH and Muscat Municipality launch drive to combat dengue

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health will launch an intensive joint campaign with Muscat Municipality to combat the spread of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito.

The campaign, which will continue for several days, will cover Al Hail South in the Wilayat of Seeb and Al Ghubra and Al Ansab in the Wilayat of Bausher daily between 6 and 11 am.

The special campaign will be in addition to the measures already taken in several governorates, residents and citizens have been urged to extend the hand of cooperation.

The Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs, Dr Mohammed bin Said al Hosani, has confirmed the registration of seven cases of den-

gue fever in the Wilayat of Bausher in the Governorate of Muscat.

He said, "This is not the first time that dengue fever cases have been recorded in the country. In 2019 and 2020, cases were recorded in the governorates of Muscat and Dhofar.

"The disease is not transmitted from one person to another directly, it is transmitted to humans through the bite of a mosquito known as *Aedes aegypti*. Muscat Municipality has been monitoring the mosquito breeding places, places with stagnant water around houses. The mosquito control methods implemented by the work teams include preventing leaks from sewage openings."



Full recovery of aviation sector by 2024-end: Al Hosni

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

For international air traffic to reach the pre-pandemic levels of 2019 will take more than two years, it was revealed by the top officials of the Airports Council International in Muscat on Saturday.

On the sidelines of the ACI World Governing Board, Aimen al Hosni, CEO, Oman Airports, told the Observer: "The predictions are that the air traffic will return 60 to 60 per cent of the pre-pandemic levels this year, 70 to 80 per cent by 2023 and full 100 per cent by mid-2024-25."

In the short term, the air traffic is expected to slow down during Ramadhan but is expected to pick up in the coming months. "Countries with a huge domestic network are likely to perform in terms of air travel compared to those that solely depend on the international and transfer passengers."

Much of the recovery will also depend on oil prices which are expected to lead to inflationary trends in the coming days, said Stefano Barongi, ACI Director-General for the Asia Pacific.

Al Hosni welcomed the scrapping of the air bubble agreement by India, which all international flights to operate without restrictions.

The ACI World Governing Board in Muscat will see the participation of 27 CEOs representing the ACI World



Governing Board.

The meetings, which will be chaired by Al Hosni, will discuss ways to enhance efficiency in the airports and aviation sector, develop environmental and economically sustainable projects, and address other challenges that directly affect the airports and civil aviation sector worldwide.

Luis Felipe, Director-General of ACI World, said, "There will be new challenges, not least how we work together to address climate change, but we are stronger together, and we have to be bold. By opening markets, and by encouraging and supporting the entire aviation ecosystem, we are able to create new jobs and

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AIMEN AL HOSNI
CEO, Oman Airports

new opportunities for the entire community."

As of January 2022, ACI serves 717 members, operating 1950 airports in 185 countries. In 2020, close to 55 per cent of all employment in the aviation sector was at airports and, according to ACI's Annual World Airport Traffic Report, airports worldwide welcomed 3.6 billion arriving and departing passengers, handled 108.5 million metric tonnes of cargo, and 61.8 million aircraft movements in 2020.

The global air transport industry has adopted a long-term climate goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Lord Mayor of London's Oman visit to boost relations, drive investment

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 26

Vincent Keaveny, 693rd Lord Mayor of the City of London, will be visiting the Sultanate of Oman from March 28.

On the eve of his visit, Keaveny issued a statement, "The UK and Oman have enjoyed a close friendship for centuries. The relationship has strengthened and developed over the years, with the most recent milestone being His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's visit to the UK in December 2021." He added that "to this day the UK remains the largest investor in Oman, providing almost half of all Foreign Direct Investment at RO 16.43 billion. The UK remains committed to the long-term economic development of Oman through the recently signed Sovereign Investment Partnership, signed in January 2022, where we agreed to work closer together on increasing high-value investment into both countries."

The new partnership will strengthen the economic ties between our two countries and identify and support commercial investments in areas such as clean energy and technology, which are already an important part of our £1 billion-a-year trading



A free trade agreement (FTA) would open the Omani market to a wider range of British exports and investors. I'm hopeful that these trade talks will break new ground in areas like artificial intelligence, digital and financial services in addition to covering areas traditionally included in FTAs such as commodities and non-tariff barriers

VINCENT KEAVENY

relationship, he said.

The partnership also commits the UK to support Oman Vision 2040 by channelling investment into priority sectors like logistics and green energy.

The UK's expertise in fintech, green finance and digital makes it a natural partner of choice to help Oman achieve its Vision 2040 objectives on sustainable development, social inclusion and economic competitiveness.

"With the ongoing trade negotiations with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), I see a bright future for our ongoing trade relationship. The GCC is the UK's 4th largest trading partner, and the prospect of an eventual trade deal would be a big step forward," Keaveny said.

Already demand for British goods and services is high and is increasingly diversifying into growth sectors like tech, health and education.

"A free trade agreement (FTA) would open the Omani market to a wider range of British exports and investors, helping both the UK and Oman increase skills, jobs and security," he said.

"I'm hopeful that these trade talks will break new ground in areas like artificial intelligence, digital and financial services in addition to covering areas

traditionally included in FTAs such as commodities and non-tariff barriers. That's why I was delighted to see the completion of the Joint Trade and Investment Review between the UK and GCC last year and its recommendation for swift progress on market access in professional, business and financial services."

Keaveny said, "As Lord Mayor of London I'm in Oman to develop closer ties between our financial institutions on regulatory alignment which would boost business ties and prosperity for both sides." London's offer to global investors continues to go from strength to strength. Its unique combination of time zone, language, legal system, global talent and financial services ecosystem makes us truly a gateway to global capital and advice."

Oman is a focal point of stability, consistency and quiet diplomacy in a region which has faced many challenges and crises. Oman is already a greatly valued friend and ally of the UK, but there are now significant opportunities to deepen our relationship in emerging areas of financial services now ripe for closer collaboration - the time is now for our two countries to be bold and grasp the nettle.

NCSI poll on local media content

MUSCAT: The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), in collaboration with the Ministry of Information, is conducting until March 31 an opinion poll to measure citizens' opinions about the content of local media.

The opinion poll aims to identify citizens' opinions about the content delivered by local audio and visual and print media as well as measure the listening, viewing and reading rates by the public.

A total of 1,500 citizens who have been selected randomly from all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman will be interviewed over phone calls through the NCSI number 24219000. — ONA

103 candidates vie for school supervisor jobs



SUR: The Directorate-General of Education in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate conducted tests for 103 candidates for administrative and supervisory positions on Saturday.

Saud bin Abdullah al Harthi, Director of Educational Supervision, said the ministry is keen on complementing the administrative and supervisory staff at the schools and departments of the Directorates of Education in the governorates.

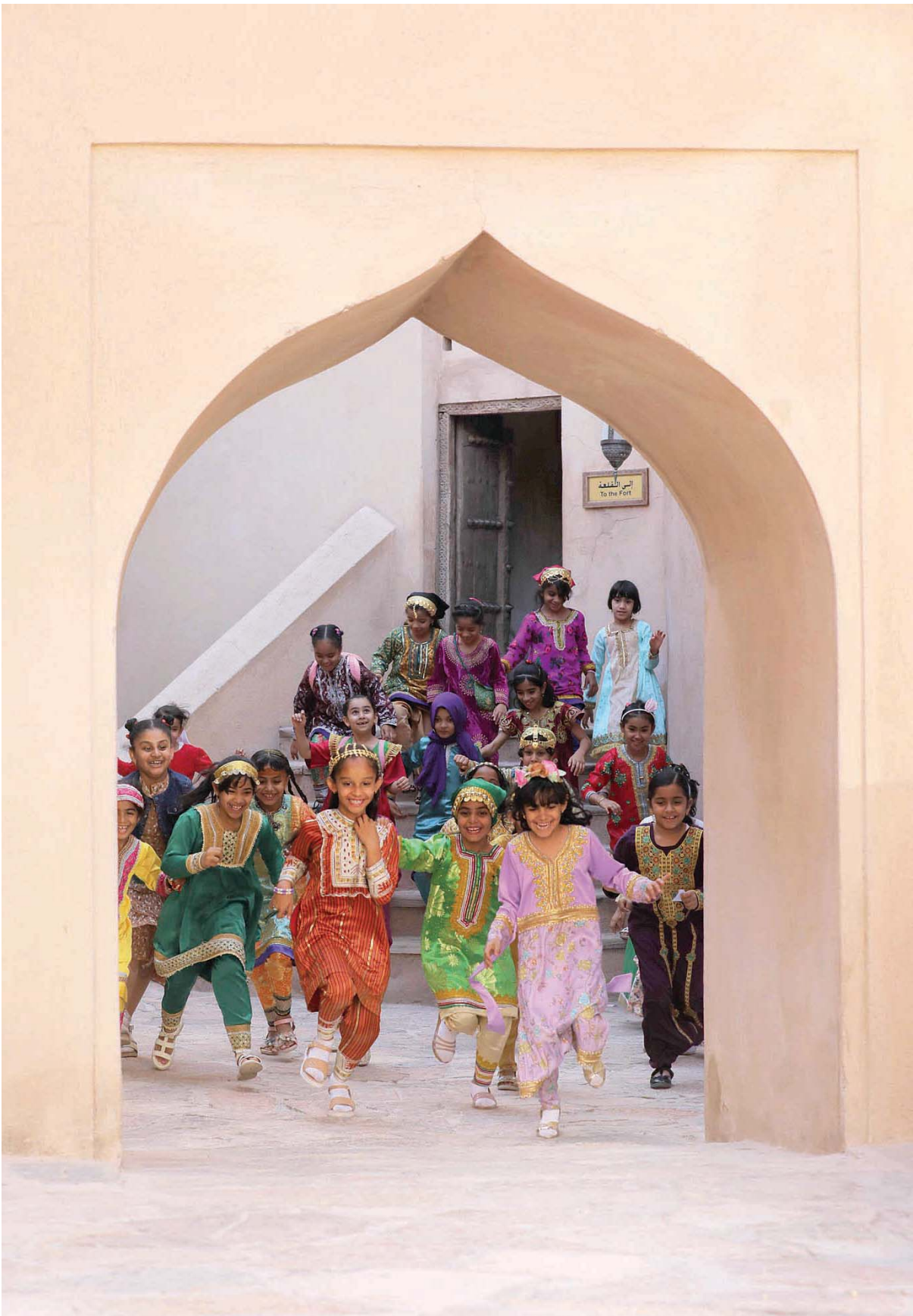
In South Al Sharqiyah Governorate, 103 applicants

underwent tests for job vacancies at the Ministry of Education.

These administrative and supervisory positions were previously announced in accordance to the needs of each governorate. A total of 103 candidates are contesting for administrative and supervisory positions in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate. Of those, 30 are competing for head of department, 13 supervisors, 56 administrative staff, 1 geography supervisor and 3 school counsellors. — ONA



NIZWA FORT FESTIVAL ENDS ON COLOURFUL NOTE



AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, MARCH 26

The five-day Nizwa Fort Festival ended on Friday. The festival was organised by Bawader International, the operating company of Nizwa Fort, in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. The festival offered a chance for entertainment and fun after spells of Covid-19 lockdowns and movement restrictions. The people of Nizwa came out in large numbers to not only cheer up the artistes and craftspeople, but also to savour Omani delicacies. The festival is part of the MoHT's plans to reboot tourism across governorates.

The ministry aims to hold this festival annually and develop it in the coming years.

Ahmed al Yarubi of Bawader said: "One of the aims of the festival is to introduce people to the history and heritage of the Nizwa Fort. It is also an opportunity for everyone to showcase their talents. The biggest goal is to attract more visitors from the Sultanate of Oman's other governorates here and to raise the occupancy rate in heritage inns and hotels."

The highlight of the festival was the participation of small enterprises which used the venue to promote their services and products. It also featured exhibitions of paintings, craft, folk arts and stalls for children.

Three plays were presented during the festival; 'The rebel play' by Ibri Youth Troupe, 'Al Tanour' by Al Shahba Troupe and 'The House Games' by Al Hilal Troupe in the castle theatre.

More than 300 participants from government institutions, small and medium companies and local community members participated in the festival.

The festival was opened under the auspices of Eng Ibrahim bin Said al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Heritage, in the presence of Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah.

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AHMED
AL YARUBI

Bawader International



MoE honours 22 teachers in e-learning platforms

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education (MoE), represented by the Employees Welfare Department, in cooperation with Al Ahli Islamic Bank, honoured 22 teachers who excel in digital learning platforms and YouTube educational channels, under the auspices of Majid bin Saeed al Bahri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Administrative and Financial Affairs. A number of advisers and director-generals, as well as a number of officials in the Al Ahli Islamic Bank attended the ceremony which took place in Khasab Hall in the Ministry's Headquarters.



Hussein bin Habib al Ajmi, Director of the Employees Welfare Department at the Ministry, in his speech on the occasion highlighted the importance of education and the role of the teacher saying: "Countries do not advance except with education, and this is only with a capable teacher. In light of the spread of the pandemic, face-to-face education has shifted to online learning, where the teacher worked under difficult and different conditions, which resulted in distinct electronic initiatives in record time. This indicates the great effort made by the teacher, which achieves the Oman 2040 digital strategy to create a knowledgeable society in which safe, effective and appropriate electronic services are available for different segments of the society."



Majlis Ash'shura to host transport minister today

MUSCAT: Majlis Ash'shura will be hosting Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, to deliver his statement at the council's ninth regular meeting of the third annual session (2021-2022) today.

The council has specified

the topics of the statement which include the transport, communications and information technology sectors.

Regarding the transport sector, the meeting will debate the strategic plans overseen by the ministry in respect of ports, maritime affairs, land transport, in-

frastructure projects and foreign investments and partnerships, Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of Majlis Ash'shura, said.

The statement will also discuss aspects related to the information technology sector with emphasis on the strategic plans overseen by

the ministry in addition to infrastructure projects and foreign investments and partnership.

This is in addition to the legislations related to smart technology programmes, laws on protecting privacy and personal data and the legal frameworks for the granting of licences.

Eshraqa donates specialised medical gear, tools to Bidiya Health Centre

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 26

Acknowledging the importance of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to drive socio-economic progress and as part of its continued commitment to community service, Eshraqa, Khimji Ramdas' Social Development Arm, recently donated a variety of medical equipment to Bidiya Health Centre.

The donation included nine specialised medical equipment catering to different units of the hospital like the pediatric ward, X-Ray and ophthalmology. In addition, it also included mobile carts and medical examination assessment tools, which would prove beneficial in improving the efficiency of the Health Centre.

The inaugural event was held on March 16, under the auspices of Mahmood bin Abdullah al Saeedi, Wali of Bidiya, in the presence of a number of key officials from the Ministry of Health and directors of various departments.

Representing Eshraqa at the event was Nailesh Khimji, Director, Khimji Ramdas Group, and Mahmoud al Saqri, Social Responsibility Manager, Eshraqa. The ceremony commenced with a speech by Mohammed al Naziri, Supervisor of Administrative and Financial Services for Healthcare Services in Bidiya.

In his speech, Al Naziri commended the initiative and appreciated Eshraqa's ongoing efforts in supporting the healthcare sector through meaningful donations that meet the varying needs of patients at the Health Centre. This initiative further attests to Eshraqa's unfaltering commitment to effectively engage with the community, enhance Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), and contribute to the development of healthcare services in Bidiya.

Commenting on the initiative, Mahmood al Saeedi, Wali of Bidiya, said, "Eshraqa, Khimji Ramdas' Social Development Arm, has always played a pivotal role in initiating a number of community welfare drives which have had a positive, long-term impact on the local community. Eshraqa has led by example, and we applaud their continuous efforts geared at enhancing the lives of people."

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Termination of Work Relationship and Disclaiming Responsibility

Mohsin Haider Darwish L.L.C, hereby, announces that Mr. Mujahid Mohamed Mubarak Al Naeem, Sudanese National, Passport No. P03487967, Resident Card No. 66392375, who was working with as Purchases Representative at Consumer Products Division, has left the work on 26th January 2022 without intimating the company and he has no authority to transact any business or receive any money on behalf of the Company. Therefore, the company alert all not to deal with the above-mentioned on behalf of the Company. Any person/organization dealing with him shall bear the responsibility of this dealing and the company shall not be responsible for any such dealing.



Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non- refundable)
20/2022	General maintenance work for Al-Wafa center for the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities in the Wilayat of Bidbid	Companies specialized in building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the second degree	Sunday 17-4-2022 02:00 PM	Sunday 8-5-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=
21/2022	General maintenance work for Al-Wafa center for the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities in the Wilayat of Rustaq	Companies specialized in building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first degree	Sunday 17-4-2022 02:00 PM	Sunday 8-5-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

- Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On Sunday 27/3/2022.
- Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.
- For Inquiry, please contact through the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

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

www.mosd.gov.om



Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non- refundable)
18/2022	Annual contracting works for the air conditioning system and the fire system in the Ministry's general office building at Airport Heights	Companies specialized in industrial workshop services and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board, in the excellent and first degree	Thursday 7-4-2022 02:00 PM	Thursday 21-4-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

- Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On Thursday 24/3/2022.
- Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.
- For Inquiry, please contact through the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

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

www.mosd.gov.om

Russia occupies Chernobyl staff town

KYIV: Russian forces took control of a town where staff working at the Chernobyl nuclear site live and briefly detained the mayor, sparking protests, Ukrainian officials said. "I have been released. Everything is fine, as far as it is possible under occupation," Yuri Fomichev, mayor of Slavutych, said by phone, after officials in the Ukraine capital Kyiv announced earlier he had been detained.

Earlier, Kyiv announced that Russian troops had entered Slavutych and occupied the municipal hospital.

Some 25,000 people live in the town 160 kilometres north of the capital, built after the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident.

Residents took to the streets, carrying a large blue and yellow Ukrainian flag and heading towards the hospital, the administration said, adding that Russian forces fired into the air and threw stun grenades into the crowd.

Russia fuelling N-arms race: Zelensky

DOHA: Russia's "bragging" about its nuclear weapons is fuelling a dangerous arms race, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky told the Doha Forum.

Zelensky also called on Qatar, which organises the annual meeting of international political and business leaders, to increase production of natural gas to counter Russian efforts to use energy as a weapon.

"They are bragging that they can destroy with nuclear weapons not only a certain country but the entire planet," Zelensky said in a live video message to the forum on the 31st day of the Russian military attack against his country.

When Ukraine dismantled its nuclear stockpile in the 1990s it was given "security assurances from the most powerful countries in the world", including Russia, he said in comments translated into English for the conference.

Georgia's breakaway region sends troops

MOSCOW: Georgia's breakaway region of South Ossetia has sent troops to Ukraine to "help protect Russia", its leader said, as Moscow's military campaign in the neighbouring country entered its 31st day.

Our guys are going to fulfil their military duty with a proudly raised banner," the leader of South Ossetia, Anatoly Bibilov, said on Telegram.

He said the troops were "on fire"."They understand perfectly that they are going to defend Russia, they are going to defend Ossetia too," Bibilov said. "Because if fascism is not crushed at the distant frontiers, tomorrow it will again manifest itself here."

He did not say how many troops had been deployed but posted a video showing several buses and trucks on the move.

7 Russian generals killed in Ukraine named

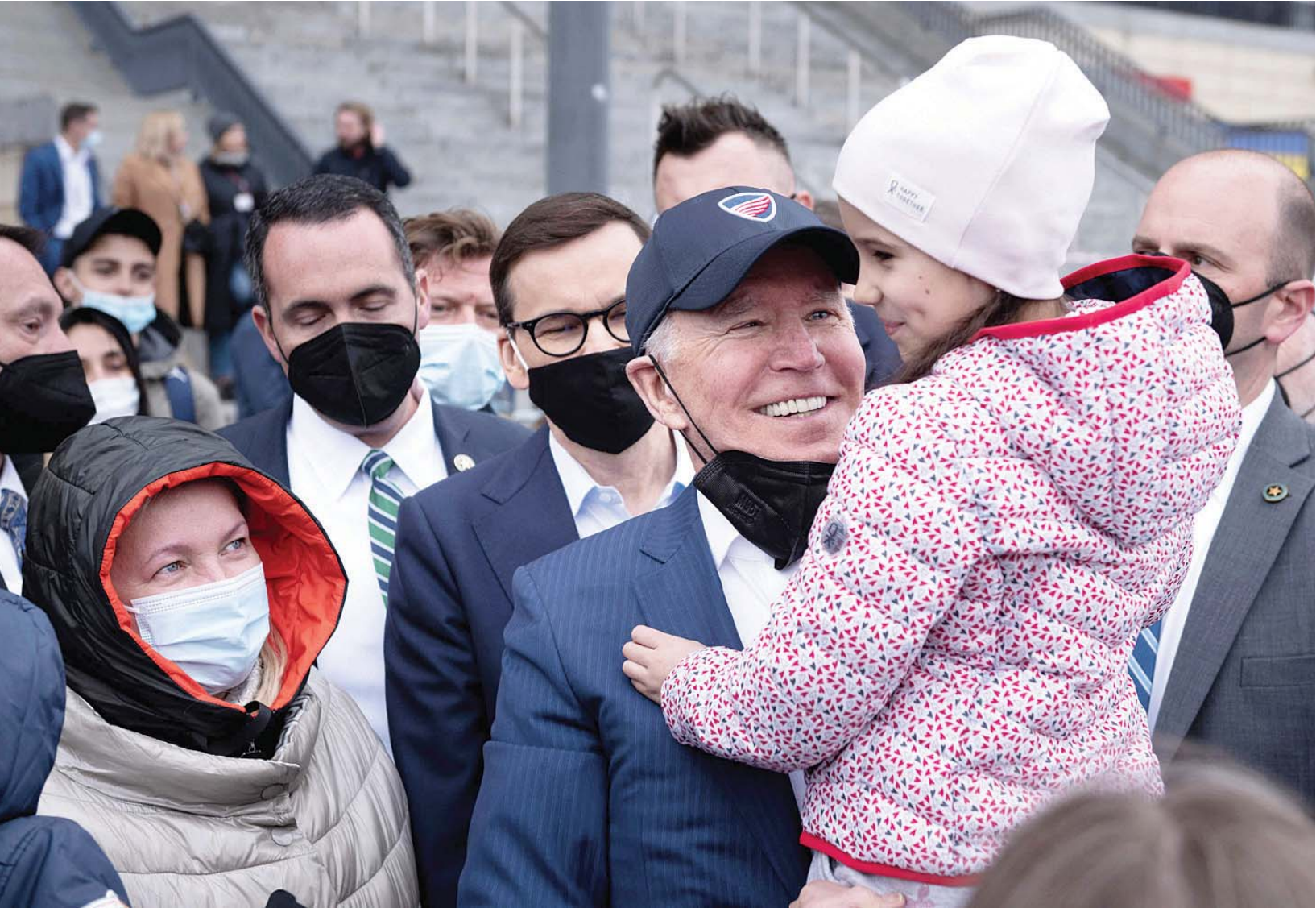
LONDON: Western officials named seven Russian generals they said had so far been killed, and another who had been sacked, during the war in Ukraine. The latest to die, Lieutenant General Yakov Rezanstev, was a commander of Russia's 49th Combined Arms Army in its southern military district, an official disclosed.

Meanwhile, Russian Army Commander General Vlaislav Yershov, of the 6th Combined Arms Army, was identified as the general sacked earlier this week by the Kremlin. It has been reported his abrupt dismissal was due to the heavy losses and strategic failures seen during the Russian military's month-long war of its neighbour.

Among the others said to have been killed is General Magomed Tushaev, of the Chechen Special Forces deployed by Russian President Vladimir Putin in Ukraine.

The number of both rank-and-file Russian troops and senior officers allegedly killed in the month-long war has shocked Western military and security officials. — **Agencies**

Biden meets top Ukrainian ministers in Warsaw



US President Joe Biden holds a girl on his arm as he and Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki (C) meet with Ukrainian refugees in Warsaw. — AFP

WARSAW: Joe Biden met two Ukrainian ministers on Saturday in Warsaw in the first face-to-face talks between the US president and top Kyiv officials since Russia's war began. Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba and Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov made a rare trip out of Ukraine in a possible sign of growing confidence in the fightback against Russian forces.

The meeting took place at the Marriott Hotel in the city centre -- opposite a Warsaw train station where there has been a constant flow of Ukrainian refugees since the conflict started.

Biden could be seen seated at a long white table between US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin, facing Kuleba and

Reznikov, a reporter saw. There were Ukrainian and US flags in the background.

The officials discussed "the United States' unwavering commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity," State Department spokesperson Ned Price told reporters.

Blinken and Austin "pledged continued support to meet Ukraine's humanitarian, security and economic needs," he added.

Biden last met Kuleba in Washington on February 22 -- two days before Russia launched its attack.

Since then, Kuleba also met Blinken in Poland next to the border with Ukraine on March 5.

Biden is on the second and final

day of a visit to Poland after he met with EU and Nato leaders in Brussels earlier in the week.

Biden also told Polish President Andrzej Duda that Nato's collective defence was a "sacred commitment" for the US, adding: "You can count on that... For your freedom and ours".

Duda told him that Poles felt a "great sense of threat" from the conflict in neighbouring Ukraine. Biden is due to give a major speech later.

On Friday, the US president spoke to US soldiers stationed in Poland near the Ukrainian border and aid workers helping refugees fleeing the conflict.

He praised Ukrainians for showing "backbone" against the Russian war and compared their

resistance to the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protests in China in 1989. "This is Tiananmen Square squared," he said.

He also referred to Russian President Vladimir Putin as "a man who, quite frankly, I think is a war criminal".

"And I think we'll meet the legal definition of that as well," he said. Biden said he would have liked to see the devastation caused by the conflict "first-hand".

"They won't let me, understandably I guess, cross the border," he said. Speaking to the troops, he said: "You're in the midst of a fight between democracies and autocrats. What you're doing is consequential, really consequential."

— **AFP**

Misinformation has become 'WWIII', says Ukraine official

DOHA: The Ukraine conflict has unleashed a "Third World War" over misinformation, an official from the beleaguered country said on Saturday, while experts warned of the difficulty in convincing Russians what their army is doing.

Russia's war on Ukraine has also forced a profound change in the way big tech companies are handling information, experts told the Doha Forum at which Deputy Foreign Minister Emine Dzhaparova put Ukraine's case.

Russia has put huge resources into getting across its message in the media and on social media platforms that its war of Ukraine is a "special operation", while President Vladimir Putin has said it intends to "denazify Ukraine".

"I believe we are entering a Third World War, not a conventional conflict but an information war," said Dzhaparova, a former



Ukraine's First Deputy Foreign Minister Emine Dzhaparova at a plenary session titled 'Misinformation and the War for Truth', during the Doha Forum in Qatar's capital. — AFP

journalist.

"It is like radiation — you don't feel it, you don't touch it, but it affects you."

Dzhaparova said Russia's "narrativisation" of the war had

been one of the key elements that had made Ukrainians more determined to resist.

She said it was a bigger problem to convince Russians and other countries because of

the effectiveness of the Russian campaign which has increased since its seizure of Crimea eight years ago.

As well as political leaders, the Kremlin has used social media, sports people and popular musicians to get its message across, she said.

"Russia has been very inventive in this field," according to the minister who said other countries were struggling to deal with it as "people don't know who to trust." "The best weapon is the truth," she said. "But there are millions of Russians who just do not want to believe. When you show them the facts it just does not work."

Big tech companies are now giving greater priority to foreign policy experts to counter misinformation in other countries, taking down more content and are reducing the influence of algorithms in

Russia's 'narrativisation' of the war had been one of the key elements that had made Ukrainians more determined to resist

EMINE DZHAPAROVA
Deputy Foreign Minister

managing content, according to Elizabeth Joanna Linder, a former Facebook executive now running her own consultancy. "But more needs to be done," she added.

Todd Helmus, a behavioural

scientist at the RAND Corporation, told the forum Russia's justification for the war was not widely accepted internationally at the start but is now gaining traction with the "far right" in the United States and Europe.

"The American far right is echoing the Russian message and the Kremlin is echoing the American far right," Helmus said, warning governments needed to act.

"We need to find ways to push information into the Russian ecosphere," he told the forum. Helmus praised the role of international media and Ukrainian influencers who have produced powerful images from the conflict, now into its second month. "The images coming out of Ukraine are amazing, genuine and authentic" and need to be encouraged, he said. — **AFP**

‘Like a Weapon’: Ukrainians use social media to stir resistance

MEGAN SPECIA

A PEACE activist in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv rolled 109 baby strollers into a square last week to represent the children who had been killed in the war with Russia. Hours later, the image was available to millions on their phones.

A little girl sheltering in a basement in Kyiv sang a haunting rendition of “Let it Go”, from the movie “Frozen”, and the clip sped around the world. A cellist performed a somber Bach suite on a street in Kharkiv, with debris and the windowless facade of a damaged building serving as his backdrop and thousands watched.

These heart-wrenching glimpses of life in Ukraine since the Russian war have become powerful ammunition in an information war playing out on social media. For some, the messaging has become a crucial battleground complementing the Ukrainian military’s performance on the physical front lines, as images and information ripple out on Instagram, Facebook, Telegram and TikTok.

“We are experiencing the war very viscerally through social media feeds”, said Emerson Brooking, a resident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, a Washington-based international-affairs think-tank. “The transformation of Ukraine into a nation at war

is just stark. And so it has especially resonated with Western audiences.”

Social media has long been a place where activists organise and share news, as well as a place to recruit fighters or seed disinformation. But in this battle, the proliferation of pictures showing the human toll of the war has helped Ukraine project an image of a country of stalwart survivors with the moral high ground, while casting Russia as a merciless aggressor — an impression reinforced by global condemnation and sanctions.

Brooking said that Ukraine had an additional advantage because Russia had not engaged in the same level of disinformation as it has in the past, in part because the government in Moscow has denied the extent of the war.

But Russian government accounts have actively questioned the veracity of verified Ukrainian civilian accounts appearing on social media.

Those efforts have only deepened Anastasiya Magerramova’s determination to show the world the devastation in Ukraine. Magerramova, 27, press secretary for the Okhmatdyt paediatric hospital in Kyiv, said she feels that she is fighting her own battle — a struggle for truth alongside the conflict among soldiers — as her compatriots take up arms.

Magerramova and a handful of colleagues have documented the civilians streaming in with injuries. She and



Empty strollers were placed in Lviv last week to represent the children who had been killed during Russia’s war.

some others have moved into the hospital, sleeping in the wards and working around the clock, phones in hand and cameras at the ready. They post the images on Instagram, Facebook and Telegram with detailed descriptions of what happened to those shown in the pictures.

“I feel that my job is important; it is also like a weapon”, she said. “I want to show the people the consequences of this war: Poor children with shrapnel in their legs, their arms, in their heads. It’s not OK. It shouldn’t be like this.”

The hospital’s social media accounts have become a running documentation of the civilian toll, showing — often in excruciating detail — the suffering of those caught up in the war.

On Saturday, Magerramova posted a photo on social media of a young mother, Olga, who had used her body to shield her baby from shelling. The family’s travails — the father was also injured — instantly reverberated around the world, picked up first by the government, then by activists, Ukrainian news media and later, international outlets.

The personal stories keep Magerramova’s phone ringing as she fields calls from journalists around the world.

Civil society groups and humanitarian organisations based inside and outside of Ukraine have also played a vital role in amplifying voices, turning into a sort of activist army to verify and disseminate information.

Marta Barandiy set up Promote Ukraine, a nongovernmental media hub, in 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine. When the full-scale invasion began in February, the group’s volunteer ranks swelled and it expanded its online presence.

Dozens now volunteer, spending their days posting information online, some working remotely from Europe and some sharing updates from Ukrainian cities under siege.

“We are trying to be a deep communication platform for Ukrainians who are in Ukraine, as well as for Ukrainians who have fled Ukraine who have stories to share”, Barandiy said. Her group translates reports from those on the ground and from government sources into English, and this week began staging news conferences to further amplify the stories.

Some of her group’s volunteers are working out of a Ukrainian civil society hub recently opened in a European Parliament building in Brussels.

Maryna Yaroshevykh, head of advocacy for Promote Ukraine, said she thought the power of some of the images had already contributed to public pressure for sanctions on Russia.

“They are opening the hearts of Europeans and people around the world”, she said. “This way, average people can pressure politicians to intervene and do something.”

Because the fighting has made some parts of Ukraine inaccessible to all but a handful of journalists, the personal tales shared by civilians on social media have become even more compelling. Nadezhda Sukhorukova, who managed to escape the besieged southern port of Mariupol and is now near Odesa, a city farther to the west, with her son, has described living a “hell” as the Russians shelled Mariupol incessantly. For weeks, she hid in a basement, only daring to venture out for necessities.

The best time to use your airline miles? Now.

JULIE WEED

Frances Meredith of Raleigh, North Carolina, used a branded American Airlines credit card for everything from groceries to medical expenses during the pandemic, piling up points with nowhere to spend them. That meant she had plenty to redeem when her family of four decided it was time for a winter getaway to Miami.

Although the seats were priced at 50,000 points each, Meredith, an internist, was excited to save money by using her rewards balance. “It was easy. There were lots of seats”, she said.

As travellers return to the skies, many, like Meredith, have amassed larger than usual totals in airline and credit card rewards programmes. And they are starting to spend them.

United Airlines’ Mileage Plus programme has had multiple record-breaking days over the past few weeks as customers have flocked to redeem miles, said Michael Covey, the Managing Director of the united programme. “The demand is hitting the books in ways we’ve never seen before”, he said.

Several factors make now the time to cash in points.

Flights booked with points on the major US carriers are fully refundable. That means if you need to cancel the trip, all your points and any associated fees will be returned without any penalties. Tickets bought for cash, in contrast, typically offer a credit for a future flight rather than a refund

and may charge fees, so your money is tied up with the airline. Refundable tickets can be purchased, but they are more expensive.

This difference, between ending up with a credit or a refund, can loom large for expensive trips like a family vacation overseas. Some travellers are “still uncomfortable with international travel”, while conditions remain in flux because of the pandemic, so using points to book a flight to a foreign country can offer more peace of mind, said Jamie Larounis, who writes about loyalty programmes on his travel website, the Forward Cabin. He is now also seeing some worry about flights near Eastern Europe because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Many travellers are sitting on larger than ever point balances, both because they haven’t been redeeming their points and because they’ve been adding to the pile over the last two years with credit card purchases tied to airline loyalty accounts. According to a study by ValuePenguin and OnPoint Loyalty, the five largest airline loyalty programmes — Delta Air Lines’ SkyMiles, American Airlines’ AAdvantage, United Airlines’ MileagePlus, Southwest Airlines’ Rapid Rewards and JetBlue’s TrueBlue — ended 2020 with \$27.5 billion in liabilities, up \$2.9 billion from 2019.

Customers earned about half as many points in 2020 as they did the previous year, and redeemed just 10 per cent of their available points compared to 30 per cent the previous year.

The most important reason to use points now is that they



People are sitting on big piles of miles and have a lot of pent-up demand for travel. There is no downside to them raising the cost of award travel

LAROUNIS
FORWARD CABIN WEBSITE

may have less buying power over the coming years, Larounis said. Airline and hotel points are like currencies owned by companies, and those companies can value their currencies however they like by changing the cost of redemption.

Helane Becker, an airline analyst at the investment bank, Cowen, said airlines have devalued points multiple times over the past few years and she expects that practice to continue.

This is already evident in both the airline and hotel sectors. Alaska Airlines recently upped the cost to book some of its first class tickets. Hyatt Hotels recently increased the points necessary for some hotel stays when it implemented a new peak and off-peak pricing programme.

Companies know that “people are sitting on big piles of miles and have a lot of pent-up demand for travel”, said Larounis of the Forward Cabin website. “There is no downside to them raising the cost of award travel.”

That is especially true of airplane seats in the premiere cabin, he said. Some leisure travellers, who may have been content in economy class seats, are now purchasing seats in the front of the plane where passengers are a little more spread out. “They see it as safer in regards to Covid”, Larounis said.

Travel itself is less daunting now with more countries eliminating Covid testing for vaccinated passengers. London, one of the most popular destinations for US travellers, dropped its testing requirement on February 11. Thailand, Vietnam, Australia and other countries are opening up to tourists.

Living with bipolar disorder



**DR HAMED
AL SINAWI**
@alsinawi

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

Few months ago I came across a book titled ‘An Unquiet Mind’ which is written by Dr Kay Redfield Jamison, Professor of Psychology at Johns Hopkins University.

The book tells her struggle with bipolar disorder describing the symptoms that changed her life, her journey in accepting the diagnosis and the treatment and the feelings of embarrassment and shame whenever she went to the psychiatrist’s clinic for her appointment.

She also described her experience with taking medications that helped her feel mentally stable so she could excel in her personal and professional life yet some medication caused her side effects that were unpleasant.

In her book she says, “When I am depressed, I do not feel alive

and cannot produce anything, but when I am in a manic state, I can write an entire paper in a day. I feel that I have a strange energy and thoughts and projects rush through my mind until I feel above the clouds.”

Bipolar disorder is a common mental illness that affects about 50 million people from different countries around the world. It is ranked by the World Health Organization as the eighth among the diseases that cause disability.

The severity of symptoms varies from one person to the other. Some patients can lead normal lives while others become unable to function and need frequent admission to mental health units with frequent episodes of depression followed by episodes of mania, which causes major changes in their lives.

During my work as a psychiatrist, I met many patients with bipolar disorders from different ages, some of whom are doctors, teachers or nurses, while others are entrepreneurs, creative writers and poets.

**BIPOLAR DISORDERS
AFFECT MILLIONS OF PEOPLE
WORLDWIDE, AND WITH
TREATMENT PEOPLE CAN
HAVE A PRODUCTIVE AND
JOYFUL LIVES**

Patients with bipolar disease experience episodes of depression where they feel sadness, crying, lacking energy and having sleep difficulties. The manic episode brings with it increased activity, excessive talking and buying of

things they do not need.

Sometimes the patient believes that he has special powers. This fluctuation in mood exhausts the patient a lot and embarrasses those around him.

During the manic phase, some patients miss the ‘enjoyable’ symptoms of mania such as a feeling of joy, self-confidence and increased activity, especially when these symptoms are mild and do not affect their productivity or interfere with their social life.

When the symptoms of mania are severe the patients experience major changes in his or her behaviours. One patient wrote a three-volume fantasy novel, which she stayed up to complete while she was in the midst of a manic episode, but unfortunately came up with a lot of incoherent ideas, while another

patient distributed expensive gifts to his friends and colleagues despite his limited income.

This is often followed by severe depression that may lead the patient to think of suicide to get rid of psychological pain.

Dr Redfield Jamison says that she hesitated a lot before publishing her book for fear that disclosing her experience with mental illness would make others see her as less qualified as a clinical psychologist, due to the stigma and negative attitudes attached to people with mental health problems.

Reading this book made me wonder, would people in Arab societies accept being treated by a doctor who suffers from the same condition? Or will it be said, “A doctor who treats people while he is ill”?

Sign of things to come? Royals’ Caribbean tour hit by protests

PHIL HAZLEWOOD

Prince William’s trip to the Caribbean was meant to help Commonwealth countries where his 95-year-old grandmother is also head of state celebrate her record-breaking 70 years on the throne. But what were designed to be carefully choreographed photocalls and public appearances for Queen Elizabeth II’s Platinum Jubilee did not go entirely to plan.

Instead, William, 39, and his wife Catherine, 40, faced calls to apologise for the slave trade that help make his ancestors’ fortunes and to atone for the sins of the past.

The Bahamas National Reparations Committee said Britain’s royals had benefited from the “blood, sweat and tears” of slaves and called for reparations. Colonised lands and people had been “looted and pillaged” by the UK monarchy over centuries, leaving them under-developed in the modern age, it added.

In Jamaica, meanwhile, Prime Minister Andrew Holness pointedly told the Duke of Cambridge -- as he is formally known -- in front of television cameras that the nation was “moving on” as an independent country. By doing so, he gave William’s father Prince Charles another indication of what he could face when he is king, after Barbados became a republic last year.

On the streets of Jamaica’s capital, Kingston, the Rastafarian dub poet Mutabaruka said ditching the queen would make little difference to ordinary people. “Making Jamaica a republic will not change the price of food but it has a psychological implication on the mind and the consciousness of the people,” he told the Jamaica Observer newspaper.

“It has an internal significance to how we view ourselves.” Shop owner Tameka Thomas put it more bluntly. “It’s time to change now. Queen Elizabeth is queen in England, not Jamaica. She should stay in England,” she said.

British royals’ pivotal role in the slave trade goes back to the 16th century, when the first queen Elizabeth sponsored one of its first major proponents, John Hawkins. King Charles II in the 1600s encouraged the expansion of the trade and with his brother, the future king James II, invested private funds in the Royal African Company.

The company transported hundreds of thousands of men, women and children from the continent across the Atlantic. Many were branded with the company’s initials. King George III’s son, who became king William IV, opposed slavery abolitionists but was unsuccessful. — AFP



OLEG USTENKO

The writer is the chief economic adviser to Ukraine President Zelensky

Thanks to Europe, Putin’s war is paying for itself

President Biden’s trip to Belgium and Poland could not come at a more critical time for Europe. If our shared ideals of democracy and freedom are to prevail, the US States and its European allies must do more to stop funding Vladimir Putin’s attack on Ukraine.

Western sanctions have so far targeted Russia’s financial sector and prominent individuals, and the United States has prohibited the import of Russian oil and gas. This effort is laudable, but unfortunately it has failed to stop the Russian military from murdering innocent people every day.

The best way to stop Mr Putin’s war machine is to cut off his daily inflow of hard currency. And the best way to do that is for Europe to stop handing over cash for Russian oil and gas. The US should also impose secondary sanctions, which could prevent anyone from legally shipping and financing Russian oil.

Oil and petroleum products are Russia’s most important exports by far. Gas is the third most valuable export and is worth more than all other exports combined. Revenue from the export of energy finances over 40 per cent of the Russian budget.

Russia’s most important customer is the European Union, which buys about 60 per cent of the country’s gas exports, 50 per cent of its oil exports and 50 per cent of its petroleum product exports.

Europe has paid more than \$19 billion to Mr Putin since February 24 for these products. Even more egregiously, since the war, Russian oil exports have not fallen, in part because the EU has not cut back on imports. At the same time, oil and gas prices have increased. From Mr Putin’s perspective, his war is paying for itself.

Attacks by Russia over the past month have clearly demonstrated that it has no qualms about deliberately firing into civilian areas. Russian bombardment hit the Mariupol Drama Theater where civilians had sheltered. Europe should be very afraid. As Mr Putin faces stiffer resistance than he expected from our brave Ukrainian fighters, this has raised fears of chemical, biological or even nuclear weapons being used against Ukrainian civilians.

Shutting down Mr Putin’s cash flow is an urgent moral and strategic



Kharkiv municipal employees fill bags with sand to protect the city’s monuments from strikes in Kharkiv where local authorities reported 44 Russian artillery bombardments and 140 rocket attacks in a single day. – AFP

imperative, but Europe is frozen in the headlights.

Some European experts claim that the war is not being financed by energy exports. This is entirely wrong. Mr Putin’s regime is seeking to buy military equipment. With much of

**THE ECONOMIC
ADVISER TO
PRESIDENT
ZELENSKY MAKES
THE CASE FOR
EUROPE TO STOP
BUYING RUSSIAN OIL
AND GAS**

the central bank’s reserves frozen, Mr Putin needs the hard currency he receives every day, and therefore Russia has continued to pump oil at full pre-war capacity. The euros that Mr Putin receives now goes directly towards firepower that kills Ukrainian civilians and destroys our cities.

The economic and energy minister of Germany, Europe’s largest economy, said that any reduction in current purchases of oil and gas would cause his country’s economy to crater.

But Europe already has enough gas to get to next winter, and the International Energy Agency has laid out a viable plan for conservation and

alternative supplies, which would reduce European imports of Russian gas by more than one third. Germany is particularly dependent on Russian gas, but a study from the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina pointed out that a short-term suspension of Russian gas would be “manageable”. Additionally, given that Germany has low debt relative to GDP, the potential effects on lower-income people can be addressed.

In the meantime, payments for Russian gas should go into escrow accounts, so that the proceeds cannot be used to buy weapons. This is standard practice when there are sanctions. Russia has already imposed its own escrow requirement on foreign investors who receive coupon payments on their ruble-denominated corporate bonds.

There is some concern as to whether an embargo on Russian oil would be undermined by smuggling. To address this issue, the president’s economic advisory team has established the Russian Tanker Tracking Group, which now follows every ship that lifts oil from Russian ports.

We now need our European partners to do the right thing: stop funding Mr Putin’s war machine. We hope by the time Mr Biden returns from Europe, the Western alliance will have again found its moral clarity.

— New York Times

Don't look back!
You're going the
other way!



Ray Petersen
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The writer is a media
consultant

I always thought that 'retro', was an abbreviation of retrospective, which is defined by Collins as, "feelings or opinions concerning things that have happened in the past." Yet Merriam's Dictionary defines 'retro' as being, "relating to, reviving, or being the styles and especially the fashions of the past: Fashionably nostalgic or old-fashioned." There is quite a gap between the

two don't you think?

I mean, it's not beyond the bounds of possibility for one word to have multiple meanings though, is it? After all, an article can be identified as "a published piece of writing", a thing, "a particular item or object", "a clause in a legal document", or even as a figure of speech in grammar, being 'a' or 'an', the indefinite articles, or 'the', the definite article. It's enough to do your head in, isn't it?

But back to retro, in the sense of fashion. Is it really a new form of fashion, or is it a retail industry inspired fad, a craze, a practice, a pseudo-enthusiastic, zealous addiction to an intense and short-lived whimsy, or is it a cyclical, regenerative, reminder that class is permanent, and appeal is the root of all discretionary spending, whatever the environment. 'On' magazine says that "it's no secret that fashion is cyclical and old trends do come back in style."

MERRIAM'S
DICTIONARY
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TWO DON'T YOU
THINK?

Mercury's leather pants, Jimi Hendrix chic hippy, Jack Kerouac's beatnik beret, Lolita's sunglasses, and vests, formerly known as waistcoats.

The fashion industry continually bombards us with messages harking back to the greatness, the sophistication and the 'timeless nature', of retro clothing and fashions, making us believe that old really is the new new, and isn't there some irony in that? For the life of me, apart from James Dean's jeans, I can't see that anything very much of the others merits any wardrobe space, though I'm reminded of the vintage poster I saw, saying "I hate to spend money on shoes, purses, jewellery and dresses, but the economy needs me." You gotta smile!

Beautiful womenfolk and hunky menfolk will always look good, whether in the latest fashion or sackcloth and ashes (as they say), but fashion should be for all of us, all shapes and sizes, because honestly, how many of us are of a physical status that transcends the need for trendy gear? Hepburn herself commented that "Elegance is the only beauty that never fades", confirming that class is not only absolute, but permanent, and Yves Saint Laurent, who rarely bothered with looking backwards, insisted that it is "fashion that fades, while style is eternal."

More than second-hand clothes much of today's retro offering appears to be more popular, but that is the crunch! Celebrities, influencers, and the 'in-crowd,' are pushing and shoving their way into the media to flaunt their retro look with some sort of divine right, yet they rarely say how they are being paid to wear it and talk about it. It's just manipulating the consumer, and usually the weakest, most impressionable... those who can least afford it, and the expense of boosting the retro fashion market and demonstrating some allusion to modernity, in a morally bankrupt fashion, and maybe that's not the word to be using.

Everybody loves a good comeback, but retro is a no-no. Why don't we just commit retro fashion to Room 101, be like the iconic Coco Chanel and "don't do fashion, be fashion!"



HAVING
PIZZA

US President Joe Biden eats a pizza as he meets with service members from the 82nd Airborne Division, who are contributing alongside Polish Allies to deterrence on the Alliance's Eastern Flank, in the city of Rzeszow in southeastern Poland, around 100 km from the border with Ukraine, on Friday.
- AFP

Climate justice requires
women's leadership

LAURA CHINCHILLA AND
MARÍA FERNANDA ESPINOSA

The world is well aware that the climate crisis is one of the main stumbling blocks to sustainable development. And yet, despite the dramatic evidence of the lethal consequences of climate change and despite possessing the knowledge, technologies and resources to fix it, we continue on the same high-carbon path that threatens our survival.

We also know that climate stabilisation depends on a whole-of-society response, and thus on all citizens' equal and fair participation in governance. That has not happened, either: Women have been underrepresented in climate decision-making. And while this trend has slowly been reversed, much more needs to be done to advance a gender-sensitive response to climate change. Three imperatives stand out: Women's leadership, indigenous rights and education.

Efforts to improve gender parity in climate governance have been ongoing for nearly a decade. In 2014, delegates to COP20 adopted the Lima Work Programme on Gender to encourage the inclusion of more women in climate-change negotiations. But five years later, at COP25 in Madrid, 60 per cent of government delegates and 73 per cent of heads and deputy heads of delegations were men.

This imbalance led to the adoption of the Enhanced Lima Work Programme and Action Plan on Gender. Under the enhanced plan, the parties to global climate talks pledged to appoint and provide support for national gender and climate-change focal points for climate negotiations and for project implementation and monitoring. Even so, from 2019 to 2021, women occupied only 33 per cent of all leadership positions in climate-change negotiations and expert mechanisms.

But efforts to include women in these discussions continue. The final agreement issued at the close of last November's COP26 in Glasgow included gender equality and women's leadership as central components of climate policy and action strategies. This represents clear recognition that the transition to net zero will be possible only through active citizenship, with women playing a vital role.

Women are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis, but they are also important agents of change. Giving women a seat at the decision-making table and using a gender lens to shape low-carbon development strategies will go a long way towards making progress

on efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

The transition to carbon neutrality requires a radical change in production systems and consumption patterns across all sectors. Women must be part of the process to develop effective policies. The task is daunting, but there are examples to follow.

Costa Rica, for one, has set a clear path towards net-zero carbon dioxide emissions.

Since 2014, more than 98 per cent of the energy generated in Costa Rica has come from renewable sources. And in 2021, the country was awarded the Earthshot Prize for its conservation model, according to which local citizens are paid to preserve and restore natural ecosystems, including rainforests.

Costa Rica's success can be attributed largely to the commitment of its citizens to sustainable development and the involvement of indigenous and rural women in climate adaptation, knowledge production and efforts to strengthen resilience.

Indigenous and rural women in particular are the most vulnerable to climate change and environmental degradation.

The inclusion of these women in creating sustainable practices is thus central to ensuring the effectiveness of climate-related decisions. Initiatives such as Club de Madrid's Shared

Societies approach emphasise that indigenous communities have the right to be involved in these discussions, and acknowledge that local communities are more likely to support and implement conservation plans when they are fully involved in their development.

Education is also a crucial component of inclusive climate decision-making. In 2021, Unesco called for environmental education to be a core curriculum component in all countries by 2025.

The Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development states that environmental education must be available to girls and boys alike from an early age to ensure that future generations have sufficient knowledge to respond to climate change. Emphasising gender equality and non-discrimination in access to climate knowledge and skills will boost the ability of young people to effect change.

The recent all-male "CEO lunch" convened at the Munich Security Conference shows that women are still missing from the highest levels of global decision-making. Yet women's leadership is needed to respond effectively to shared global challenges.

Without the active and meaningful participation of women and girls in local, national and global climate strategies, a carbon-neutral future will remain out of reach.

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A demonstrator holds up a sign reading "Your indifference is killing the planet" during the Fridays for Future global protest in Mexico City. - AFP

sport

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ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, MARCH 26

The Oman Desert Marathon is returning to action for its eighth edition after a gap of two years forced by the pandemic.

The Oman Desert Marathon 2022 will be held on November 26, organisers Tamkeen Sports announced.

The Marathon is a four-stage ultra race of 35 km, 50 km, 38 km, 42 km to discover the most remote and untouched sands and the highest dunes of the Oman Desert on the tracks of the ancient caravans.

The course will start from the Oasis of Bidiya and finish at Al Jawharat Resort, also in Bidiya. Four stages and four different perspectives of one of the most beautiful deserts of the world: Red, golden and white sands will make this journey unique and always different.

Said al Hajri, owner and founder of the race, is keen to welcome runners to the Sultanate of Oman.

“The Oman Desert Marathon is not only a race, but it is also an event that joins many people from the local community and that expresses the love of the people for Oman. Our goal is to welcome all the participants with the legendary Omani hospitality and to give to all our runners the possibility to live a fantastic experience in the Omani Desert.”

The Oman Desert Marathon is considered one of the toughest multi stages self-sufficient desert running races in the world. It requires high endurance, and covers 4 stages with a distance of 165 km.

Last year it was aimed for the local residents, however since Oman and the world are open for travelling, the 165 km Oman Desert Marathon Classic edition is back for 2022 as the concerns about the impact of Covid-19 on tourism are not an issue.

200 RUNNERS

The marathon attracts more than 200 runners from most of the countries around the planet.

After the Sultanate of Oman was announced among Lonely Planet’s top 10 countries to visit in 2022, and the only country from the Arabian Gulf to be included on that list, it is expected to have a rise in the numbers for the eight edition.

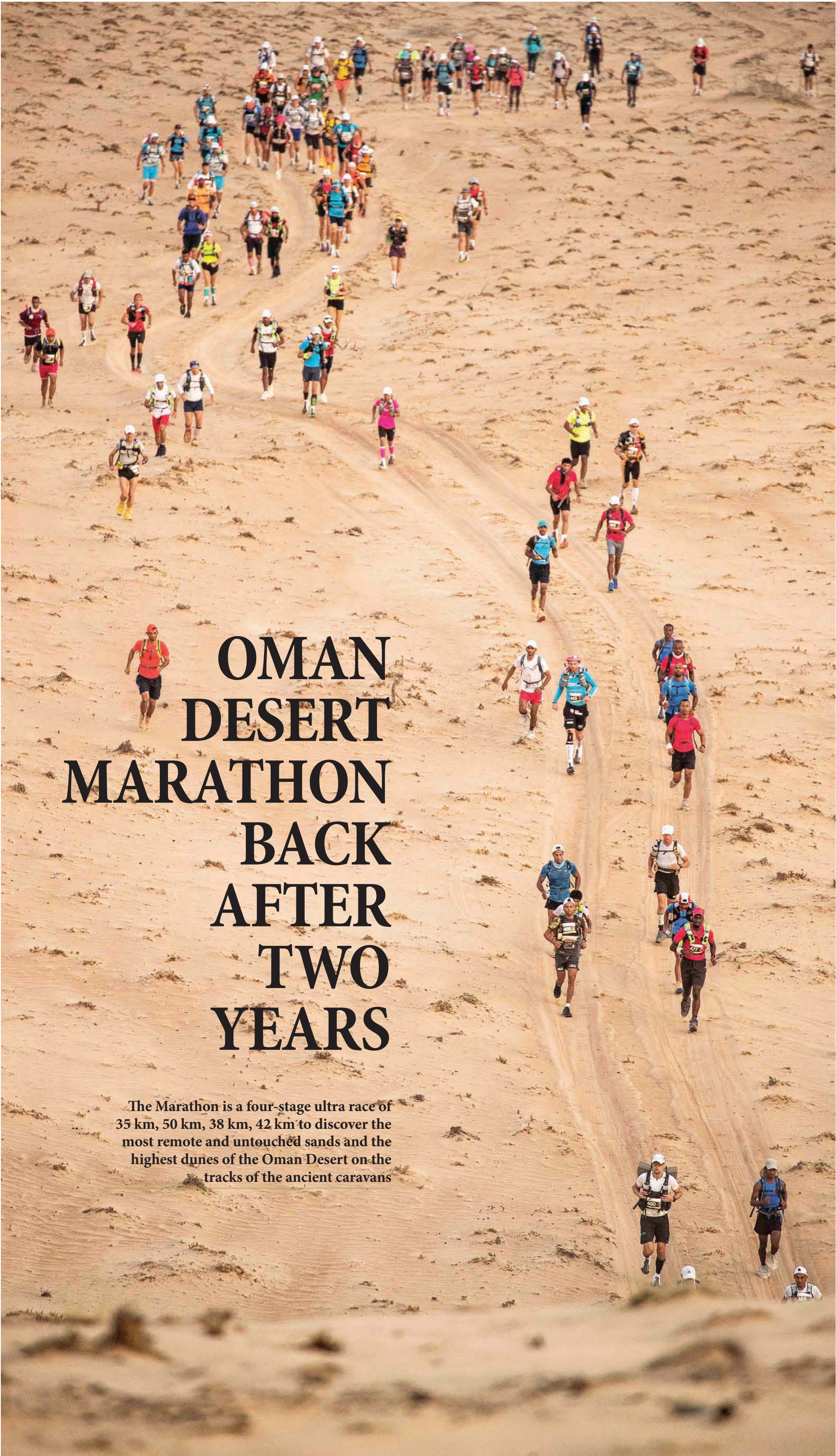
Former racer Adam May had said the marathon changed his perception of ultra-marathon.

“The ODM changed my perspective on ultra-marathon running for the better. The desert is magical and beautiful, but will test you mentally and physically to your limit, but you will be a better person from it. The ODM event should be on every runner’s calendar”, he said.

Female racer Franzel Cilliers called it a rewarding experience.

“The ODM made me realise that you can really achieve anything you put your mind to. That running is actually a team sport and that I would not have been able to do it without my team-mates TENT 7. The ODM brings people together, you share the same pain and the same joy. Definitely the most challenging yet most rewarding thing I have ever done”, she said.

This year the event will feature for the second time a Kids Race 2 km, a 5 km Family Run and a 10 km Cross Country Run, as well as accommodation and camping options for those wanting to spend a weekend in the region.



OMAN DESERT MARATHON BACK AFTER TWO YEARS

The Marathon is a four-stage ultra race of 35 km, 50 km, 38 km, 42 km to discover the most remote and untouched sands and the highest dunes of the Oman Desert on the tracks of the ancient caravans

PONTING SEES PANT AS POTENTIAL INDIA SKIPPER

NEW DELHI: Australia great Ricky Ponting on Saturday said India's Rishabh Pant has the makings of a successful leader as the wicketkeeper-batter begins another IPL season as Delhi Capitals captain.

Pant's Delhi will start their Indian Premier League campaign against five-time champions Mumbai Indians on Sunday in an expanded 10-team Twenty20 tournament.

Ponting, head coach of Delhi, believes the 24-year-old Pant has grown as a leader since becoming team captain last season.

"This is my fifth season at Delhi Capitals, and the evolution of Rishabh as a player and person has been quite dramatic," Ponting told reporters.

"There is no doubt that his maturity over the last 12 or 18 months with his play and also with his leadership and captaincy has been outstanding."

Delhi, still searching for their



This is my fifth season at Delhi Capitals, and the evolution of Rishabh as a player and person has been quite dramatic. There is no doubt that his maturity over the last 12 or 18 months with his play and also with his leadership and captaincy has been outstanding

RICKY PONTING
Delhi Capitals coach

maiden IPL title since the cash-rich league began in 2008, reached their third successive play-offs last year. Pant has been marked as a future leader by India's cricket board and new all-format captain Rohit Sharma endorsed the view.

Former Australia skipper Ponting said there were similarities between Pant and Rohit, who

succeeded Ponting as captain of Mumbai Indians in 2013 and led them to five titles.

"There is every opportunity for Rishabh's journey to be quite similar to Rohit Sharma," said Ponting.

"Taking over as a young captain of a successful franchise and growing on a daily basis. And

hopefully Rishabh can add the same sort of success that Rohit's had at the Mumbai Indians.

"With some experience in a role like this, in such a high-pressure tournament like the IPL, I have got no doubt in years to come that there is every chance that Rishabh can be an international captain."

Pant, who has represented India in 67 white-ball matches and 30 Tests since his T20 international debut in 2017, said his team goals always stay above personal ambitions.

"I have not thought about my personal performance or anything," said Pant, who was sitting alongside Ponting at the press conference. "We just focus on the team goal, which is the most important thing for us as Delhi Capitals going forward."

The 15th edition of the IPL begins on Saturday, with holders Chennai Super Kings taking on Kolkata Knight Riders at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium. — AFP

India plans women's IPL next year

NEW DELHI: BCCI is planning to launch the women's edition of the Indian Premier League Twenty20 tournament next year.

"It has to be approved by the (annual general meeting)," Sourav Ganguly, President of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) told reporters on Friday. "We plan to start it by next year hopefully."

IPL Chairman Brijesh Patel said the process to launch the women's version has "started" and that it could be a five- or six-team league.

The BCCI has organised a women's T20 challenge event since 2018, and Patel said this year there will be four matches involving three teams around the men's play-offs.

The 15th edition of the men's IPL begins on Saturday, with holders Chennai Super Kings taking on Kolkata Knight Riders in Mumbai.

Key decisions, including

a move to float the media rights tender for the next five years for the men's edition, were taken in the IPL governing council meeting on Friday in Mumbai.

Bids are expected to be invited separately for digital, TV and rest of the world rights in a breakaway from the previous term, when Star India paid \$2.55 billion for five years of TV and digital rights up to 2022.

This time the collective base price from various categories has been kept at around \$4 billion, a senior official told BCCI on condition of anonymity.

The money-spinning league — which expanded to 10 teams to include Lucknow Super Giants and Gujarat Titans and 74 matches this year — is a huge revenue earner for the BCCI.

Pre-pandemic, the IPL was estimated to have generated more than \$11 billion for the Indian economy each year.

— AFP

Omani players shine at Design Group FIDE chess tourney

MUSCAT: Design Group FIDE International Chess Tournament was witness to some sensational chess at the Panorama Mall.

Shybi Binof, the best female player in Oman, upset the appcart of Velavaa Raghavesh.

The morning however belonged to the Omani players who all scored fine victories and the stand out players were Said al Balushi and Sultan al Habsi.

The highest ranked player in the tournament Basheer Qudaimi, players from Yemen, Philippines and Egypt were also doing good.

The afternoon session

witnessed some notable triumphs with youngsters Srivatsan Karthikeyan and Krishanu Sai scoring victories over their Omani counterparts Abdul Rahman al Zadjali and Mohad al Amri respectively.

Eight players were with three full points after three rounds and leading the table is Krishanu Sai followed by Napome Emerson, Srivatsan Karthikeyan, Basheer Qudaimi, Hamood al Busaidi, Sultan Al Habsi, Musallam al Aamri and Yasser Hamdan respectively.

As the tournament enters into day 3 and fourth round we look forward to another exciting day of chess.



NZ beat Pakistan but exit World Cup



New Zealand's Suzie Bates plays a shot during the Women's Cricket World Cup match against Pakistan at Hagley Oval in Christchurch. — AFP

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand: Century-maker Suzie Bates produced a milestone innings as New Zealand beat Pakistan by 71 runs in the Women's World Cup in Christchurch on Saturday.

It was the final match of the tournament for both sides, and although New Zealand hold a mathematical chance of making the semifinals, captain Sophie Devine said that was most unlikely and it was a "bittersweet" win to bow out on.

"Absolutely, we're gutted that we're not moving forward in this tournament and I want to wish those teams that do manage to go through all the best," she said.

The tournament hosts posted 266 for eight with Bates scoring 126 before Hannah Rowe took

five for 55 to restrict Pakistan to 194 for nine.

It lifted New Zealand to six points, equal with fourth-placed England and India who each have a superior run rate and a game in hand which sees them both threaten to overtake third-placed West Indies -- who are one point ahead but have completed their matches.

At a crowded Hagley Oval, on New Zealand's first day without Covid-enforced outdoor spectator restrictions, Bates contributed nearly half the New Zealand total and along the way became only the fourth player in women's cricket to reach 5,000 ODI runs.

Bates also became the first person to score a century in four consecutive World Cup tournaments but believed her

player-of-the-match award should have gone to Rowe.

"I just really wanted to take the game deep and make sure we finished off the 50 overs and got a good score on the board," she said.

"It's a nice record to have but I thought Hannah Rowe, I could share this player of the match with because she bowled outstandingly."

Bates was given out lbw on 17 and deliberated on the dismissal until the final second before seeking a review which confirmed the ball was missing leg-stump.

When the opener was eventually dismissed, bowled by Nashra Sandhu in the 43rd over, she received a standing ovation as she walked from the field and New Zealand were well placed at 211 for five with more than seven

overs remaining.

But instead of New Zealand pushing up the run rate, Pakistan took the initiative with four wickets for 20 runs before Katey Martin and Frankie Mackay plundered 32 off the final two overs.

Martin finished unbeaten on 30 with 22 of her runs coming off eight deliveries in the final flurry.

The star performer with the ball for Pakistan was Nida Dar, with the spinner taking three for 39 from her 10 overs.

Dar then top-scored for Pakistan with 50 while captain Bismah Maroof contributed 38 but the side were behind the required run rate throughout, and after reaching three for 155 Pakistan added only 39 more runs and lost six wickets. — AFP



Iga Swiatek of Poland reacts during the final match of the 2022 WTA Qatar Open in Doha. – AFP file photo

Swiatek becomes new World No 1 with Miami win

MIAMI: Poland's Iga Swiatek clinched becoming the new world number one in women's tennis on Friday by defeating Swiss player Viktorija Golubic 6-2, 6-0 at the WTA Miami Open.

Swiatek will move into the top spot vacated by Australian Ashleigh Barty after the three-time Grand Slam champion announced her retirement earlier this week.

"Pretty surreal," Swiatek said. "On one hand, these are the most special moments that you're going

to remember for the rest of your life, but on the other hand, that match was just another match."

The 20-year-old Warsaw-born star had to win her second-round match at the South Florida hardcourt tournament to ensure she would replace Barty in the next rankings next month. After the victory, there was a brief on-court ceremony where Swiatek was cheered and honoured by tournament director James Blake and former WTA number one Lindsay Davenport.

"I never really imagined that moment because, truth to be told, I was working day-by-day and playing tennis well, but I never had the strong belief that it can actually happen," Swiatek said. "So it's even more surreal for me."

She didn't feel slighted by the manner of it all, coming suddenly after Barty's shock farewell.

"I loved every moment of it," Swiatek said. "It doesn't matter for me if there were fireworks. The crowd was really supportive. They

were really excited. I'm just soaking everything in because I didn't have any expectations."

Swiatek will be the first Polish woman to reach the rankings summit, eclipsing the old mark for players from her homeland she shared with former world number two Agnieszka Radwanska.

Poland's first Grand Slam singles title was won by Swiatek at the 2020 French Open.

Swiatek has enjoyed a blistering start to the season, winning WTA

titles at Doha and Indian Wells, and is now on a career-best 12-match win streak. She's also the first player since Denmark's Caroline Wozniacki in 2009 to win five or more titles before turning 21.

Paula Badosa could have taken over as number one had Swiatek lost, but the Spaniard would have needed to win the Miami Open title to do it. Swiatek becomes the 28th woman to reach the WTA pinnacle and the youngest since Wozniacki in 2010, but she doesn't expect

much to change for her with the climb to the top.

"I think it's going to be a little bit different. Maybe the hype is going to be a little bit bigger, but I'm ready for it. And honestly, it's part of the job," Swiatek said.

"From my perspective, I don't think anything will change. Maybe I've got to watch if I'm wearing clean clothes and representing tennis well. So I'm going to be careful with that. But honestly, I'm the same person." — AFP

Kyrgios stuns Rublev in 52 minutes at Miami Open

MIAMI: Nick Kyrgios stressed on Friday he's at peace with himself after a day where both sides of the Australian's character come into sharp focus at the ATP and WTA Miami Open.

Hours before he wowed Hard Rock Stadium with a ruthless 52-minute demolition of seventh-ranked Andrey Rublev to reach the third round, the enigmatic world number 102 was fined \$25,000 by the ATP following a stormy defeat to Rafa Nadal at Indian Wells earlier this month. The 26-year-old Aussie was fined \$20,000 for unsportsmanlike conduct after hurling his racket near a ball boy and \$5,000 for an audible obscenity.

Kyrgios, prone to emotional



the Australian star, who next faces Italy's Fabio Fognini.

"I am at peace with everything off the court," Kyrgios said.

"I am in the right mindset. It's just one match. I was lucky to get through the first round and today I played great. I've had the biggest pre-season ever. I've trained hard and in the best shape I've been in for a while. I'm in a better space with my family. I could put it down to a few things."

"I've been on tour for nine years. I know some weeks will be incredible and some will be shocking. I'm not on that rollercoaster life anymore where I really enjoy those highs and almost drown my sorrows with the lows. — AFP

Oman sports media committee discusses media cooperation with Qatar 2022

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 26

Oman sports media committee held its first meeting in 2022 recently at the Oman Journalists Association (OJA) headquarters.

The meeting was presided over by Salim al Jahwari, head of the committee, in presence of all the members. During the meeting, the committee discussed several topics including the upcoming agenda of 2022/2023 and cooperation with the organising committee of Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022.

The meeting commenced with the re-establishment of the committee and will be chaired by Salim al Jahwari.

The committee reviewed the possibility of adding some

former members. The chairman and members of committee affirmed the importance of holding meetings with the officials at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Oman Olympic Committee, sports associations and committees.

The members pointed out that discussions with officials will address the difficulties and challenges of the journalists and reporters and finding the ways on easing the duties of media people to cover all the national sporting teams in local and external events.

It is expected the list of activities in agenda of the forthcoming two years will feature cooperation with the organising committee of Qatar 2022 Fifa World Cup on Oman's media attendance

in this top sporting event. Also, the committee addressed all the agenda of the last term that did not occur and utilise it with the new plan.

The new plan for the committee will feature organising many training seminars, workshops related with the sports media which will enhance the capabilities of the domestic journalists and media.

Also, the committee suggested to have some sports activities and events for the OJA members in coordination with the sports associations and committees.

Moreover, the committee discussed arranging visits to the regional and international sporting media organisations to improve the relationship of the OJA with them.



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Drones deployed to unlock Duqm Special Economic Zone’s mining potential



NEW TECHNOLOGY: Local AI startup ESBAAR has received many offers from local and international investors

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 26

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) continued to pursue a set of aerial and marine surveys and experiments using drones in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD). These experiments come within the framework of empowering entrepreneurs and opening opportunities for the Omani youth to develop their skills and capabilities in this field, and carry out their experiments in the zone designated by OPAZ for artificial intelligence (AI) purposes, which stretches over an area of 18 square kilometres in the zone.

OPAZ, in cooperation with Marmul Integrated Company, succeeded recently in implementing a number of experiments and aerial surveys using drones in one of the mining sites in SEZAD and positive results had been achieved that helped in taking appropriate decisions aimed at enhancing productivity and proper planning of quarrying and mining sites in addition to enhancing knowledge of safety & security aspects and inventory management.

Ahmed al Farsi, Chairman of the Steering Committee to supervise the Artificial Intelligence zone, said drones are one of the techniques of the 4th Industrial Revolution.

Mining surveys using drones were carried out to collect aerial data of the mining sites to be processed through specialised programmes and formed into 3D maps of these sites.

Hussain bin Habib al Lawati from ESBAAR Company, which specialises in providing AI and drone services, said ESBAAR has benefited greatly from opening opportunities in this field, and was pleased that OPAZ designated a special zone for AI with a vast area which enables specialists

“OPAZ efforts in this field are remarkable and we had the opportunity to learn more about the special economic zones and free zones, the investment opportunities available, and the business opportunities with the organisations and beneficiary companies in the zone

**HUSSAIN BIN HABIB
AL LAWATI**
ESBAAR Company

to launch their projects, works, and experiments.

“OPAZ efforts in this field are remarkable and we had the opportunity to learn more about the special economic zones and free zones, the investment opportunities available, and the business opportunities with the organisations and beneficiary companies in the zone. In addition, the meeting with entrepreneurs and companies specialised in the field of drones, enabled us to share information, discuss challenges and gain knowledge of OPAZ’s future plans to ease work for investors and entrepreneurs,” he said.

He added that ESBAAR has received many requests from Oman and abroad, and recently from South Africa, to carry out aerial surveying of usufruct lands at Duqm.

“ESBAAR carried out a variety of works in the areas affiliated with OPAZ, and our technologies have been used in the inspection work in Suhar free zone, as well as examining Thermal towers — or what is known as toxic gas incinerators — in the refinery, as well as various works for geological surveying, and 3D modelling for the buildings and assets in Duqm and Suhar,” he added.

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Mazoon Electricity participates in 23rd Gulf Engineering Forum

MUSCAT: Mazoon Electricity Company (member of Nama Group) participated in the 23rd Gulf Engineering Forum at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel at Al Bustan Palace from March 20 to 22, 2022, under the theme “Engineer and Disaster Challenges”, hosted by Oman represented by the Oman Society of Engineers, in collaboration with the Gulf Engineering Union.

The forum touched on the importance of the role of engineers and specialists in the field of crisis management related to the challenges associated with disasters and ways to prevent them, through the latest technologies, plans and procedures that reduce damage caused by disasters and crises.

The forum is an important opportunity to enhance local and international engineering knowledge, share experiences among participants, discuss future issues, enrich engineering ideas, and discuss best engineering practices related to disasters.

The forum’s theme entitled “Engineer and Disaster Challenges” was due to the importance of this topic as Oman experiencing natural disasters, particularly cyclones and floods resulting from the running of



valleys because of Oman’s position in the southwestern corner of the Arabian Peninsula and its view of the Arabian Sea, making it one of the areas affected by such natural disasters, in addition disasters classified as technological or social disasters.

Three engineers from Mazoon Electricity Company, Engineer Khalfan bin Naser al Burtamani (Senior Manager Regulatory & Corporate Affairs), Engineer Aza bint Hamed al Maamari (Senior Analyst Risk Management & BCM) and Engineer Mohammed bin Saif al Wardi (Specialist Risk Management), participated in the

forum, where they reviewed the experience of Mazoon Electricity Company in risk management (Corona pandemic as case study), and the other paper discussed the company’s experience in managing the business continuity plan during crises (cyclone Shaheen as case study).

Through the two papers, Mazoon Electricity’s engineers discussed crisis management plans at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic and the company’s precautionary measures to prevent infection among employees. The other paper presented the company’s

plan for business continuity during the crises and addressed the implementation of the plan during cyclone Shaheen and its effects on the electricity network performance in areas affected by the cyclone.

The paper addressed the company’s preparedness for such crises and the lessons learned for review and development. The papers also clarified the importance of adopting best practices in risk management and business continuity to maintain the level of services provided by service companies under exceptional circumstances.



Bank Nizwa opens new branch in Bahla

MUSCAT: In line with the bank’s well-formulated expansion strategy that focuses on bringing Islamic banking closer to the people, Bank Nizwa recently opened a new branch in Bahla. The Bahla branch is Bank Nizwa’s third branch in the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate and its being the 16th in the Sultanate of Oman.

“With several initiatives geared at raising awareness on Islamic banking practices, Bank Nizwa has been a key advocate of Sharia-compliant financing in the Sultanate of Oman. As an established leader in its segment, Bank Nizwa has been meeting the growing demand for Islamic banking with innovative Sharia-compliant solutions and premium levels of customer service while focusing

on expanding its network of branches in an endeavour to be closer to its customers,” said Khalid al Kayed, CEO of Bank Nizwa.

“Ease of accessibility, closer engagement and improved interaction have been key focus areas to enhance the banking experience for our customers. While we have achieved monumental progress in our digital outreach, we have also remained dedicated to expanding our network of branches to cover the length and breadth of the country. The opening of a new branch is another step towards strengthening the bank’s network in the Sultanate of Oman and addressing the demands of its growing customer base in the region.”

Ooredoo CEO named among region’s 20 women to watch

MUSCAT:

Continuing to set benchmarks in the telecoms industry, Ooredoo Oman’s Chief Executive Officer, Noor al Sulaiti, has been named



respectively fields, while breaking barriers in the process.

Noor al Sulaiti said, “It’s an honour to be named in Capacity Media’s power list alongside so many inspirational women. I feel very lucky to be among many examples of positive female talent at Ooredoo, which is a testament of our ongoing commitment to nurturing women’s empowerment and an equal opportunities culture.

With 2022 seeing the highest number of submissions since the list’s launch in 2018, 20 Women to Watch serves as an index that shines a light on women across the arena who have achieved significant results or reached major milestones in their

alongside so many inspirational women. I feel very lucky to be among many examples of positive female talent at Ooredoo, which is a testament of our ongoing commitment to nurturing women’s empowerment and an equal opportunities culture.

Together, we are highlighting the enormous talent that exists in the region and setting an example to any budding professional that no industry or achievement is out of reach.”

New Maserati Grecale global premiere

MUSCAT: The new Maserati Grecale SUV is “The Everyday Exceptional”. Grecale strikes the right balance between versatility, elegance, performance and innovation, guaranteeing performance, comfort and safety, all at the same time. These features are combined with off-road capabilities and uncompromising driving pleasure. Developed at the Maserati Innovation Lab in Modena, the new SUV is produced at the Cassino plant.

Grecale is a range within the range, the Trident brand’s fullest ever. An extremely wide range of engines is available: conventional internal combustion, hybrid and, in a year’s time, Grecale will also be the first full-electric SUV in Maserati history.

Three versions will be rolled out at launch: GT, powered by a four-cylinder mild hybrid



engine capable of delivering 300 hp; Modena, with a four-cylinder 330-hp mild hybrid engine; and the powerful Trofeo, equipped with a high-performance 3.0L 530-hp petrol V6 based on the Nettuno engine fitted to the MC20. To complete the range, the Grecale Folgore, the 100% electric version with 400V technology.

The new SUV stands out

in terms of spaciousness and comfort, boasting an impressive set of “best-in-class” features. It is best-in-class in terms of interior space, driveability, handling, acceleration (0-100 km/h in 3.8 seconds – on the Trofeo), top speed (285 km/h – again on the Trofeo), sound quality and extensive use of fine materials such as wood, carbon fibre and leather.

Its dimensions are a major factor: in the GT version, Grecale is 4,846 mm long with a wheelbase of 2,901 mm, a height of 1,670 mm, a width of 2,163 mm (including wing mirrors), with a rear wheel track of 1,948 mm (and even greater in the Trofeo). The design of Grecale embraces Maserati’s new visual symbol, which distinguishes every new model since the MC20.

The front features a low and imposing grille. The profile is notable for its contrast between purity and technique, with a highly fluid body featuring meandering, visual forms and its technical components highlighted by the use of carbon fibre. In the rear, the boomerang taillights are inspired by the Giugiaro 3200 GT and fit in with the trapezoidal line, made even more striking by the coupé effect of the cabin and its finish like a sports car’s.

Customer wins his car back with Kia Scratch & Win campaign

MUSCAT: Kia’s most exciting offer of the season is gaining immense popularity among people in Oman. Customers buying their favourite Kia vehicle have so much to look forward to. As part of the campaign, customers purchasing a new Kia, have an unbelievable opportunity to scratch and win 2 Kia at one time.

Additional scratch & win prizes include, Win your purchased Kia back, win all-new Sportage, Win up to 20 per cent on display price, Win periodic service up to 100,000 kms and VAT on us. The campaign is valid until May 1, 2022. (Conditions apply. Please

visit Kia showroom for details.

Recently Hamed bin Ali bin Humaid al Kaabi, a businessman from Suhar first purchased one Cerato, scratched a card and won his brand new Kia Cerato back. Unable to believe his luck, he went on to purchase his second car, a Cerato again, scratched the card and won 10 per cent discount on the price.

Sharing his thoughts on this win, Hamed bin Ali bin Humaid al Kaabi said, “I am so happy to have scratched and instantly won one car back and 10 per cent discount on the second car. I am still finding it so hard to believe this. Amazing



campaign indeed. Instant prizes. I encourage all people looking forward to buying their new car,

to visit Kia showroom and check out their offer. You will not be disappointed.”

Kia’s range in Oman has a range of exciting vehicles that suits the requirements of every customer. From hatchbacks to sedans, SUVs and Hybrid Electric vehicle, you will find it all here at Kia Oman. Kia (www.kia.com) is a global mobility brand with a vision to create sustainable mobility solutions for consumers, communities, and societies around the world.

Founded in 1944, Kia has been providing mobility solutions for more than 75 years. With 52,000

employees worldwide, a presence in more than 190 markets, and manufacturing facilities in six countries, the company today sells around three million vehicles a year.

Kia is spearheading the popularisation of electrified and battery electric vehicles and developing a growing range of mobility services, encouraging millions of people around the world to explore the best ways of getting around.

The company’s brand slogan – ‘Movement that inspires’ – reflects Kia’s commitment to inspire consumers through its products

and services.

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), the distributor for Kia in Oman provides a rewarding ownership experience for customers. Excellent product attributes and unmatched facilities easily ensure their absolute satisfaction, every mile of the way.

No wonder then that Reliable International Automotive has been ranked amongst the top Kia distributors worldwide and has been honoured with prestigious accolades including the ‘Good Partnership award’, ‘Family Like Care’ Service award’, and ‘Kia ‘Distributor of Distinction’ award.



OQ eyes role as Oman's energy transition 'champion'

Leadership position: State-owned integrated energy group backs total of four green hydrogen projects to date, powered by around 30 GW of renewable energy capacity

CONRAD PRABHU

@conradprabhu



OQ, the global integrated energy group of the Sultanate of Oman, says it wants to emerge as a "champion" of the nation's ambitious decarbonisation and energy transition strategy. A key executive of the energy group – part of integrated sovereign wealth fund Oman Investment Authority (OIA) – cited OQ's preeminent role in shaping the country's low-carbon energy future.

"We have been taking bold steps in the green hydrogen space, having already announced about four projects that should bring in about 30 gigawatts (GW) of renewables to support green hydrogen", said Najla al Jamali (pictured), Chief Executive – OQ Alternative Energy.

OQ PLANS TO LEVERAGE ITS EXPERTISE IN, AMONG OTHER AREAS, DOWNSTREAM AMMONIA PRODUCTION TO MANUFACTURE GREEN AMMONIA AS A SAFE AND COST-COMPETITIVE CARRIER OF HYDROGEN FOR EXPORT MARKETS.

"We hope this will (position) us, as a state-owned enterprise, as a champion for energy transition and green hydrogen going forward."

The official made the comments during an Executive Plenary Session organised as part of the SPE Conference – Oman Petroleum &



Energy Show held in Muscat last week. Discussions focused on the theme, 'How the Petroleum Industry is Preparing Itself for the Era of Decarbonisation and Energy Transition'.

According to Najla, OQ Alternative Energy's decarbonisation strategy encompasses three pillars: Energy Excellence, Clean Energy and Low Carbon Molecules. "We want to look at decarbonisation as a journey, starting with Energy

Efficiency as the low hanging fruit; then you move into electrification using renewables to power your upstream and downstream operations as much as you can, and then move on to low carbon molecules whether Blue (with carbon capture, utilisation and storage – CCUS) or green hydrogen."

Opportunities for monetisation of negative emission credits will be explored as well, she further noted. Significantly, the first two pillars

alone – Energy Efficiency and Clean Energy – have the potential to reduce OQ's carbon footprint by more than 60 per cent, said the Chief Executive, noting that the group currently contributes around 13 per cent of the Sultanate of Oman's carbon emissions.

Notably, all four green hydrogen projects announced by OQ to date are proposed for implementation in the renewables-rich Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates of the country.

"Both regions have excellent wind, which in combination with solar, brings down the net levelised cost of energy and consequently the levelised cost of hydrogen, which becomes very competitive coming out of Oman. This is why there's huge interest from alternative energy players to come into Oman, specifically into these two regions", Al Jamali stated.

OQ plans to leverage its expertise in, among other areas, downstream ammonia production to manufacture green ammonia as a safe and cost-competitive carrier of hydrogen for export markets. Boding well for the group in this regard is its stake in an existing ammonia project in Sur, and the anticipated launch of a new ammonia plant in Salalah this year, she pointed out.

OQ-backed green hydrogen projects include a mammoth 25-GW solar and wind powered venture in partnership with Intercontinental Energy (Singapore) and Enertech (Kuwait), and two other gigawatt-scale schemes separately backed by DEME Group of Belgium and Marubeni Corporation of Japan.

Mazoon Dairy Business Forum to start on March 30

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, MARCH 26



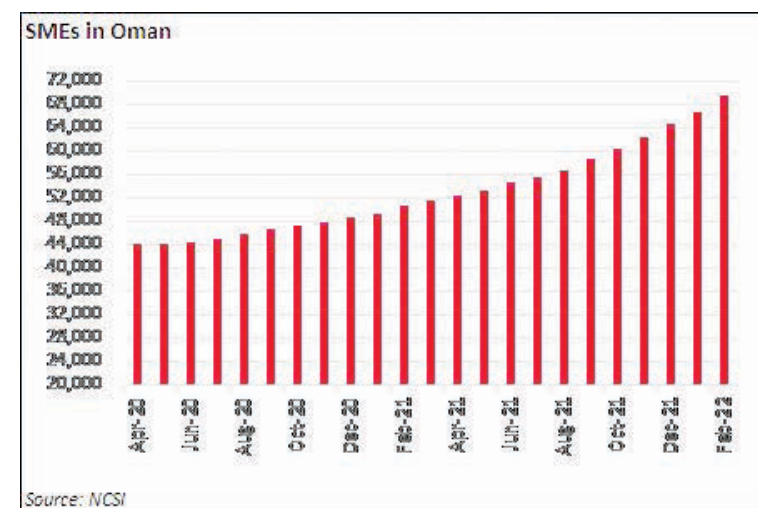
Mazoon Dairy has announced that it will organise the Mazoon Business Forum in the Al Buraimi Governorate on Wednesday, March 30, under the auspices of Sayyid Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidy, Governor of Al Buraimi, and with the participation of a large

number of regulatory, legislative and financial authorities, as well as entrepreneurs, university and college students and the residents of the province.

The list of participating parties includes the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the Al Buraimi Governorate, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (Riyada), the Industrial Innovation Academy (Madayn), Oman Development Bank,

National Bank of Oman, Bank Muscat, Oman Fund Technology, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Fund (Inmaa), and the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (Sharaka). The forum falls within the framework of the company's social responsibility and its support for entrepreneurship in the Al Buraimi Governorate.

MSX30 Index closes the week lower



MUSCAT: MSX30 index ended the week lower by 0.80 per cent. The financial index closed lower by 1.77 per cent. Service index ended lower by 0.09 per cent. Industrial index was up for the week by 0.74 per cent. The MSX Shariah index closed lower by 0.11 per cent.

For conventional banks, CBO data reveals that the weighted average RO interest rate spread (calculated as lending rate minus deposit rate) rose by about 3.3bps MoM in Dec'21 to 3.592 per cent, as lending rate expanded by 5bps while deposit rate expanded by 1.6bps. On YoY basis, spread has improved by 9.5bps on a 5.8bps expansion in lending rate while deposit rate contracted by about 3.7bps. Weighted average interest rate on private sector RO time deposits contracted about 10bps on MoM basis at 3.908 per cent. On YoY basis, weighted average interest rate on private sector RO time deposits contracted about 20bps. Interest rate on all private sector deposits (RO) was 1.463 per cent, down by 2.7bps MoM and 3.4bps YoY.

About 43.1 per cent of total deposits (in RO) of conventional banks are at zero interest rate. As per our records, this figure has somewhat declined over the last few months.

The largest chunk of total credit of conventional banks (in RO, at about 62 per cent lies in the 5 per cent-7 per cent interest rate bracket.

The total number of guests in hotel properties of the 3 to 5-star category in the Sultanate of Oman increased 52.5 per cent to 263,508 YTD, compared to 172,751 guests for the same period of 2021. The occupancy rate increased to 47.1 per cent, according to the latest monthly statistics released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) compared to 33.3 per cent last year. Total revenues of these hotels rose by 120.4 per cent to RO 28.72m YTD, compared to RO 13.03m during the same period of the previous year.

The total number of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) registered in the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development increased by 37.5 per cent in February 2022 compared to the same period 2021 to reach 69,521 compared to 50,558 in February 2021, according to the data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Among the governorates, the Governorate of Muscat topped the list by reaching 23,515 enterprises, comprising a rise of 38.3 per cent, followed by the Governorate of North Al Batinah with 10,879, comprising an increase by 36.4 per cent, the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah with 8,178, going up 28.7 per cent and the Governorate of Dhofar by 6,330, constituting a surge by 50.6 per cent compared to the same period in 2021.

(Courtesy: U-Capital)

Oman Energy Show 2022 provides new impetus to energy sector

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, MARCH 26

Oman Petroleum & Energy Show (OPES), a national-level event that focused on the Sultanate of Oman's energy transition strategy, came to a successful close on March 23, 2022. The event provided a significant impetus to the energy sector and witnessed a footfall of over 15,500 visitors.

OPES was officially inaugurated by His Highness Sayyid Taimur bin Asaad al Said, Chairman of the Central Bank of Oman Board of Governors, on March 21 at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre. The Guest of Honour was accompanied by Dr Mohammed bin Hamad al Rumhy, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Eng Salim al Aufi, Under-Secretary - Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

OPES was conducted under the auspices of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and hosted by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), while the exhibition was organised by CONNECT and the conference was organised by the Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE).

Dr Saleh al Anboori, Conference Chairperson and



Director-General of Exploration and Production of Oil and Gas at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, delivered the keynote speech.

The opening ceremony was followed by the OPES Awards presentation which was testament to OPES' focus on industrial applications, technology and project implementations, and bridging the concept-practice gaps. The Awards honoured several companies that had achieved excellence on major fronts.

During the three-day OPES conference and Young Professionals Forum, PDO Managing Director Steve Phimister joined as a panellist in

two sessions, while a number of PDO staff and senior delegates also participated as presenters, panellists and moderators. The company also received eight awards during the 2022 and 2020 Petroleum and Energy Show Awards, testament to the quality of the work undertaken by the company. And during the opening of its exhibition booth, which attracted a large turnout of visitors and those interested in learning about the company's initiatives and services in various fields, PDO also signed four agreements with Super Local Community Contractors (SLCCs) to extend the contracts awarded to them until 2029.

With a keen focus on

innovative technology, OPES also had a dedicated digital transformation theatre for visitors to learn from and experience.

Meanwhile, the Young Professional Forum played an instrumental role in providing the youth with key insights on trending topics and industry challenges while also offering a platform for them to learn more about innovative ideas and pioneering initiatives from experts and senior executives.

The Digital Oil and Gas Zone and Digital Oil and Gas Talks also laid emphasis on increasing profitability through sustainable measures and were well-received by all participants and visitors.

Markets may do Powell’s job for him

Markets may give a helpful assist to the Federal Reserve. US central bank Chair Jerome Powell has been speaking aggressively about interest rate hikes. The Eurodollar yield curve implies the Fed will overshoot with swift increases, which will then need to be cut. In response to expectations, investors and companies could trim spending and investing in a way that eases inflation, without Powell needing to move so big on rates.

In Powell’s most aggressive comments yet on Monday, he said that the Fed could hike in bigger steps than the 25-basis point bump last week.

Further, it may raise rates beyond what is considered the neutral level at which monetary policy is neither helping nor hurting the economy.

Investors have taken notice of the big rhetorical U-turn on easy money policies.

But then it inverts in the second half of 2023, suggesting that investors think longer term rates will be lower than short term ones. If that plays out, that would be one of the fastest reversals after a rate-hike liftoff.

The expectations could spur the decision-makers to react more quickly, reshaping the economy.

Typically rate changes take months or even years to cycle through. But the Business Roundtable’s CEO outlook survey for the first quarter shows capital investment plans falling by nine points, suggesting that corporate chieftains are already pulling back spending.

Changes to sentiment are popping up elsewhere. US corporate debt markets have halted activity as investors readjust their risk appetite in what could be a dramatically changing rate environment

The risk is that Powell is so aggressive in his rhetoric that the market moves too quickly. But if inflation is contained without Powell doing as much, the market could avoid the types of shocks it currently thinks are coming. — Reuters

In response to expectations, investors and companies could trim spending and investing in a way that eases inflation, without Powell needing to move so big on rates.



STRIKING HAULIERS

Demonstrators hold a banner reading ‘transport is the heart and lifeblood of the economy’, during a protest called by striking hauliers against soaring fuel prices in Madrid. The Spanish government offered a rebate and a onetime cash payment to end a truckers’ strike over soaring fuel prices that has led to food shortages in supermarkets across the country. – AFP

Most restaurants fail. Here is why.



STEFANO VIRGILLI stefano@virgilli.com

The writer is a member of the International Press Association.

OFTEN, RESTAURANT OWNERS FAIL TO CHOOSE A CONVENIENT LOCATION.

I am one of the many people that have come up with the idea of opening a restaurant at least once. In my case I failed to open the restaurant because of adverse circumstances. Others opened, but failed to generate enough business. For example, Mr. Mansoor, an Omani gentleman who shared with me his story.

At first he thought that a restaurant could have been a source of passive income for his family. He felt that money would have come automatically after opening. Unfortunately, he ended up being one of the 60 per cent of restaurants that close in their first year.

Surprised? How about 80% of restaurants close within their first 5 years? Why so many restaurants fail? Well, location is probably the most important factor. Although there are some exceptions when established chefs can open in the middle of nowhere, and still have plenty of customers, for new restaurants that is hardly imaginable.

Often, restaurant owners fail to choose a convenient location. Not everyone is willing to take a detour to try some new

food experience. Especially because food is such a personal preference, that we seldom abandon our comfort zone.

That brings to the second main reason why many restaurants fail: the type of cuisine. Mansoor thought carefully about what type of cuisine he wanted to promote. He wanted a pizza place, or a Turkish fast food.

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, he could not find a chef able to cook a good pizza. So he ended up settling for his second option, a Turkish fast food, mostly serving doner kebab and other small dishes.

At the beginning things seemed to pick up fast. Mansoor was confident that soon he would have paid back the initial investment. But when the hot season started, his chef decided to go back to Turkey, and left Mansoor with no backup.

He closed the restaurant for nearly a month while he found a replacement chef. That caused business discontinuity, and when he finally opened again, most of the habitual customers did not come back.

Mansoor told me that it was like starting all over again, but this time with a chef that

was not originally from Turkey, so the food was not authentic as it was before.

He shared with me that at that point he considered changing the restaurant to Indian cuisine, since the chef was well versed in it. But unfortunately, the cooking equipment he bought was specifically designed for Turkish food, so he had no choice, but to continue. That triggered the third reason why most restaurants fail: manpower.

Because the business slowed down during the summer, he was forced to let go one of the waiters to save some money, but another one quit soon after.

So, Mansoor had to work at the restaurant himself, and in the weekends he had to bring his son along to help out. His dream of a passive money-making machine evaporated in less than 6 months.

By the 10th month he told me that he had enough, and decided to close at the end of the commercial lease. But this is not the end of the story, fortunately.

Next week I will share how Mansoor managed to turn things around and he is now running a successful food business.

How to use economic sanctions wisely



ANNE O KRUGER

The author is Senior Research Professor of International Economics at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies and Senior Fellow at the Center for International Development at Stanford University.

To help Ukraine while avoiding a nuclear confrontation between Nato and Russia, the United States and its allies have attacked the Russian economy with trade and financial sanctions on a previously unimaginable scale. But is it the right scale, and are these the right sanctions?

Trade sanctions are prohibitions on exports, imports, or other international transactions — including airline landing rights, asset sales, shipping rights, and port privileges — with a targeted country. Blockades are a well-known wartime sanction, but countries employ sanctions in peacetime as well. The idea is to coerce the targeted country to alter its behaviour, by preventing it from enjoying the benefits of exchange with the rest of the world.

The use of sanctions intensified after World War I, when governments, led by then US president Woodrow Wilson’s administration, agreed to address international disputes through

economic measures instead of military action. This preference for sanctions over violent conflict resumed after World War II and has become more entrenched ever since.

By 2020, the US had imposed sanctions on more than 10,000 entities — 10 times as many as in 2000 — many of them connected to North Korea, Cuba, and Iran. These measures have largely come in the form of prohibitions (or limitations) on trade with the target country.

Historically, sanctions have had only limited success, and their effectiveness has varied widely depending on underlying conditions. When other countries refrain from participating in sanctions, the target country can evade a sanctions regime by doing business with, or arranging transshipment through, the holdouts.

Until 1991, the Soviet Union regularly played this role by continuing to trade with United Nations-sanctioned countries. Moreover, new smuggling methods

and other means of sanctions evasion have emerged over time, making enforcement a constant challenge. The longer sanctions are in place, the more ways businesses and others will find to evade them.

The situation changed in the 1990s, when the UN Security Council started endorsing sweeping sanctions against specific countries.

In 1990, it imposed a financial and trade embargo on Iraq in response to its invasion of Kuwait.

US sanctions barred American companies from all transactions with entities in Iraq, and additional “secondary sanctions” targeted any activity with companies continuing to do business with Iraq, as well as goods or services with components made in Iraq. Such primary and secondary sanctions can be highly costly for targeted countries, but they have not persuaded governments in Cuba, Venezuela, or North Korea to change their ways.

When Russia invaded Ukraine in late February, US President Joe Biden’s administration announced

harsh sanctions on trade with Russia, along with unprecedented financial prohibitions, and most other countries took similar measures.

For example, Russian banks have been excluded from the Swift financial messaging system for international payments. As a result, Russians cannot use their reserves, receive payments for most exports, or pay for their imports in anything other than roubles or through another payments system.

The effects of these sanctions have been sweeping. Although China has been building its own Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS), Swift still handles the vast bulk of international payments today. Amiyatosh Purnanandam of the University of Michigan has described the barring of Russian banks as “a nonviolent nuclear attack on Russia’s economic system”.

In response, Russia has been seeking other channels to receive and make payments. For example, Russia has been pressuring India for a rupees-for-roubles arrangement

under which it can export oil in exchange for other goods.

But the true extent of the damage to the Russian economy will depend in large part on the European Union, Russia’s largest trading partner.

If Europeans stopped importing oil and gas from Russia, the harm to Russia’s economy would be rapid and severe.

The problem, of course, is that an energy boycott would entail extreme hardship for Europe as well. Although the United States and other countries could help soften the blow, they probably could not make up for the reduction in supply. Moreover, a significant reduction in Russian oil and gas exports to the EU would result in sudden dramatic increases in hydrocarbon prices globally, hitting all energy-importing countries.

While the horrors of the Russian invasion have induced strong public support for sanctions, the question is how long the sanctions can usefully stay in place.

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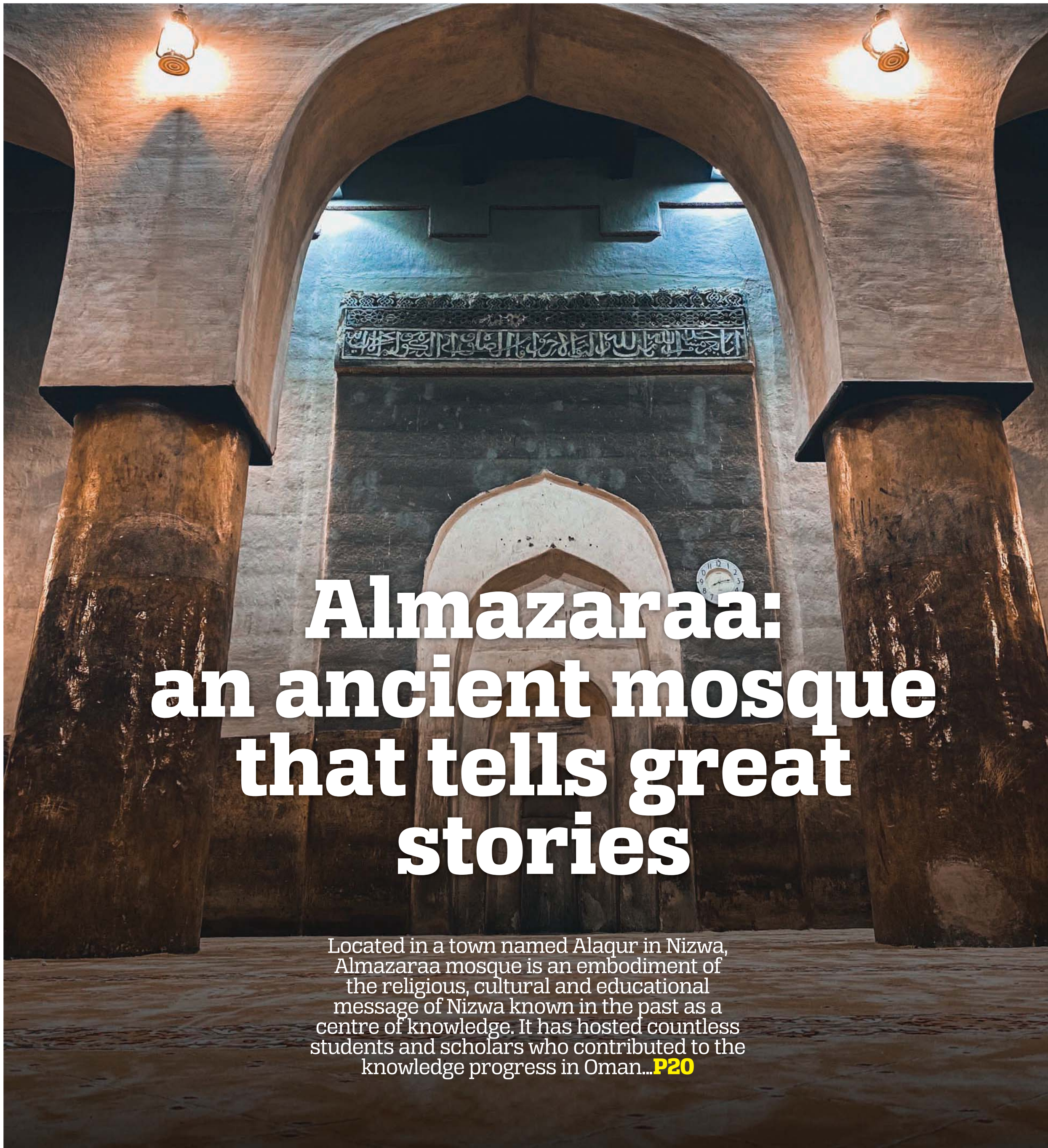
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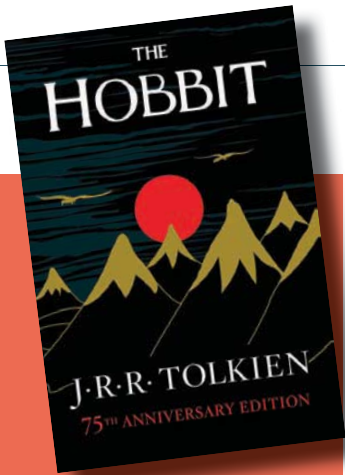
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Almazaraa: an ancient mosque that tells great stories

Located in a town named Alaqur in Nizwa, Almazaraa mosque is an embodiment of the religious, cultural and educational message of Nizwa known in the past as a centre of knowledge. It has hosted countless students and scholars who contributed to the knowledge progress in Oman...**P20**

READ



THE HOBBIT
BY J.R.R. TOLKIEN

The Hobbit is set within Tolkien's fictional universe and follows the quest of home-loving Bilbo Baggins, the titular hobbit, to win a share of the treasure guarded by a dragon named Smaug. Bilbo's journey takes him from his light-hearted, rural surroundings into more sinister territory.

TRAVEL TALES

Italian medieval mountain hamlet reborn as city appeal dims

WHEN THE SUN comes up over the castle of Rocca Calascio, a mountain hamlet high up in the central Italian Apennines, it is like a silent, red thunder.

One such sunrise struck Franco Cagnoli with an almost spiritual calling that led him on a personal mission to revive the medieval village that had been abandoned in 1957.

The once-ghostly place is one of many small locations in Italy enjoying a revival, fuelled by cheap prices, smart working opportunities and a desire for a quieter lifestyle.

"To put it in romantic terms,

there is a love story between me and Rocca Calascio," Cagnoli said as he showed visitors round the castle above the hamlet known as the "Light of Abruzzo", the name of the central Italian region where it is located.

Depopulation of rural villages or mountain hamlets in Italy began with emigration in the early 20th century, accelerating after World War Two when the country's economic boom lured people to urban jobs.

At about 1,400 metres above sea level, the castle, whose foundations date back about 1,000 years, is



one of the highest in Europe. The medieval hamlet below is home to two families and others have bought properties to restore as either primary residences or second homes.

Cagnoli, now 39, first saw the castle when he was 16 and living in the regional capital L'Aquila. He was on road trip to find himself.

"I arrived here on my scooter as

the dawn lit up the castle. I was literally blinded by the light and since that day something inside me changed," he said. "I thought it was the most beautiful place on earth. I felt special energies."

His bond with Rocca Calascio never loosened. In 2012 he moved to Calascio, a village of about 80 residents three kilometres by road

downhill.

He is now the castle's custodian and head of a cooperative whose 26 members guide visitors.

One Rocca Calascio resident, Valeria Befani, left Rome in 1996 and now runs an online business selling woollen products she makes on an old-fashioned wooden loom.

"People of the previous generation didn't appreciate, or thought they didn't appreciate, the land they lived on," Befani said.

"Today's teenagers, like my children, are proud of their land and are happy if they can stay here."

The castle, where the 1985 film "Ladyhawke" starring Michelle Pfeiffer was filmed, began as a tower in a chain of medieval defensive fortifications to control the valleys stretching inwards from the Adriatic Sea. Rocca Calascio's future was handed a boost this month when Italy's culture ministry included it among 21 places that will receive 20 million euros (\$22 million) each to restore ruins and build visitor facilities. — **Reuters**



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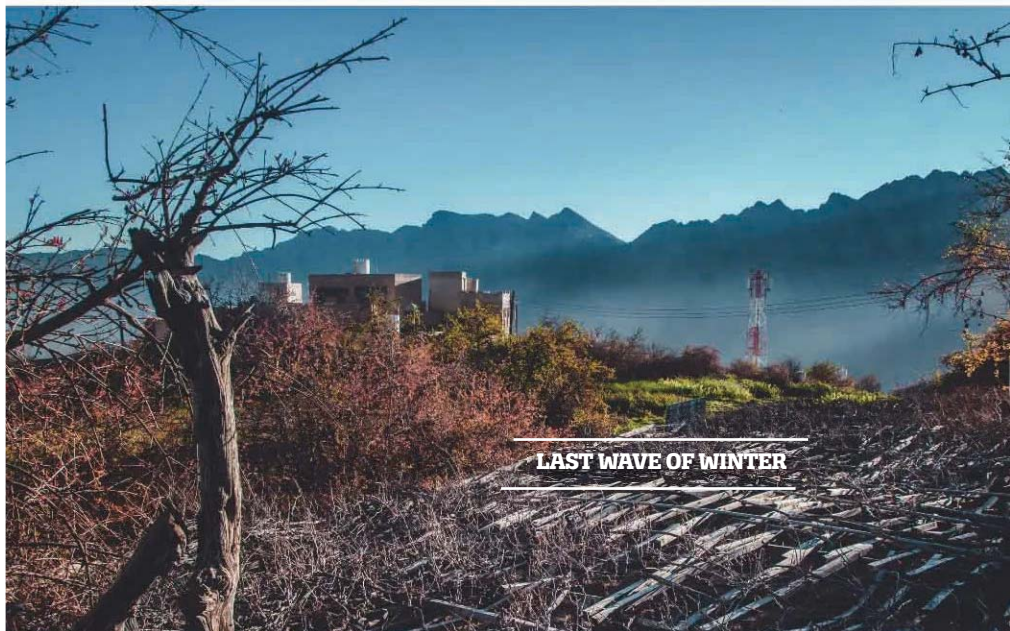
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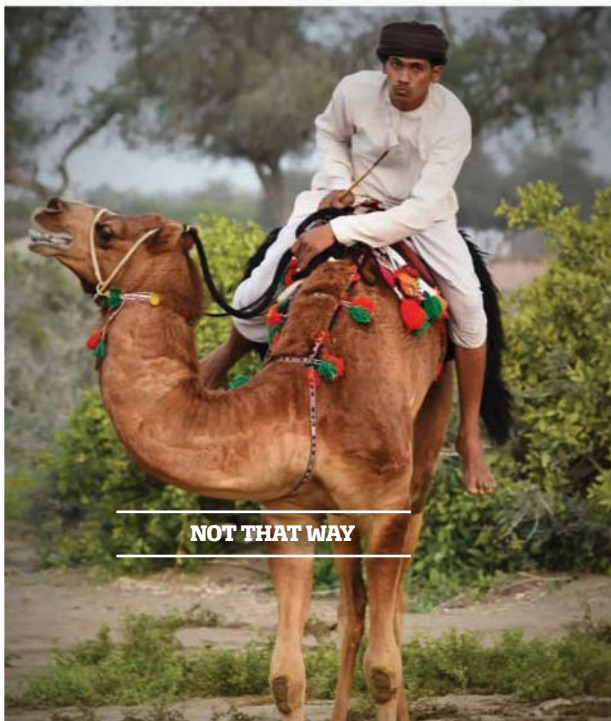
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AROUND THE WORLD

ART

From Da Vinci to Picasso, doodles on display in Rome



HIDDEN ON THE BACKS of canvases or scrawled on scraps of paper, doodles have allowed artists down the ages, from Michelangelo to Picasso, to test, explore and unleash their creativity.

Rome's Villa Medici is showcasing this long-ignored facet of artistic production in a new exhibition spanning the period from the Renaissance to the present day.

Entitled "Scribbling and Doodling — From Leonardo da Vinci to Cy Twombly", the unusual collection of nearly 300 original works ranges from playful and whimsical to transgressive and political.

It brings to light delightful discoveries never intended for the public eye — with some even in the most unexpected of places.

The wooden panels of the majestic "Triptych of the Madonna" by Giovanni Bellini conceal a world of drawings on the back "that have nothing to do with the front", Francesca Alberti, one of the show's curators, said.

On close observation, one can distinguish overlapping figures sketched onto the raw wood, one wearing a bishop's mitre and grimacing grotesquely.

"What we show in this exhibition is a whole series of drawings where the artist's hand has been liberated."

KIDS' DRAWINGS

Whether on the walls of artists' workshops, underneath frescoes or in the margins of other drawings, the doodles and sketches include out-of-proportion figures, crude renditions of heads and bodies, comical caricatures and wobbly lines, scribbles and hatchings. These "experimental, transgressive, regressive or liberating graphic gestures", as the catalogue describes them, are not subject to the rules and constraints of academic art and call to mind children's doodles.

"It took me a lifetime to learn to draw like them," Pablo Picasso said of the freshness and creativity of children's art.

Less rigid and more spontaneous, the works represent the hidden side of the artists' talent, plunging the visitor into the heart of the creative process.

The exhibit deliberately ignores chronology and happily mixes eras, proposing new connections between Renaissance masters from Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo to modern and contemporary artists like Jean-Michel Basquiat, Jean Dubuffet, Pablo Picasso and Cy Twombly.

PUTIN OUT

Displayed in the villa's wide, gently rising staircase, originally built to accommodate horses, "a dialogue between Renaissance drawings and contemporary drawings" plays out, with 16th-century sketches juxtaposing doodles produced four centuries later. A "Madonna and Child" by the Mannerist Taddeo Zuccari, who lived from 1529 to 1566, "decomposes and unravels into a whole series of scribbled lines as if, in fact, the artist's hand was completely free", Alberti said.

These sketches and doodles were important to the artists, Alberti explained, as they allowed them to "release the tension accumulated while drawing".

"You also need to free yourself from drawing to be able to draw again with the same energy," she said.

Visitors to the exhibition are themselves invited to unleash their inner creativity in a charcoal grey room, with chalk provided. Current events have inspired many of the scribbles visitors have left on the walls. The slogans "Putin out!" and "Long live peace" appear next to a depiction of Ukraine's yellow and blue flag. — **AFF**

GASTRONOMY

English Tea, Dalgona Candy and Hikes in the Scottish Highlands: Favourite Shows Inspire Trip Ideas



WITH 70% OF Americans watching more TV in 2021 than they did in 2020, binge-watching has skyrocketed during the pandemic. Now, as borders reopen, restrictions ease and travel restarts, tour advisers are fielding an increasingly popular request: immersive, TV-themed itineraries that allow travellers to live out their favourite shows' story lines.

In Britain, where all travel restrictions are now lifted, hotels in London have partnered with Netflix to offer Lady Whistledown-themed teas inspired by "Bridgerton" high society. In Yellowstone National Park, travellers are arriving in Wyoming not for a glimpse of Old Faithful, but for a chance to cosplay as John Dutton from the hit drama "Yellowstone."

And in South Korea, where vaccinated travellers can now enter without quarantine, street food vendors on Jeju Island are anticipating a run on dalgona candy, the honeycomb toffees that played a central role in "Squid Game."

"When you fall in love with a character, you can't get it out of your mind," said Antonina Pattiz, 30, a blogger who last year got hooked on "Outlander," the steamy, time-travelling drama about Claire Beauchamp, a nurse transported 200 years back in history. Pattiz and her husband, William, binge-watched the Starz show together, and are now planning an "Outlander"-themed trip to Scotland in May to visit sites from the show, including Midhope Castle, which stands in as Lallybroch, the family home of another character, Jamie

Fraser.

William Pattiz is part Scottish, Antonina Pattiz said, and their joint interest in the show kicked off a desire on his part to explore his roots. "You watch the show and you really start to connect with the characters and you just want to know more," she said.

The fifth season of "Outlander" was available in February 2020, and Starz's 142% increase in new sub-

scribers early in the pandem-

ic has been largely attributed to a jump in locked-down viewers discovering the show. During the ensuing two-year hiatus before Season 6 recently hit screens — a period of time known by fans as "Droughtlander" — "Outlander"-related attractions in Scotland, like Glencoe, which appears in the show's opening credits and the Palace of Holyroodhouse, saw more than 1.7 million visitors. "Outlander"-related content on Visit Scotland's website generated more than 350,000 page views, ahead of content pegged to the filming there of Harry Potter and James Bond



Enduring Trend, New Intensity

Screen tourism, which encompasses not just pilgrimages to filming locations but also studio tours and visits to amusement parks like The Wizarding World of Harry Potter, is an enduring trend. Tourists flocked to Salzburg in the 1960s after the release of "The Sound of Music"; in recent decades, locations like New Zealand saw a huge bump in visits from "Lord of the Rings" fans and bus tours in New York City have offered tourists a chance to go on location of "Sex and the City" and "The Marvelous Ms. Maisel." — **NYT**

COLUMN



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Ancient Arabic Proverbs: 6

35) Between Hana and Mana Our Beard was Lost: there was a man who had to two wives: Hana and Mana. Hana was young and whenever she saw greys in her husband's beard, she plucked them out claiming that it would make him look younger. While Mana the old wife, did the opposite: she plucked out the black hairs so that he looks his age. One day the man looked at the mirror to realise that he'd lost his beard completely between the two wives and exclaimed: "Between Hana and Mana our beard was lost!". This became a proverb used when being unable to reach middle ground.

36) He Returned with Hunain's Slippers: Hunain was a famous cobbler in Al-Hira (Iraq). He was visited by a Bedouin riding a camel who liked one of the slippers and started hag-gling over the price. After hours of futile argument, the Bedouin left the shop without buying which angered Hunain who'd lost time and customers. Knowing the Bedouin's route, he decided to avenge himself and took a short cut to reach the Bedouin's path. There he left one of the slippers that the Bedouin liked earlier. When the Bedouin reached that point, he saw the slipper and thought to himself: "This looks like Hunain's slipper! I wish they were a pair!". He left it and walked for a distance to find the second slipper-

that was placed intentionally by Hunain as well- and regretted not taking the first one. He abandoned his camel with its cargo and went back to get the first slipper. Hunain was hiding nearby and took the camel back to his shop as a compensation for his wasted day. The Bedouin came back with the slippers to find his camel gone. Returning home, he told his story saying that he'd returned with Hunain's slippers. It became a proverb indicating disappointment and despair.

37) God Bless He Who Knows His True Self-Worth: Omar ibn Abdul-Aziz (682-720 A.D) was the 8th Umayyad Caliph well-known for being pious and devout. One day he learned that his son had bought an expensive ring and sent him a letter saying: "It reached me that you'd bought a ring for 1,000 Dirhams. Sell it and feed 1,000 famished. Buy yourself a steel ring instead and inscribe on it: "God Bless He Who Knows His True Self-Worth".

38) The Rain had Reached the Trap: It's said that there was a hunter who used to set traps for lions in Arabia. His traps were primitive: a hole in the ground that he covered with branches and put a bait on top of it. One day, it rained so hard that the traps were filled with water that he said: "The rain had reached the trap". It became a proverb used when you can't go quiet about something anymore.

39) Today is Wine and Tomorrow is Another Matter: Imru Al-Qais (500-540 A.D) was a famous poet in Al-Jahiliya time. He was a son of a king who denounced him for his waywardness and Imru spent years vagabonding. When the news of his father's assassination reached him, Imru was drinking and said: "God have mercy on my father. He lost me young and burdened me with his revenge old. No sobering today and no drunkenness tomorrow! Today is wine and tomorrow is another matter!". It's used when focusing on doing one task.

There are more than 300 existing ancient Arabic proverbs that are still actively in use. I hope you enjoyed those few chosen ones. Ramadhan Kareem to all!

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Almazaraa: an ancient mosque that tells great stories

By Arwa al Hashimi
Photos by Riyadh al Hinai

Oman is a land of treasures. It has so many charming places that were built hundreds of years ago and are still standing until today. Thankfully as well, many of the old villages had been renovated giving them back the life they lost due to degradation. The effort to preserve many of the country's heritage can be felt across the country and all of these are prodded by the fact that we would like them to be an exemplary way of showcasing what Oman has to offer on the cultural front.

Almazaraa mosque is located in a town named Alaqur in the Wilayat of Nizwa. This ancient town is special for its unique architecture including houses, doors, forts, roofs and etc. The mosque is known to be one of the most ancient mosques in Oman built in the third century AH. It was a gathering point for people who visit it for different purposes like prayers, studying or even teaching different sciences.

The mosque is an embodiment of the religious, cultural and educational message of Nizwa that is known as a centre of knowledge back in the day and until now. The mosque hosted countless students and scholars who contributed to the knowledge progress in Oman. Those scholars made an honourable effort both locally and internationally. They excelled in different fields such as grammar, linguistics, jurisprudence, poetry and many other sciences. It is delightful to know that this mosque is still fulfilling its role as it is a destination for many to do their prayers and other religious duties.

Architecturally, the mosque includes a very vast yard that is surrounded by the wonderful scenes of the archaeological town of Alaqur, with its forts, castles, balconies, walls, gates, and orchards that surround it from different sides splendidly. Inside the mosque is a masterpiece where you can see the magnificent work of our ancestors that is made with very simple material, yet super incredible minds. In the front middle, there is the mihrab where some well-chosen verses of holy Quran are carved. On its top, there is a line of stucco decorations of harmonious Islamic geometric patterns. There are also four round masts two of them have been covered with the cement after the rehabilitation while the other two are still standing with their unique writings and important documentation.

For the roof, it took the style of the old ceilings made of strong wood of different types. There are some documentations of the most significant times related to the mosque such as the first time it was rehabilitated in 1371 AH in the era of Imam Muhammad bin Abdullah al Khalili.

The walls are full of prose and poetic writings and signatures some of which are unclear and date back to 3 centuries, including documentation of a massive fire that burned one of the town's farms in 1105 A.H. The walls also document some death and other local news as if those walls are press release that people come by every day. As for the stairs, they lead to an area known as Alboomah, which is the small dome that serves as a minaret, it was renovated, replacing wood with iron, and fixing it with cement.

Although Almazaraa mosque in Nizwa has a modest and austere mihrab, it is still very rich with writings, which became a source for Omani researchers, and presented personalities who might be forgotten forever with their efforts if not mentioned on the mosque's walls. Such buildings represent the importance of Islam and Islamic architecture and show the big place it has in the Sultanate of Oman.

