

IRENA applauds Oman's green energy accomplishments

Abu Dhabi: The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) has welcomed efforts by the Sultanate of Oman to transition away from fossil-fuels for its energy requirements towards a sustainable energy future based on renewable energy resources. A top official of the UAE-headquartered organization underlined the important strides that the Omani government has made in promoting the adoption of renewable and sustainable energy resources. **DETAILS ON P13**



P6

GERMANY FACES BACKLASH OVER UKRAINE



P13

\$150M PHARMA PROJECT SET FOR LAUNCH



P12

CIRBA CLAIMS OICD SECOND ROUND TITLE



MUSCAT

HM GREET'S CHINA'S PRESIDENT XI

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China on the Chinese New Year. His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings to the Chinese president wishing him good health and happiness and the friendly Chinese people more progress and prosperity. — ONA

57,906 STUDENTS TAKE GED EXAMS

The General Education Diploma (GED) first semester examinations for the academic year 2022-2023 will begin today. A total of 57,906 are taking the exams at 361 examination centres in all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. The Ministry of Education has readied 6,400 exam markers and 6,500 exam supervisors. Besides, the ministry formed follow-up committees for all exam-related processes including the central examination committee that follow up and oversee the examinations and marking. **DETAILS ON P2**



INSIDE



NIGHTS OF CULTURE AND FUN

Oman's wealth of rich heritage and culture is highlighted at Muscat Nights, a celebration of a diverse cultural spectrum, fun, and frolic at four major venues. The Muscat Municipality, the organisers of the festival, has presented a unique experience in showcasing the Omani heritage and promoting the identity and cultural heritage of the Sultanate of Oman to the world. **SEE P3**

30 cruise ships to bring over 150,000 visitors this year

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A total of 30 cruise ships are set to visit the Ports of Oman in 2023, bringing over 150,000 passengers to the shores of the Sultanate, according to the Oman Ports Authority.

The ports scheduled to receive these ships include the Port Sultan Qaboos in Muttrah, ports in Khasab and Salalah.

The cruise liners Costa Toscana, AIDAcosma, MSC Opera, Mein Schiff 6, Queen Mary 2, and Norwegian Jade are among those scheduled to make port calls in Oman in 2023.

Ejaz Kazi, General Manager of the Oman Ports Authority, stated that Oman's economy as well as businesses that rely on cruise tourism will greatly benefit from these port calls.

"It is a glad news that many vessels are visiting the Sultanate



during the season of 2023 and I'm pretty much sure that the ports, businesses that rely on cruise tourism and the economy as a whole will be greatly benefitted out of this," Kazi said.

The event 'Let's Cruise', organised by E-Travel, showcased multiple cruise options within the Gulf region with a special focus on Oman, offering a valuable insight into the world of cruising.

Fabian Fernandez, of Beyond Borders, which represents Costa

Cruises and other charter cruises, noted that cruising has become increasingly popular in the region thanks to the support offered by governments, particularly Oman's policy of opening up its ports to cruise liners.

With holiday plans on the rise after two years of Covid restrictions, the event offered a welcome glimpse into a relatively untapped market for cruising in Oman, offering refreshing getaways for holiday-starved travellers.

44% of Oman's population is children, 49.6% women



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The number of children in the age group (0-17 years) is 1,221,751, constituting 44 per cent of the total Omani population, while the number of Omani women is 1,391,609, which is 49.6 per cent of the total Omani population of 2,804,117 as of the end of 2021, according to the Special Categories Bulletin for the year 2022 issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The Omani children population increased by 16 per cent between 2017 and 2021, with the highest percentage of them in the Governorate of North Al Batinah.

The bulletin also stated that the number of Omani youth in the age group of 18-29 years is 544,983 men and women, representing 19.4 per cent of the total population. Around 60 per cent of young Omani men are employed in the private and civil sectors. The number of elderly citizens (60 years and over) increased from 149,824 in 2017 to 154,405 in 2021, constituting 5.5 per cent of the total Omani population.

The bulletin also revealed that the number of Omani women by the end of 2021 was 1,391,609, which is 49.6 per cent of the Omani population during the same period.

As for the age-related fertility rates for Omani females, they decreased from 4 births per 1,000 women of childbearing age (15-49 years) in 2017 to 3.4 per thousand women of childbearing age for the year 2021.

The bulletin also highlighted that 60 per cent of the total holders of a bachelor's degree or higher are females and the illiteracy rate for Omani females decreased to 6.3 per cent in 2021, compared to 2017, when the rate was 6.8 per cent.

The number of Omani persons with disabilities reached 42,613 persons, constituting 1.5 per cent of the total population, with 61 per cent being males and 39 per cent being females. The highest percentage of persons with disabilities was concentrated in the Governorate of North Al Batinah (22 per cent), followed by Muscat (16 per cent), Al Dakhiliyah Governorate (13.9 per cent), and Al Wusta Governorate (0.6 per cent).

Oman Desert Marathon begins in Bidiya | 400 INTERNATIONAL RUNNERS FROM 30 COUNTRIES IN ACTION

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JAN 21

The eighth edition of the Oman Desert Marathon (ODM) for the year 2023 was launched in Bidiya in the Al Sharqiyah North Governorate on Saturday morning.

The desert marathon will be competed on the golden sands

of Bidiya during January 21-24. The event is organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Tamkeen Sports and Investment Company.

More than 400 international runners from 30 countries and several amateurs participate in



the new edition. The first round of the race started in front of the fort of the ancient town of Al Wasel in Bidiya in a ceremony held under the auspices of Azzan bin Qassim al Busaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism.

FULL REPORT ON P10



Bilarab Award qualifiers visit museums in France and UK

MUSCAT: The qualifiers for the final stage of the Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design concluded trips to the French Republic and the United Kingdom.

The trips come at the initiative of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism which oversees the implementation of the winning project to design the Museum of Maritime History in the Wilayat of Sur.

The participants started their trip by visiting the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations in the French city of Marseille where they were briefed on the architectural and construction aspects of the museum which embodies the civilisations of Europe and the Mediterranean countries throughout different historical periods.

It is distinguished by its unique view of the Mediterranean Sea.

In their second stop they visited the National Maritime Museum (NMM) in Greenwich, London, one of the oldest and most famous museums in the UK which was opened in 1937.

It showcases the maritime history of the UK and the whole world with over 2 million exhibits on display that represent maritime navigation history during the 17th century.

The participants were keen and determined to make the most of the trip by visiting museums and other buildings characterised by



diverse architectural styles.

They visited the Victoria and Albert Museum, one of the world's leading museums in art and design which has more than 2.8 million pieces on display including books and archives representing

various civilisations. The museum represents an enrichment for those interested in architecture due to its distinctive design.

The participants' passion for architecture motivated them to study and analyse some

architectural designs to hone their designing skills and knowledge.

The participants expressed their happiness over these trips which enriched their knowledge and enhanced their architectural skills in the field of museum designing.

They extended their thanks and appreciation to the Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for providing them this opportunity, stressing that they will make maximum benefit from it in developing their projects with some of the ideas that they learned during the visit, especially since the museums have many things in common with the Maritime History Museum project in the Wilayat of Sur in terms of idea and content. — ONA



OHRC reviews children's rights report



GENEVA: Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) took part in the review and discussion of the fifth and the sixth periodic reports submitted by the Sultanate of Oman to the Committee on the Rights of the Child of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), in Geneva.

During the review of the Sultanate of Oman's report, a number of independent international experts of the Committee on the Rights of the Child presented some comments on the report commending the amendments that were made to the system of the OHRC and

the reforms it made to enhance children's rights.

They welcomed the steps that were taken by the OHRC to ensure the protection of children's rights in the Sultanate of Oman.

The OHRC had previously submitted a parallel report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in light of its purview. Reports submitted by the member states of the Convention on the Rights of the Child are under review by international independent experts. The national human commissions concerned with children's rights are taking part in the review as observers.

— ONA

MoH senior officials hold plenary meeting



MUSCAT: The Head of Departments at the Ministry of Health last week held sessions of its second plenary administrative meeting in the presence of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Head of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, under-secretaries of the ministries of health and labour, directors general of health services and directors of hospitals in the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, Dr Khamis gave a presentation about Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit.

He outlined the vision's progression, priorities, objectives, challenges facing the vision, solutions to address the challenges, tracks and mechanism of regulating the vision's comprehensive system of functioning.

The second day of the meeting covered the training programme in the field of collective action and effective communication among the Health Ministry officials. — ONA

57,906 students take GED first semester exams from today

SUHAIL BIN NASSER AL NAHDI
MUSCAT, JAN 21

The General Education Diploma (GED) first semester examinations for the academic year 2022-2023 will begin today.

A total of 57,906 are taking the exams at 361 examination centres in all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. Of these, Muscat Governorate has 56 examination centres, Dhofar (49 examination centres), North Al Batinah Governorate (50 examination centres), South Al Batinah Governorate (38 examination centres), Al Dakhiliyah Governorate (48 examination centres), South Al Sharqiyah Governorate (27 examination centres), North Al Sharqiyah Governorate (32 examination centres), Al Dhahirah Governorate (22 examination centres), Al Wusta Governorate (20 examination centres), Musandam Governorate (7 examination centres) and Al Buraimi Governorate (12 examination centres).



The Ministry of Education has readied 6,400 exam markers and 6,500 exam supervisors. Besides, the ministry formed follow-up committees for all exam-related processes including the central examination committee that follow up and oversee the examinations and marking. This is in addition to the governorates committees represented by the examination management committees which are tasked with preparing the examination centres and following up the exams.

The Ministry of Education has dedicated four marking centres in Muscat, North Al Batinah, South Al Batinah and Al Dakhiliyah governorates that will be operational on morning and evening shifts. The marking of the exam papers begins tomorrow (Monday) and concludes on February 22.

The Ministry of Education restricted cell phones at the examination centres advising students to be present at the centres at the specified time carrying the original ID documents with them.

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3



Oman's heritage showcased at Muscat Nights

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Oman's treasure trove of rich heritage and culture were in sharp focus at the Muscat Nights, a celebration of diverse cultural spectrum, fun and frolic at the four major venues.

The 17-day long festival got under way on Thursday and has been a major crowd puller over the weekend and more so on Saturday with more people teeming into the parks.

Unlike in the past festivals, when Oman celebrated Muscat Festival till 2019, the heritage village vows to offer a kaleidoscopic view of the historic and cultural aspects without losing its amusing factor.

Muscat Municipality, the organisers of the Nights, has presented a different experience in reviewing the Omani heritage and showcasing the identity and cultural heritage to the world.

The distinguished corner has an exclusive array of authentic artifacts and the participation of leading Omani institutions in the field of technology and virtual reality brings rare facts and figures, monuments and historic landmarks to the audience that makes up for a huge difference at



the heritage corner.

The three Omani organisations, Shizka for organising events, Azm Programming company, and Manafeth company that specialises in 3D drawing have spared no stones in presenting the country

in virtual mode without losing the charm at the corner in the heritage village of Al Naseem Park.

"We hope the visitors would get a unique and extraordinary experience as we aim to introduce visitors to Muscat Nights by using

virtual reality technology and simulating it for six sites in the Sultanate of Oman," said a Muscat Municipality spokesperson.

"We further hope that this would allow visitors to Muscat Nights experience the virtual

reality of these places through lenses that reflect the sense of time and history and makes you feel at the historic place and time while at Al Naseem Park," he added.

He further said that the interest in introducing this corner as one

Use of Virtual Reality technology at Heritage Village Al Naseem Park drawing huge crowds

of the eye-catching corners of the heritage village stems from the Muscat Municipality's interest in adopting emerging technologies in presenting the features with live images. This has altered the stereotype which was previously in use about the heritage village that includes our popular legacies and regions.

The idea of the corner is to promote virtual reality technology and the possibility of enhancing it for tourism, and to provide a virtual experience around some places, depending on modern programming and the addition of new world that depict scenes in accordance with the VR technology.

A visitor to this corner can see six tourist locations in the Sultanate of Oman through the (VR) glasses, such as Wilayat of Sur, Nizwa Market, Muttrah Market, Qasr Al Alam Landmark, Royal Opera House, and Misfat al Abriyeen and walk around as if he in the same spot.

Chinese Embassy celebrates Spring Festival

MUSCAT: The Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Muscat on Thursday organised a celebration on the occasion of the Spring Festival, the most important Chinese traditional festival.

Li Lingping, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, accredited to the Sultanate of Oman, said that bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and China are witnessing great development in various fields. She noted that the past year was distinguished at the level of bilateral relations between the two sides through contacts and close high-level meetings.

Li said that the economy between the Sultanate of Oman and China are very complementary and have great potential, and there is cooperation between the two sides in the fields of infrastructure, energy, communications technology and fisheries.

The ambassador mentioned that China continues to maintain the position of the largest trading partner of the Sultanate of Oman and the



largest importer of crude oil. Until the end of November last year, the volume of trade between the two sides

amounted to \$36.97 billion, an increase of 27.3 per cent on an annual basis, while the new Chinese direct investment in

the Sultanate of Oman reached \$20.49 million, an increase of 124.67 per cent.

She also stated that this year marks the 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Sultanate of Oman and China, and that the relations of friendship and cooperation between the two sides stand at a new historical starting point that provides broader horizons for development.

The celebration witnessed folk art and music that reflected the traditional, cultural and civilisational aspects of China.

The Chinese Spring Festival is one of the most famous holidays in the world, dating back 4,000 years, during which folkloric celebrations are held in all Chinese provinces and cities that embody Chinese dance, originality of art, singing and other arts.

The ceremony held at the Diplomatic Club, was attended by a number of officials in the Sultanate of Oman, heads of diplomatic missions accredited to the Sultanate of Oman, and a group of the Chinese community. — ONA

Tender

مدائن
madayn

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) announces the following Tender:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of Buying	Date of Submission	Type of Work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
1/2023/PEIE/HQ-1	SURVEYING GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS USING DRONE TECHNOLOGY IN INDUSTRIAL CITIES AND DEVELOPMENT OF MADAYN'S GIS DATA	05-02-2023	02-03-2023 (12:00 PM)	COMPANIES SPECIALIZED IN THE FIELD OF WORK	FIRST AND ABOVE	150

Tender Documents can be obtained from Accounts Department in KOM (4) Floor No (4) at Knowledge Oasis Muscat (KOM) (Tel: 24449679/24449634) during official working hours, against non-refundable fee as mentioned above.

Offers must be submitted in a closed envelopes sealed with red wax. The tender number and name shall be written on the top of the envelope containing the offer. Nothing should be written on the exterior of the envelope to display the identity of the tenderer.

Offers should be addressed to, The Chairman of Procurements Committee, Madayn, Post Box No. 2, Postal Code 124, Rusayl, Sultanate of Oman.

The completed Offer Document must be deposited in the Tender Box at Knowledge Oasis Muscat (KOM 1)

The Tenderer should enclose Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the Tender value validity for (90) days, and addressed to The Chairman of Internal tender Committee.

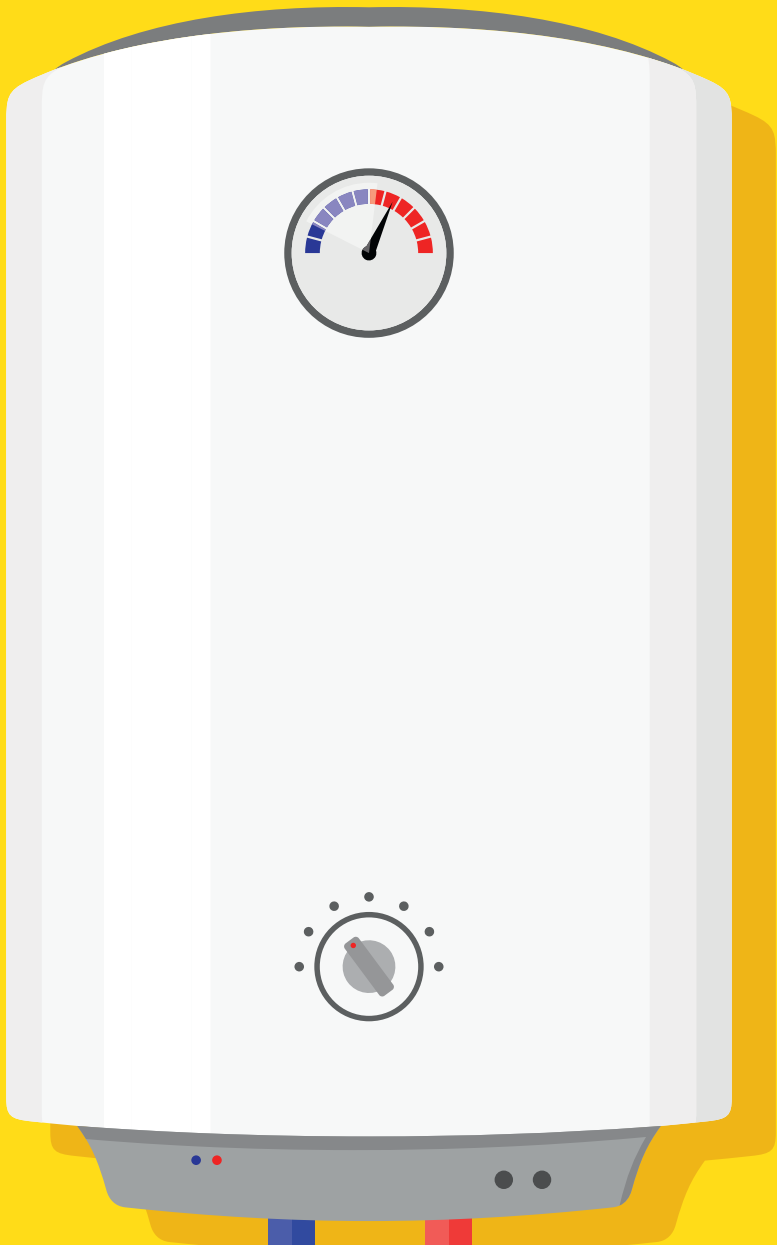
For any Inquiries: Tenders@madayn.om

Madayn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers have no right to claim for any compensations.

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ENSURE

SAFETY

ONE OF THE MOST
IMPORTANT RISKS
CAUSED BY ELECTRIC
HEATERS IS
EXPLOSION LEADING
TO ACCIDENTS AND
CERTAIN DEATH

WATER HEATERS POSE
A GREAT DANGER IF
THEY ARE MISUSED
DUE TO IGNORANCE
OR NEGLIGENCE, OR
WHEN ANY DEFECT
OCCURS TO THEM

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
[@Afrahalbalushia](#)

Many lives have been lost from the misuse of water heaters and lack of knowledge of safety requirements.

The water heater is one of the most important devices in use during winter as it used for multiple purposes.

It is not just a device but is a ticking time bomb that may kill you or your family members.

The electric heater is one among the several types of heaters in use along with gas heaters and solar heaters.

One of the most important risks caused by electric heaters is explosion or electric seam, both of which are serious causes leading to accidents and certain death.

Electrical short circuit occur due to improper installation when connecting electricity to heater, such as sticking electrical wires to each other or lack of care when connecting them to the device.

Neglecting them can cause electric seams, which may result in electric shock which often leads to death.

Explosions of water heaters are usually due to the interruption of water from the heater. This occurs due to evaporation of water from the heater

or the lack of water reaching it with the continuation of the temperature rising until it reaches the boiling point and evaporation. This leads to pressure inside the tank and the explosion occurs due to thermostat damage.

Fatal death due to gas heaters occur when the carbon dioxide gas present causes casualties in the winter season.

There must be a source of ventilation in the case of hot water showers in order to reduce cases of fainting or poisoning by water vapour and carbon monoxide gas resulting from the combustion of natural gas in the heater.

Accidents due to suffocation are due to carbon monoxide poisoning in which the injured fails to notice anything. They do not have the opportunity to seek help. If you suspect that someone is suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning, immediately move them to a well-ventilated place and call an ambulance.

Water heaters pose a great danger if they are misused due to ignorance or negligence, or when any defect occurs to them.

Heaters are frequently used with the advent of winter season, and their use may be prolonged for consecutive hours.

An awareness about the seriousness of its safety need to be created and it should be securely installed and used properly.



Plans to integrate logistic services in South Batinah and Muscat

VINOD NAIR
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The Oman Logistics Centre of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) on Thursday organised a workshop on the integration of logistics services in the governorates of Muscat and South Al Batinah.

The workshop was held as part of the efforts to organise all transport services — land, sea and air — in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and the National Logistics Strategy 2040.

The workshop discussed challenges facing the businesses in the sector, short and long-term opportunities, and initiatives to



boost in-country value.

It may be noted that the contribution of the logistics sector to the Gross Domestic Product in 2022 was RO 1.5 billion or seven per cent of the GDP, while the Sultanate's ranking in the competitiveness index is 53, while

for the trade facilitation index, the Sultanate was rated the first in the Gulf.

The workshop presented a report on the movement of goods through the ports of the governorates of Muscat and South Al Batinah in 2021.

The total exports of the Sultanate of Oman via Muscat were 56 million tonnes, and the total shipments transiting through the ports of Muscat Governorate were 2,190,000 tonnes. The total imports through the ports of South Al Batinah were 4,353,000 tonnes.

The workshop was attended by Engineer Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology; Khamis bin Mohammed al Shamakhi, Under-Secretary for Transport; Eng Ahmed bin Hassan al Theeb, Vice-President of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, and Shaikh Saif bin Humair Al Shehhi, Governor of South Al Batinah.

Agreement signed to provide training for people with disability



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Social Development has signed a cooperation programme with the Capital Market Authority (CMA) for community partnership in enhancing and providing a training programme for people with disability in fields related to the capital market and insurance sectors. The programme comes within the framework of the initiative 'Be with us for them'.

The move aims to empower

people with disability and enhance their role in the society by honing their capabilities and competencies.

The cooperation programme was signed by Shaikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Under-Secretary, Ministry of Social Development, and Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi, CEO of CMA.

Al Shamsi said that the initiative stems from the ministry's keenness to develop programmes and services offered to people with disability and to activate the concept of institutional partnership through social responsibility. The moves aim to empower people with disability in the society.

The initiative is supervised by the CMA in coordination with insurance companies to provide advantages and special offers for people with disability in the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

Provisions of Food Safety Regulations amended

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has issued a ministerial resolution — 11/2023 amending some provisions of the Food Safety Regulations.

As per the decision, a new item was added to the violations and administrative fines related to food safety, which is the imposition of an administrative fine of RO 1,000 for the production, import, or marketing of food products to which titanium dioxide (E171) is added. This decision shall come into effect 6 months after the date of its publication in the Official Gazette.

Titanium dioxide is used as a food colour (E171) to make food more visually appealing, to give colour to food that would otherwise be colourless, or to restore the original appearance of food. Titanium dioxide is also present in cosmetics, paints and medicines.

The main food categories with exposure to E171 are fine bakery wares, soups, broths and sauces (for infants, toddlers and adolescents); and soups, broths, sauces, salads, savoury-based sandwich spreads and processed nuts.

Oman named among world's most beautiful countries



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The Sultanate of Oman has been named among the world's 18 most beautiful countries by Veranda, a US-based design and lifestyle magazine.

The list published by Hearst Magazines Division of Hearst Communications, was compiled through a travel survey that aimed to narrow down the most breathtaking places on earth from among the 193 vastly different nations.

Maldives topped the list, followed by Costa Rica, Tanzania, US, Peru, Japan, Iceland, Kenya, Thailand, Namibia, Greece, New Zealand, Chile, Italy, Vietnam, Switzerland, Canada, and Oman.

Veranda praised each country for their unique and stunning offerings, from intriguing architecture and colorful landscapes to complex histories and centuries-old traditions.

The magazine highlighted Oman's blend of traditional and contemporary culture, particularly in the coastal city of Muscat, which is home to the renowned Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque and a rising food scene reinterpreting traditional Omani cuisine.

Veranda also highlighted the natural beauty of Oman's mountains, such as Jabal Akhdar, and the people who make the country stand out.

It also mentions Oman as a marvellous place from towering mountains and sandy coastlines to striking city centres.



Royal Hospital activates scientific research and innovation

MUSCAT: The Royal Hospital on Thursday organised its annual scientific research event, which aims to highlight, support and promote scientific research in the medical field, under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health.

Dr Sami bin Sulaiman al Farsi, Director-General, Royal Hospital, said the hospital is making tangible efforts to activate scientific research and innovation for individuals in the institution.

He pointed out that organising the event on an annual basis comes with the aim of encouraging scientific research and making it one of the main goals in the hospital's march.

He stated that the participating scientific research deals with the latest developments in the medical field, and a number of specialists and those concerned



in the medical field take part in it. He also stressed that the hospital pay great attention to scientific research with the importance of keeping abreast of the latest developments in health field.

Dr Muntazer al Moussawi said that 12 visual presentations were presented in addition to 18 scientific papers dealing with the latest developments in the field of science and knowledge, expressing his hope that the event will be an encouragement for all

to move forward and improve the quality of research.

Dr Hasina al Harthiyah reviewed the most important projects carried out by the Studies and Research Department at the Royal Hospital, including the Scientific Café project and the initiative to support decision-makers with evidence in addition to a group of scientific workshops related to capacity-building in the field of scientific research and innovation. — ONA



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

A'Sharqiyah University (ASU) is a private higher education institution located in Ibra, North of A'Sharqiyah Governorate of the Sultanate of Oman, about 150 km from Muscat. It was established in 2009 by Ministerial Decision (78/2009) issued by the Ministry of Higher Education.

Tender details:
ASU's Tender Committee has the pleasure to invite the companies who are experienced in Providing Equipment for Electrical lab:

Tender No.	Description	Document Collection Deadline	Site Visit Date	Bids Submission Deadline	Document Fees
ASU/04/2023	Providing Equipment for Electrical lab at A'Sharqiyah University in Ibra	26/01/2023	29/01/2023 at 10:00 am	16/02/2023	100 OMR

- The specialized companies of the above assignment can obtain the tender document from Procurement and Contracts Department at A'Sharqiyah University, Ibra, during the working days from 9:00 am to 03:00 pm.
- Bids have to be submitted in closed sealed envelopes with red wax, addressed to (Tender Committee, A'Sharqiyah University - Ibra), bearing the tender subject with its reference number with no indication to the name of bidders.
- The submitting of the main envelope should contain the following:
 - Separate sealed envelope contains technical proposal (1 original copy + 2 copies).
 - Separate sealed envelope contains commercial proposal (1 original copy + 2 copies).
 - Separate sealed envelope contains tender bond.
- ASU general terms and conditions of tenders shall apply on all submitted bids.
http://www.asu.edu.om/downloads/purchase_terms_conditions.pdf
- ASU is not bound to accept the lowest bid.
- For more details, please don't hesitate to contact us on: (+968) 25401115.



Germany faces backlash over refusal to give Ukraine tanks

KYIV: Germany faced a strong backlash from allies on Saturday over its refusal to supply Ukraine with its vaunted Leopard tanks to bolster its fighting capacity in the nearly year-long war with Russia.

On Friday, some 50 nations agreed to provide Kyiv with billions of dollars’ worth of military hardware, including armoured vehicles and munitions needed to push back Russian forces.

But German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius told reporters on the sidelines of the event at the US Ramstein Air Base that despite heightened expectations, “We still cannot say when a decision will be taken, and what the decision will be, when it comes to the Leopard tank.”

Ukraine on Saturday denounced the “global indecision” of its allies on providing heavy-duty modern tanks, saying “today’s indecision is killing more of our people.”

“Every day of delay is the death of Ukrainians. Think faster,” presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak tweeted.

Several allies echoed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in saying the tanks were essential to Ukraine’s fight with its much larger neighbour.

In a joint statement — and a rare public criticism of Europe’s top power — the foreign ministers of the three Baltic states said they “call on Germany to provide Leopard tanks to Ukraine now.”



Germany is under pressure to allow Ukraine to receive its vaunted Leopard tanks. — Reuters

“This is needed to stop Russian aggression, help Ukraine and restore peace in Europe quickly. Germany as the leading European power has special responsibility in this regard,” said the statement, tweeted by Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics.

Berlin has been hesitant to send the Leopards or allow other nations to transfer them to Kyiv, with reports earlier in the week saying it would agree to do so only if the US provided its tanks as well. Washington has said providing its Abrams tanks to Ukraine is not feasible, citing difficulties in

training and maintenance.

But expectations had grown ahead of Friday’s Ukraine Contact Group meeting of around 50 US-led countries that Germany would at least agree to let other countries operating Leopards transfer them to Kyiv’s army. US Senator Lindsey Graham, a Republican from South Carolina who is currently visiting Kyiv, called on both sides to supply the machines.

“To the Germans: Send tanks to Ukraine because they need them. It is in your own national interest that (Russian President Vladimir) Putin loses in Ukraine.”

“To the (US President Joe) Biden Administration: Send American tanks so that others will follow our lead,” he said.

The pleas came as the Russian army said its troops had launched an offensive in Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia region, where fighting intensified this week after several months of an almost frozen front.

In its daily report on Saturday, Moscow’s forces said they carried out “offensive operations” in the region and claimed to have “taken more advantageous lines and positions”. — AFP

Pakistan agrees to import Russian oil

ISLAMABAD: Russia could start exporting oil to energy-starved Pakistan after March if terms are agreed, and is discussing with Islamabad whether payment could be made in the currencies of “friendly” countries, Russia’s energy minister said on Friday.

Pakistan has been battling a balance of payment crisis with foreign exchange reserves falling to \$4.6 billion, barely enough to cover three weeks of imports — mostly for oil.

It said in October it was considering buying discounted Russian crude, citing neighbouring India, which has been purchasing from Moscow.

Pakistani officials and Russian Energy Minister Nikolay Shulginov, who is in Islamabad for an annual inter-governmental commission on trade and economy, said the key elements of the deal had yet to be agreed.

“As for the supply of crude oil and petroleum products, we conceptually agreed on the development and signing of an agreement that will determine and resolve all issues of logistics, insurance, payment, volumes,” Shulginov told reporters in

Russian, according to the Russian state news agency RIA Novosti.

Shulginov also said “negotiations are going on” about settlement in the currencies of “friendly” countries, meaning non-Western countries that have not imposed economic sanctions on Russia in response to its invasion of Ukraine. Oil is generally paid for in dollars.

Shulginov said the two sides had “established a timeline of this agreement in our joint statement — which is late March”, according to RIA.

Pakistan junior oil minister Musadik Malik told local Geo News TV separately that Islamabad wanted to import 35% of its total crude oil requirement.

He added: “If we have dollars in excess, then we are ready to do the trade in dollars, and if there is a shortage of dollars and we have some other currency in our reserves, we are ready to trade in that. ...

“All these things will be finalised in the next 60 days, so that by the end of March the oil supply starts from Russia.”

— Reuters

Sunak fined for not wearing seat belt

LONDON: Prime Minister Rishi Sunak of Britain acknowledged on Friday that he had been fined by police for not wearing a seat belt after he posted an Instagram video of himself riding in a car without one.

Sunak’s office said he would pay the penalty but did not disclose the amount.

“The prime minister fully accepts this was a mistake and has apologised,” Sunak’s office said in a statement. “He will of course comply with the fixed penalty.”

Under British law, which requires seat belts with few exceptions, violations can result in fines of up to 500 pounds, or about \$620.



Rishi Sunak was issued a fine by British police on Friday for failing to wear a seat belt in a car while he was filming a social media video. — Reuters

Sunak’s office acknowledged the fine after a video on his Instagram page showed him riding in a car without a seat belt as he visited Lancashire, in northwest

England. In the video, he was promoting his “leveling up” fund, a program intended to invest in local communities and create jobs.

The video drew widespread attention from those who noticed that the prime minister was not buckled up.

Lancashire police wrote on Facebook on Friday “that a video has been circulating on social media showing an individual failing to wear a seat belt while a passenger in a moving car in Lancashire.”

“After looking into this matter,” police wrote that they had “issued a 42-year-old man from London with a conditional offer of fixed penalty.” — Reuters/AFP

Thai elephant camp adds more jumbos as tourists return

PHUKET: An elephant camp in Thailand has purchased six new jumbos to welcome tourists and returning Chinese visitors, offering activities from elephant rides to elephant showers, the owner said.

Pang Chang Kamala Elephant Camp on the resort island of Phuket is also adding programmes such as elephant care due to a rise in bookings after the Lunar



New Year, camp owner Wittaya Taweeros told reporters.

“As the number of tourists has increased, we’re ready to welcome

them, also with our newly bought elephants,” Wittaya said.

With 25 elephants now, the camp can receive 300 tourists per day, up from 200, he added.

Wittaya said he was confident that more tourists will come. “We’ve already got 60% to 70% bookings after the Lunar New Year from the same agent we worked with before the pandemic,” he said. — Reuters

Arizona dismantles shipping container wall on border

HEREFORD: A wall of shipping containers installed just a few months ago by the then- governor of Arizona at a \$100 million cost to US taxpayers was being dismantled.

Republican Doug Ducey ordered the huge line of shipping containers to be placed at the frontier between the United States and Mexico, during the final months of his administration, in what he said was a bid to stem illegal immigration.

But after being sued by Washington for putting the containers on federal land in the Coronado National Forest, Ducey — who has since been succeeded by Democrat Katie Hobbs — agreed in December to remove them.

“I couldn’t believe that Governor Ducey thought that was a good idea,” said Debbie McGuire, as a truck barreled down a dusty road

carrying an empty container away.

“It’s absolutely ludicrous. To put containers that weren’t going to work ever to keep anybody out,” she said.

“I just can’t believe he thought it was a good idea. Ridiculous, and a total waste of taxpayer money.”

Ducey’s container wall effort began in the middle of 2022, and quickly ran into opposition, with critics slamming it as a cynical political move that would damage the environment and make no difference to the number of illegal border crossings.

Opponents said the corrugated containers, which snaked like a huge cargo train for four miles (seven kilometres) through federal lands, divided an important conservation area.

They also pointed out that the terrain is so difficult to traverse that people traffickers have never really used it.



A truck drives away with a shipping container removed from a long row of those stacked to create a wall between the US and Mexico. — AFP

In practice, the double-stacked containers were ill-suited to keeping people out — their rigid shape means they didn’t always line up, leaving gaping holes

between boxes easily big enough for a person to fit through.

In some areas, the terrain was too steep to accommodate them, and workmen had to leave spaces.

“It’s just political gamesmanship,” said Bill Wilson from nearby Sierra Vista, as he watched the wall being dismantled on Friday.

“It’s a travesty and a waste of government money, tax money, time and effort,” the 77-year-old told reporters.

Arizona shares around 370 miles (600 kilometres) of border with Mexico, including environmental preservation areas, national parks, military zones, and indigenous reservations.

Until the 2017 arrival in the White House of Donald Trump — who was propelled to power on his pledge to “Build That Wall” — there was very little in the way of a physical barrier separating it from Mexico.

Now vast stretches of the border have a fence that towers up to 30 feet (nine metres) high.

Before the containers arrived in the Coronado National Forest — an area that can only be reached by dirt roads — the border here was demarcated by a wire fence.

— AFP

How do you fight a drought when it’s flooding?

FARHAD MANJOO

California is built upon the great gamble of irrigation. Left alone, much of the land in the Western United States would be inhospitable to teeming cities. But we’re Americans; we couldn’t let the desert stand in our way. More than a century ago, the US Bureau of Land Reclamation began taming the water in the West. It’s been a remarkably successful project. In California, where I live, irrigation has turned largely barren regions into some the country’s most fertile farmland and most prosperous metropolises. We’ve built “the most ambitious desert civilisation the world has seen,” Marc Reisner put it in “Cadillac Desert,” his 1986 history of Western irrigation.

I’ve been thinking a lot about “Cadillac Desert” in the past few weeks as the rains fell and fell and kept falling over California — much of which, despite the pouring skies, seems likely to remain in the grip of a severe drought. Reisner anticipated this moment. He worried that the West’s success with irrigation could be a mirage — that it took water for granted and didn’t appreciate the precariousness of our capacity to control it. “Everything depends on the manipulation of water — on capturing it behind dams, storing it, and rerouting it in concrete rivers over distances of hundreds of miles,” he wrote. “Were it not for a century and a half of messianic effort toward that end, the West as we know it would not exist.”

But what happens to that century of irrigation when the weather changes, as it is now? Experts say that climate change is exacerbating “weather whiplash” in California — that we’ll increasingly suffer years of prolonged, extreme aridity followed by great biblical gushers of precipitation. Can a society adjust to a climate of opposing calamities — a climate of both megadroughts and atmospheric rivers, of far too little and far too much?

Just psychologically, this is a difficult balance to maintain: It’s hard to worry about drought when it’s flooding. It’s hard to worry about flooding when there’s a drought. Adjusting infrastructure and water usage to the seesawing weather is going to require some big and possibly painful changes to many of the state’s key constituencies. Farmers will have to give up some agricultural land and grow different crops. Homeowners and developers might have to leave some flood-prone areas uninhabited. We’re going to have to alter our cities to capture more water and alter our lifestyles to use less of it.

California’s water system “was designed and built and is operated for different climatic conditions — for the climate of the 20th century, not the 21st century,” said Peter Gleick, a co-founder and senior fellow at the Pacific Institute. Gleick said there’s some reason for optimism that we’ll be able to tackle this problem; at least California’s government understands and is determined to address the changing weather. Still, Gleick said, “given what we now know about the unavoidable changes of climate change, our policymakers are not doing enough.”

California’s precipitation patterns are naturally variable;



A Compton resident bails out her flooded porch after a night of heavy rainfall.

we have always had very dry years and very wet years, and quick shifts from droughts to floods are not unheard-of. But climate change is supercharging this phenomenon. A recent state climate report found that year-to-year weather variability has increased sharply since the 1980s. Anyone living in California over the past decade has seen this firsthand. Between 2012 and 2016, California suffered one of its worst droughts on record. Then, in 2017, we had one of the wettest years on record. Then California and much of the Western United States went back into severe drought, again with some of the driest years ever recorded; a report published in *Nature Climate Change* last year found that the years between 2000 and 2021 might be the Southwest’s driest 22-year period in 1,200 years. And then, this winter, another deluge.

It’s not just that wet years bring more water; it’s also how the water is falling. Because temperatures are warmer, a lot more of California’s precipitation has in recent years been falling as rain instead of snow. This is a problem for a few reasons. Snow acts as a kind of “frozen reservoir” that stores water from one season to another — the snow falls in the winter, then trickles into California’s water supply as it melts. But when precipitation falls more heavily as rain — and when the storms come in quick succession, as they have recently — water isn’t as easily stored and instead becomes destructive. A 2019 study published in the journal *Water Resources Research* found that the risk of flood grows as snowfall shifts to rainfall and that floods driven by rain can

be much larger than floods driven by snowmelt. When rain falls on snow, the snow melts faster. And when rain pours on cities, little of it is captured for use — and instead washes out to sea.

Capturing stormwater is a big opportunity. For years, Los Angeles County has been working on a gigantic effort to collect more rainfall for use. Among other projects, the plan involves creating huge “spreading grounds” — tracts of land where rainwater is allowed to pool and soak into the ground; installing rain barrels and other ways to collect water in apartment buildings and at businesses; and building water-absorbing infrastructure into roadways and sidewalks, like drainage ditches and pavement made out of materials permeable to water. Officials reported collecting 33 billion gallons of water in the recent storms — enough for more than 800,000 people for a year. Expanding such efforts statewide could yield lots of new water.

It’s also clear that California’s agricultural sector has got to use less water. Farming currently accounts for 80 per cent of California’s water use. In drought years, lots of the agricultural water is pumped from underground, a practice that experts say cannot be sustained. Farmers can reduce this amount by growing more efficient crops — at the moment, too much of our land is used to grow water-hogging crops like alfalfa and almonds — but even so, the agricultural sector will have to get smaller. Farmland will need to be fallowed — at least 500,000 acres, according to researchers at the Public Policy Institute of California.

Elon Musk said Davos isn’t fun. Well, is it?

JOSEPH BERNSTEIN

The concept of fun is weirdly hard to define, like love or obscenity. You kind of know it when you’re having it, and you definitely know when you’re not.

Last month, Elon Musk, the Tesla and Twitter CEO, said that he had declined an invitation to the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum at Davos, because, he wrote in a tweet, “it sounded boring af”: Not fun at all.

And yet, Davos is global capitalism’s Super Bowl, a place where world leaders (Olaf Scholz!), royalty (Philippe, King of the Belgians!), corporate titans (Jamie Dimon!) and some of our very finest celebrities (Idris Elba! Will.i.am!) gather for five nights of parties, where they — allegedly — set the course for the future of the world over Michelin-starred canapés.

So which is it? Is Davos fun? Or is it boring? Well, it depends on whom you ask, as well as what you get invited to.

(And according to a WEF spokesperson, Musk wasn’t even invited to this year’s conference. So there.)

“Davos is not boring at all,” said Randall Lane, the chief content officer and editor of *Forbes*, who has been going to Davos since 2014. On Thursday night, Lane’s magazine hosted a party for 1,200, featuring musical performances by Fat Joe and Doug E Fresh in honour of the 50th anniversary of hip-hop — an event that many people would consider

fun.

“It’s not boring during the day, and it’s definitely not boring at night,” Lane said. “If you think it’s boring, you probably haven’t been here.”

During the day, Davos is given over to official programming — the Davos agenda. (Reporters and executives from *The New York Times* regularly participate in the conference, and the company has hosted private events there.) It features talks and round-table discussions about such topics as the energy transition, the global supply chain and Alzheimer’s disease, which are perhaps less fun than Fat Joe, or Sting for that matter, who played a small concert hosted by Microsoft on Tuesday evening.

“The conference itself is not at all fun,” said Jolie Hunt, the CEO of Hunt & Gather, a marketing agency. She has been going to Davos for 20 years. “The dinners, the nightcaps, the schmoozes: those are tonnes of fun.”

Those events take place at restaurants, in hotels and at private chalets. This year, Anthony Scaramucci, the Skybridge Capital founder and former White House communications director, hosted the 12th annual edition of his notorious party at the Hotel Europe, which financial journalist Felix Salmon called “a mess” back in 2011. According to Semafor, group chats on WhatsApp and Telegram now play a major role in determining which parties hit and which ones miss. Semafor cited “power chats” that include “Burning Man at Davos” and “unDavos,” for those interested in the “less stuffy social scene.” (Group chats: again, fun to some, not fun for others.)



According to a WEF spokesperson, Musk wasn’t even invited to this year’s conference.

The theme of this year’s conference was ‘Cooperation in a Fragmented World,’ and the official conference overview includes the word ‘crisis’ or ‘crises’ eight times

According to Hunt, one crowd goes to bed by 11 pm in order to be up for what she called “the breakfast circuit.” Another crowd, she said, stays up dancing until 4 am. Late night/early morning dancing is a classic sign of fun. (Still another crowd reportedly finds its fun elsewhere.)

Because Davos is so remote (two hours by car from Zurich, less by helicopter), the conference promotes a kind of snowed-in hyper-networking. Some find this energising (fun). Others find it enervating (not fun).

“I am generally so drained by work that I just collapse,” Adam Tooze, a historian, wrote in an e-mail.

Davos attendees are usually about 80 per cent male, which is also not fun. A 2020 Times UK investigation found that female guests were “routinely harassed.”

Laura Modi, the CEO and co-founder of Bobbie, a baby formula start-up, said that she was pleasantly surprised by the atmosphere, which she found “extremely welcoming.” This was Modi’s first Davos, and she found it fun — to a point.

“I myself haven’t really left my house in a year during the infant formula shortage,” Modi said. “So the longer dinners, talking to people I would never get to speak to and having laughs — that was fun.”

Still, she said, “It’s a lot of people on the grind. I can absolutely see why Elon would think it’s boring.”

For some longtime attendees, such as economist Nouriel Roubini, known for his gloomy projections, Davos this year was “95% work and very little socializing,” he wrote in a WhatsApp message.

Where are we heading as human beings?



Dr Hamed al Sinawi
@alsinawi

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

Last week a friend sent me a video of a trans woman from a western country stating that she identifies as a wolf, and a second one who says she identifies as a cat and communicates with her children through meowing.

She also stated that schools respect her children's choices and "meow back when communicating with them". This video made me wonder, where are we heading as human beings?

History books tell us that during the Middle Ages in Europe, there were people transforming into a variety of animals — most commonly wolves — and during the 16th and 17th centuries, there were trials involving claims that the accused were witches that had the ability to shape-shift into a wolf.

This is a psychiatric condition called Lycanthropy, which is a delusion of being an animal – wolf or otherwise.

A delusion is a false belief held by a person who is convinced that it is true. This is often seen among people who suffer from schizophrenia or other psychotic illness.

But recently there are reports of people identifying as cats and wolves without exhibiting other signs of mental illness.

Social media sites are discussing a new wave of people who are choosing to not identify as a part of the human race but align themselves with animals such as cats and wolves.

For example, there is an eight-grade student in Australia who identifies as a 'cat'. She does not

‘THE REASON WHY SOME PEOPLE IDENTIFY AS OTHER THAN HUMAN IS NOT FULLY KNOWN, BUT PSYCHOLOGISTS SUGGEST THAT IT OFFERS AN ALTERNATIVE WAY TO FIT INTO A SOCIETY THAT DOESN’T ALWAYS MAKE ROOM FOR EVERYONE’

use speech to communicate but meows like a real cat. The schools are reported to be “very supportive” and put a litter box in the bathroom for students who identified as cats to use instead of the toilet. According to social scientists, people who identify as animals are more likely to be men who like watching cartoons as

children and enjoy reading science fiction books.

A recent study showed that 12 to 17 per cent identify as trans and between 5 and 15 per cent have autism while up to 70 per cent identify with the LGBTQ+ community.

The reason why some people identify as other than human is not fully understood, but psychologists suggest that it offers an alternative way to fit into a society that doesn't always make room for everyone.

In short, it could be a result of societal disintegration that is now seen in several countries. In my opinion, the argument that children and teenagers should be allowed to choose their gender is not valid, as they are too young to make such decisions and they are often easily influenced by trends

and what is popular in social media.

It is not a surprise that a good number of transgender people revert back to their original gender, which in certain cases is not fully possible — especially after surgical reconstruction.

Someone may ask, what can I do to protect my children from such behaviour? Well, there is no single way and probably having regular conversation with your children about different affairs will help you be aware of their thoughts and interests and pick up any unacceptable ideas.

When possible, plan activities that would take them away from their phones, like a walk in nature or a picnic. You may face some resistance in the beginning, but don't give up.

CEOs face challenge over sluggish climate efforts

SIMON JESSOP, LANANH NGUYEN & PARITOSH BANSAL

A return to Davos by corporate titans and their bankers after recent record Alpine temperatures has turned a spotlight on just how quickly they are moving to rein in carbon emissions.

The number of organisations pledging to get to net-zero emissions by mid-century has soared in recent years, up 60 per cent to more than 11,000 in September 2022, UN figures showed.

Yet the world remains on course to miss its climate goals.

Several bankers and executives at this year's World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in the Swiss ski resort of Davos said they were looking for ways to speed up the transition to a greener future.

Increasingly, they said conversations in C-suites and with financiers had turned to the risks that climate change presented to businesses.

"Suddenly people have realised that it is something that's not just a way of presenting things, but that it is a necessity for survival," said André Hoffmann, vice-chairman of Swiss drugmaker Roche.

While there is agreement on the need for change, people were divided on the pace. Climate activist Greta Thunberg made the journey up the Swiss Alps to call on the global energy industry and its financiers to end all fossil fuel investments.

Privately, bankers said the energy crisis in Ukraine had shown that they needed to fund a transition to renewable energy, which would take time. Despite scientists warning last year that time was running out for humanity to cap global warming and limit devastating weather events, 2022 was dominated by Russia's war of Ukraine and an economy-damaging spike in inflation.

Executives from some of the leading US financial firms also faced growing pressure from domestic right-wing politicians to row back on efforts to reflect environmental issues in their investment decision-making.

Yet with regulators across the world bringing in tougher rules to better police 'sustainable' activities — and with more bad practice being challenged in court — executives in the Swiss mountain resort said they were focused on sustainability.

Suni Harford, the president of UBS's asset management arm who leads the bank's sustainability efforts, said her conversations at Davos suggested no let up in focus on climate, despite the shorter-term pressures.

"Clients are becoming ever more informed on the energy transition, demand for sustainable and green products has held up well, and clients are increasingly looking to measure the impact of their portfolios." — Reuters

Which leaders resign, like Jacinda Ardern? Often, the system decides



Max Fisher

The writer is an international reporter and columnist for NYT

When Jacinda Ardern announced this week that she would step down as New Zealand's prime minister, her decision caught the world by surprise. She called leading a country "the most privileged job anyone could ever have," but said she would leave office by February.

It was particularly striking to see a leader voluntarily relinquish power at a moment when the world's strongmen — and even some elected presidents — are clinging ferociously to theirs.

Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil, for instance, has disputed the election results that recently removed him from office, with some of his supporters storming the country's legislature in an apparent mimicry of the United States' own attempted insurrection in 2021.

Ardern framed her resignation as a personal decision based on no longer having "enough in the tank" to fulfil the responsibilities of being prime minister. Some supporters have also praised her move as embodying the democratic ideals on which she spoke passionately.

But what separates leaders who step down from those who do not often turns less on that leader's ideology or personal life than on the simple nature of their political system.

In parliamentary systems such as New Zealand's, it is the norm for leaders to step down when it is thought that doing so will best serve their party's electoral prospects. Sometimes such a resignation is voluntary, and sometimes it comes amid quiet internal pressure from party members. Usually it is a mix of both.

Although Ardern has said she is stepping down for personal reasons, her party is facing its worst poll numbers in years and a national election in October.

Parties in parliamentary systems often nudge a leader to step down in such circumstances because they can elevate a new prime minister from within their ranks to win back voters before the next election. (In New Zealand, another member of Ardern's Labour Party was nominated on Saturday to take over as prime minister.)

In such situations, the party's



ARDERN FRAMED HER RESIGNATION AS A PERSONAL DECISION BASED ON NO LONGER HAVING 'ENOUGH IN THE TANK' TO FULFILL THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF BEING PRIME MINISTER

incentive is to keep this process quiet, so as not to air internal divisions or project political weakness. This often creates the appearance of a graceful and voluntary resignation.

Angela Merkel, Germany's longtime chancellor, stepped down voluntarily in 2021, also several months before national elections in which her party faced difficult poll numbers. She presented the choice as hers, preserving her political stature and her party's show of unity. Her party carefully orchestrated Merkel's handoff to a hand-picked successor. But the party nonetheless lost power in that year's election.

In most parliamentary systems, prime ministers, unlike presidents, are elected by their party's lawmakers. Those lawmakers typically also have the power to replace them at will, or at least to trigger votes that might remove them. As a result, power handoffs, even chaotic ones, are overwhelmingly likely to proceed peacefully.

"The vast majority of the stable democracies in the world today are parliamentary regimes, where executive power is generated by legislative majorities and depends on

such majorities for survival," Juan Linz, a prominent political scientist who died in 2013, once wrote. Presidential democracies, Linz and others have found, are unusually likely to collapse into coups or other violence.

Scholars have identified several reasons for this. One is that these systems are set up in a way that makes removing a leader far more difficult and gives it higher stakes, while also effectively discouraging leaders from stepping down voluntarily. The separation of legislative and executive branches means that a ruling party cannot simply change out an unpopular leader with a replacement as it can in parliamentary systems.

Rather, that party must use the legislature to pry the president from office via public impeachment proceedings. Even in the rare instances when this succeeds, it tends to open deep and damaging fissures within the president's party, as well as grinding the government to a halt, which is why lawmakers rarely do it.

Even when they do, it can bring a constitutional crisis or worse. Peru, for instance, has been mired in chaos ever since its president dissolved the legislature in December to prevent it from holding an impeachment vote, which led to that president's removal from office and weeks of nationwide unrest.

Presidents also know that resigning or declining to run for reelection would hurt their party's prospects of holding power. — New York Times

‘Living in the Hall of Fame’

“Humility,” wrote the famed author C S Lewis, of The Chronicles of Narnia fame, “is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself, less.”

It’s so simple, isn’t it? Something of an underlying philosophy that can do nobody any harm. It costs nothing to demonstrate except a little pride, and that can’t be a bad thing, can it? Humility too indicates respect, which is something that we may feel for someone, but we find it intensely difficult to express, without feeling we are weakening ourselves. I like the very idea of humility in practice, because whether you are ‘better or worse,’ ‘more or less,’ than another, being humble indicates that there is still something to learn from others, and what better can we know of ourselves, or have others say about us?

Humility is not a quality that ensures sainthood for mere mortals, but really, it’s not a bad place to start, is it? We can feel much better about ourselves if we acknowledge the bold nature or confidence in others, we are not ‘giving anything away,’ simply acknowledging the realities of God’s gifts. It creates a divide between wisdom and arrogance, between the ability to wield power effectively, and the illusion of power that is craved by so many pretenders. That candidate for sainthood, Mother Teresa, spoke often of humility being the mother of virtue, and being a quality that is “real and ardent,” and that if devoted to your purpose, “nothing will touch you, neither praise nor disgrace, because you know who you are.” The humble know when to stop and go, push, and pull, praise, and rebuke, because they have been there themselves, and know its limits, its value, and its far more priceless recognition.

William Shakespeare, that doyen of all playwrights, offered this in ‘Henry V,’ Act 1; Scene 3: “Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more, or close the wall up with our English dead! In peace



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The writer is a media consultant

there’s nothing so becomes a man as modest stillness and humility: But when the blast of war blows in our ears, then imitate the action of the tiger; Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood, disguise fair nature with hard-favoured rage.” In doing so he wrote of the latent strength of humility, and the depth of character that lurks below, contending that strength, and strength of purpose, even ferocity, abound among the humble. He was critical too, of those without the quality, writing in ‘All’s well that ends well,’ Act 4, Scene 3: “Who knows himself as a braggart, let him know this, for it will come to pass that every braggart shall be found an ass,” confiding that without humility, you have no character worth mentioning.

Irish rock band, The Script, have a unique societal perspective to their music, and they sing of how you can beat your chest, move mountains, and shine brightly, all you like, but that you must find yourself, to be the champion, to be all you can be, whether a teacher, an astronaut, a politician, preacher, or simply a believer. The thing about humility is that you cannot really ‘practice’ it! You either embrace it and live it, or you don’t! Like pregnancy, you either are or you aren’t, and it’s not a quality we can consciously develop, but rather one we open ourselves up to, or the possibilities for ourselves, of.

To have honour, to be reliable, to have resilience, and to exhibit perseverance, are all genuine qualities. However, to imply, no, let’s be definitive about this... humility implies a strength of character that we are all capable of, but few genuinely achieve. Oh, many lay claim to it, but their appearance is rarely matched by the reality, and in their shallow propagation of this most admirable of qualities are usually hoist, at some time or other, by their own petard, and as we know, the ultimate reassurance of humility comes from the immaculate Prophet Muhammad himself, (pbuh), saying, “The best of people is he who more humbles himself, the more his rank increases.”

THE HUMBLE
KNOW WHEN
TO STOP AND
GO, PUSH, AND
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AND REBUKE,
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AND ITS FAR
MORE PRICELESS
RECOGNITION

NO WALL IS HIGH ENOUGH



Palestinian protesters place a national flag atop Israel’s controversial separation barrier during a demonstration near Qalandia village in the occupied West Bank to protest Israeli plans to expand the Atarot settlement industrial zone and to construct a new settlement in the area. – AFP

Oman: A place worth journeying to

There is no surprise that Oman has been described and portrayed as one of the safest and most innocuous countries in the world. Nobody refuses to admit or acknowledge that Oman’s position is inexpugnable and its role in dealing with matters locally, regionally and internationally has at all times been filled with vitality, intensity and strength.

Oman is incontestably a place of awesome beauty and outstanding worth, tending to inspire awe because of its elevated grandeur. It has a glorious past, a present marked by great beauty and splendor, and a bright future pulsating with life, vigor and activity.

In today’s Oman, characteristics of remote past and present time are intermingled, where separate constituents or marking of limits and boundaries between them are hard to be distinguished and unlikely to change.

The splendors of the past of this Arabian country with such a magnificently impressive and sumptuous history are still manifest, readily perceived by the senses and easily recognised as soon as a visitor step in the country.

Large fortified structures, such as forts and castles of great antiquity



Dr. Musallam al Ma'ani

Dean of Al Zahra College for Women

OMANIS ARE
ALWAYS AN
AFFABLE HOST,
BEING PLEASANT
AND AT EASE
IN TALKING
TO OTHERS
SOCIALLY,
COMMERCIALY
AND OFFICIALY,
AS WELL AS
PROFESSING
POLITICAL AND
SOCIAL BELIEFS
THAT ARE NOT
EXTREME

being in view in almost every governorate in Oman, are only a few examples relating to the life and culture of ancient times, having had an existence of many years.

This is reflected in the features of modern life of Oman with its distinguished customary beliefs, social forms and material traits, which represent what the world sees and perceives

nowadays as a set of unique values and social practices befitting Omanis. Visitors find themselves obliged to adorn not only such a relatively high level of cultural traits, but also the soil in which they are rooted and the society which is free from moral imperfection.

Bustling scenes, with amazing and interesting images of Oman, are only a short narrative,

but the full story, not lacking in any essential, lies behind these scenes. Omanis are still persistent in maintaining and adhering to their conventional social customary forms, a matter that promotes smoothness and pleasantness in social relationships and is a source of comfort, convenience and enjoyment to them.

Omanis take up and practice

a moderate attitude towards what goes around them, avoiding extremes of behaviour and expression as well as observing, at all times, reasonable limits. With their affable manners, ease and friendliness have become a synonymy for Omanis. Omanis are always an affable host, being pleasant and at ease in talking to others socially, commercially and officially, as well as professing political and social beliefs that are not extreme.

That is why Oman has a future in the air, where everybody can feel it in every place and part of the country. Although one cannot foretell future events, Oman continues unchanged, at all times, and remains firm under any misfortune because it is blessed with a wise leadership, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, who always puts the interest of Oman and its people atop of his priorities, meriting them the attention they deserve before other alternatives. Oman, under the rule of His Majesty the Sultan, is not likely to give offence to others nor does it arouse strong feelings or hostility when dealing with other nations and peoples.



Large fortified structures, such as forts and castles of great antiquity being in view in almost every governorate in Oman, are only a few examples relating to the life and culture of ancient times, having had an existence of many years.

sport

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400 runners take field in Bidiyah sands

MOROCCAN STARS RACHID AND MOHAMMED HEADLINE LIST

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JAN 21

The eighth edition of the Oman Desert Marathon (ODM) for the year 2023 was launched in Bidiya in the Al Sharqiyah North Governorate on Saturday morning. The desert marathon will be competed on the golden sands of Bidiya during January 21-24. The event is organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Tamkeen Sports and Investment Company. More than 400 international runners from 30 countries and several amateurs are participating in the new edition. The first round of the race

started in front of the fort of the ancient town of Al Wasel in Bidiya in a ceremony held under the auspices of Azzan bin Qassim al Busaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism. The opening ceremony of the event began with a long walk accompanied by the chief guest and the audience. It was followed by a heritage event that embodied Omani culture, which included some Omani traditional arts and bagpipe music. After that, the chief guest flagged off the race, which included a main round of 42 km and three local rounds. The first track was allocated for children for a distance of 2

kilometres and was called the 'Jawharat Bidiya' race, the cross-country race for 5 km and the Al Wasel race for beginners and families for 5 km. On the first day, the participants were able to cross soft sandy hills and zigzag the slopes without difficulty. The contestants showed high physical skills characterised by the spirit of challenge, adventure and love of the exploration of the wonderful Omani desert. The international contestants are expected to reach the finish line this afternoon after completing all stages of the first round, which is 47 kilometres long, during which they cross high sandy hills, slopes and difficult zigzags until reaching the endpoint.

LOCAL MARATHON The results of the local competitions resulted in a victory for the experienced international and local runners. In the men's 10 km challenge race, Salem al Rashdi came on top with a time of 41 minutes and 40 seconds. Arab al Harmali took second spot in 42.37 minutes, and Rashid al Shuaibi (43.17 minutes) finished third. In the women's category for 10 km, French contestant Kellon claimed the honours in one hour, nine minutes and 47 seconds, while China's Klizar came in second (1:10:9) and Oman's Suhaila al Tawby finished third (1:19:24). In the cross-country race for 5 km, Mahmoud al Jahdhami

won first place with a time of 17 minutes and 38 seconds, while Murshid al Siyabi came in second (17.39 minutes) and Imad al Farsi finished third (17.40 minutes). In the competition for beginners, called the Johara Bidiya Race for 2 km, Osama bin Ahmed al Fahdi came on top followed by Ahmed bin Al Abd al Wahibi and Qais bin Saif al Tobi in second and third places respectively. **TOP FIELD** Said bin Mohammed al Hajri, ODM General Supervisor, said: "We are happy with the official opening of the marathon, with the participation of more than 400 international runners. The top field is led by Moroccan stars

Rachid al Murabiti and his brother Mohammed al Murabiti in the men's section and in the women's section by Aziza al Amrani and Aziza al Raji and top Ukrainian veteran Evgeny. There are also top runners from France, Spain and other countries. We wish them to achieve success in the eighth edition at the golden Bidiya sands, which attracts tourist groups and lovers of adventure and exploration every year." "Organising such events has already put the Sultanate of Oman on global sports map and we are trying to improve our credentials by making these editions better. We also hope to attract more tourists and sports enthusiasts by holding such international events," Al Hajri added.

Djokovic defies injury, Murray bows out

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic's hamstring just about held up as the hot favourite battled into the Australian Open last 16 on Saturday, but Andy Murray's heroic run is over. Hard-hitting Aryna Sabalenka meanwhile burnished her title credentials as she barrelled through, along with several other women's seeds. An ailing Djokovic had heavy strapping and needed treatment twice on his troublesome left hamstring before defeating Grigor Dimitrov 7-6 (9/7), 6-3, 6-4 on Rod Laver Arena. The Serb will face home hope Alex de Minaur for a place in the quarterfinals as he closes on a 10th Melbourne Park crown and a record-equalling 22nd Grand Slam title. "Obviously, I didn't know how I'm going to feel physically, it was going up and down," said Djokovic. "It was an incredible battle, three sets over three hours. Let's rest up and prepare for the next one." Djokovic's fellow 35-year-old Murray will not join him in the next round, however, as the



Serbia's Novak Djokovic in action during his third round match against Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov. – Reuters

Briton's 4:05 am finish eventually caught up with him. Former number one Murray was clearly feeling the effects of his epic five-setter in round two, which started on Thursday but ended in the early hours of Friday. The 24th-seeded Spaniard

Roberto Bautista Agut won 6-1, 6-7 (7/9), 6-3, 6-4 and faces unseeded Tommy Paul of the United States. "I gave everything that I had the last three matches — I'm very proud of that," said Murray. "But I'm also disappointed because I put loads of work into

the beginning of this year and was playing well enough to have a really good run, have a deep run." Also in the men's draw, fifth seed Andrey Rublev surged into a clash with Holger Rune — then thanked his beaten opponent Dan Evans for giving him a banana mid-match.

AUSTRALIAN OPEN RESULTS

MEN (THIRD ROUND) Andrey Rublev (RUS x5) bt Daniel Evans (GBR x25) 6-4, 6-2, 6-3; Holger Rune (DEN x9) bt Ugo Humbert (FRA) 6-4, 6-2, 7-6 (7/5); Alex De Minaur (AUS x22) bt Benjamin Bonzi (FRA) 7-6 (7/0), 6-2, 6-1; Novak Djokovic (SRB x4) bt Grigor Dimitrov (BUL x27) 7-6 (9/7), 6-3, 6-4; Ben Shelton (USA) bt Alexei Popyrin (AUS) 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 6-4; Jeffrey Wolf (USA) bt Michael Mmoh (USA) 6-4, 6-1, 6-2; Roberto Bautista Agut (ESP x24) bt Andy Murray (GBR) 6-1, 6-7 (7/9), 6-3, 6-4; Tommy Paul (USA) bt Jensen Brooksby (USA) 6-1, 6-4, 6-3

WOMEN (THIRD ROUND) Karolina Pliskova (CZE x30) bt Varvara Gracheva (RUS) 6-4, 6-2; Zhang Shuai (CHN x23) bt Katie Volynets (USA) 6-3, 6-2; Magda Linette (POL) bt Ekaterina Alexandrova (RUS x19) 6-3, 6-4; Caroline Garcia (FRA x4) bt Laura Siegemund (GER) 1-6, 6-3, 6-3; Aryna Sabalenka (BLR x5) bt Elise Mertens (BEL x26) 6-2, 6-3; Belinda Bencic (SUI x12) bt Camila Giorgi (ITA) 6-2, 7-5; Donna Vekic (CRO) bt Nuria Parrizas Diaz (ESP) 6-2, 6-2; Linda Fruhvirtova (CZE) bt Marketa Vondrousova (CZE) 7-5, 2-6, 6-3

OMINOUS SABALENKA

Sabalenka is building a head of steam in her pursuit of a first Grand Slam title. The Belarusian fifth seed blew away 26th-seeded Elise Mertens 6-2, 6-3 to set up a clash with Olympic champion Belinda Bencic. Thirtieth seed Karolina Pliskova and 23rd seed Zhang Shuai also

went through in straight sets on day six at Melbourne Park, and will clash in the fourth round. Sabalenka is trying not to get carried away. The Minsk-born 24-year-old teased the Margaret Court Arena crowd for supporting Belgium's Mertens over her, but said she was enjoying the ride into the second week. — AFP

First-ever mixed doubles champions crowned

MUSCAT: The penultimate day of play saw the first ever mixed doubles world titles decided at the World Veteran Table Tennis Championships Muscat 2023, held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC).

Denmark's Carsten Egeholt and Janne Jensen took the title in the 40-years category, after overcoming the pair of Igor Krokhin from Sweden and Finland's Marina Donner (11-9, 3-11, 11-7, 11-9) in the final. Italy's Hansjoerg Toll and Korea Republic's Oh Yunkung secured victory in the 45-year category in what was the closest final of the day – the pair recovered from a two-game deficit to secure victory (5-11, 9-11, 11-8, 11-8, 11-4) over Ukraine's Viktor Vasylevskyi and Nataliia Ostrovska.

Latvian duo Sandijs Vasiljevs and Ina Jozepsone claimed gold in the 50-years category after a hard-fought match against Denmark's Karsten Haumann and Pia Toelthoj (11-7, 11-9, 11-7), while Romania's Andreas Fejer-Konnert and Switzerland's Margit Geiger emerged victorious in the 55-year category in straight games (11-4, 11-2, 11-4) against Denmark's Jan Sondergaard and Jette Vieg.

In the 65-years category, Paal Guttormsen of Norway and Estonia's Kai Thornbech overcame Ukraine's Leonid Segal and Svea Onno in a four-game match (7-11, 11-7, 12-10, 11-7) to claim top spot on the podium.

The title decider in the mixed doubles 75 years category was a contest between husband-and-wife teams from the United States. David and Donna Sakai beat Del and Connie Sweeris (12-10, 11-7, 8-11, 11-4) to take first prize.

The team of Cheung Tingting and Jiang Zhaozhao from China emerged victorious in the 70-years category after beating India's Pinakin Sampat and Japan's Etsuko Iseki (11-3, 11-1, 11-5) in the final. In the 85-years category, Japan's Kazuo Masuda and Reiko Miura secured gold after a tough match against Germany's Peter Stolzenburg and Marianne Blasberg (11-4, 11-9, 9-11, 11-9). A German win came in the 80-years category when Dimitrije Bilic and Heidi Wunner defeated England's Roy Norton and Carol Judson (9-11, 11-4, 11-5, 11-5).

Vivek Kohli, Co-Chairman of STAG International, representing



Top three winners of mixed doubles 80-85 ages.



Top three winners of mixed doubles 55-60 ages.



Top three winners of mixed doubles 45-50 ages.

India said, "Oman is a lovely place, and this World Veteran Table Tennis Championship will

leave deep memories with the players. I can say this is the best ever tournament. The venue is so

nice, the people, and everyone has enjoyed this. The next host will have to do a lot to exceed



Top three winners of mixed doubles 70-75 ages.



Top three winners of mixed doubles 60-65 ages.



Top three winners of mixed doubles 40-45 ages.

this! For me, as a player, it has been an amazing experience. I am returning after eight years; everything has been perfect. I have really enjoyed it. In singles, I finished top 32 and in doubles top 8 in the world, so it is a good feeling."

Peter Karlsson, head TT coach at the Aspire Academy in Qatar, representing Sweden said, "I have to give a big thanks to the organising committee and the country of Oman. The way the country and the people have received me is amazing. Secondly, the competition itself was very fun. For me coming here as an experienced player, it is nice to meet a lot of friends. Of course, we want to win, but it's not the main thing. It was when I was younger, but now I have a

different mindset. Life is more about friendship and happiness, so I am very happy to have to his opportunity in Muscat."

Saturday will see the winners in the men's and women's singles and doubles competitions decided, adding

tension and excitement to proceedings and bringing an incredible tournament to a close with players looking to take home the trophy.

The two most experienced players in the entire competition will compete in the final of the 85-years group.

Hyun Youngja and Watanabe Yasu, both from Japan, have proved throughout the championships that age is just a number as the two 90-year-olds show how sport can bring lifelong joy.

Oman pacer Bilal Khan picked by Sharjah Warriors

MUSCAT: Bilal Khan has been the main spearhead of Oman cricket team for the past few years. The 34-year-old fast medium pacer has been instrumental in many a victories for Oman and is now set to showcase his mettle at the region's biggest and inaugural T20 international franchise competition – the International League T20 (ILT20), which began on January 14.

Picked by Sharjah Warriors, one of the six franchises in the ILT20, Bilal is the only Omani player to feature in such a top-class international T20 league.

Having been with the squad since the start of the tournament began last week, Bilal said: "I am super excited to be part of the Sharjah Warriors squad. The team includes some of the world's top stars and I am happy to be part of a team set-up that have greats like Moeen Ali, Marcus Stoinis and

Chris Woakes among others.

"It is a great learning curve for me. Rubbing shoulders with such stars definitely will improve my bowling skills."

Bilal, who is yet to feature in the team's playing XI, is hopeful of being picked in the forthcoming matches.

Sharjah Warriors have so far played three matches and have failed to open their account.

The tournament, which began on January 14, has managed to attract some of the biggest stars and has a lot to offer for the players.

With each team allowed to pick nine overseas players, the ILT20 has given a good opportunity for cricketers from Associate Nations like Oman and Namibia.

Bilal said: "I have been working hard over the past many years and I am indebted to my national team coach Duleep Mendis, bowling coach Aavishkar Salvi and our



Bilal Khan

trainer Evert for their full support.

"Sharjah Warriors head coach Paul Farbrace of England and team's bowling coach G Jayakumar of India have backed my bowling

during the nets and practice games. I feel confident of producing a good spell for the team in the upcoming games."

Bilal is not new to franchise cricket as he had in the past played in Afghanistan's Shpageeza Cricket League in 2017-18 and 2022 with Speenghar Tigers and Amo Sharks respectively.

For Bilal, the home ground in Sharjah brings back good memories as one of his three five-wicket match hauls in his ODI career was achieved at the same venue last year in a match against Namibia.

"I have very good memories of Sharjah cricket stadium. I hope to put up some strong performances if given a chance and I am looking forward to my first match with Warriors. I had played two practice games where I picked up two wickets so far. The coaches are happy with me and I am proud

of the fact that I am playing along with world-class stars," said Bilal.

Warriors is a Capri-Global-owned Sharjah-based franchise and includes England quartet of Moeen Ali, who is the skipper, Chris Woakes, Danny Briggs and Dawid Malan, Afghanistan quartet Mohammad Nabi, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Noor Ahmad and Naveen Ul Haq, Australia's Marcus Stoinis and West Indies' Evin Lewis.

The local players from UAE are Karthik Meiyappan, Muhammad Jawadullah, Alishan Sharafu and Junaid Siddique and Namibia's JJ Smit is the other Associate Nation player.

The six-team franchise-style league is being played over a 34-match schedule at Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah. The final is scheduled to be played on February 12, 2023.

Besides Capri Global owned Warriors the other franchise teams

are owned by Reliance Industries (MI Emirates), Adani Sportsline (Gulf Giants), GMR Group (Dubai Capitals), Knight Riders Group (Abu Dhabi Knight Riders), and Lancer Capital (Desert Vipers).

While there are four local players in each squad, teams are allowed to field as many as nine overseas players in their starting XI, compared with the usual four foreigners per side seen in established T20 franchise leagues.

A number of the international stars have agreed deals worth \$450,000 per season to play in the tournament, with the salary cap the second highest after the powerhouse Indian Premier League (IPL).

The league is sanctioned – but not owned – by the Emirates Cricket Board (ECB), and is being run by ECB vice-chairman Khalid Al Zarooni and general secretary Mubashshir Usmani.



Cirba claims OIDC second round title

ALI MAKHSEED TAKES SECOND SPOT, AHMED AL AMRI TOPS LOCAL SECTION

The drivers compete during the Round 2 of Oman International Drift Championship 2023 at the Muscat Drift Arena of the Oman Automobile Association.



Winners of the International category on the podium.



Winners of the Mena category on the podium.



Winners of the National category on the podium.

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, JAN 21

Lithuanian driver Benediktas Cirba edged Kuwait's Ali Makhseed in the thrilling final to take the honours of the Round 2 of Oman International Drift Championship 2023 on Friday night.

"It was just incredible. This year the competition is higher than ever and I feel honoured to win the top place for this round. I can't wait for what's in store for the next one," Cirba said after the narrow

win over Ali Makhseed. The final witnessed a close contest and Cirba prevailed after Ali Makhseed pulled out due to a mechanical issue in the end. Nonetheless, Ali Makhseed finished runner-up in the main international category and topped the Mena category. The Kuwaiti driver said: "It's a bittersweet moment to lose in the final because of a mechanical issue but I'm lucky today to get to the final, and thank God for that. "It's been a long weekend, and big thanks goes to OAA for organising such a great event and

I look forward to seeing everyone in the next round." Irish drifter Alan Hynes finished third for a second straight time after beating Omani driver Ahmed al Amri in the third-place play-off. The entry to the last four stage guaranteed Al Amri a second spot in the Mena category. First round winner Nikolass Bertens ended his campaign in the last 16 after losing to Ahmad Daham of Jordan, who finished third in the Mena category. Daham was second in the main category in the opening round.

A total of 46 drivers competed in the qualifiers on Thursday (January 19) at the Oman Automobile Association's Muscat Drift Arena. The top 32 qualified into the finals on January 20. Tough decisions were taken by the judges on the panel, taking in every minuscule detail into consideration. **AL AMRI SHINES** In the national category, Ahmed al Amri put up an impressive show to top the charts after a good competition.

"I'm so happy to have earned first place in the national category. It's been such a great season so far with all these great drifters and I thank OAA for all the work they have put into organising this tournament," Ahmed al Amri said. Ali al Balushi claimed the second position and last round topper Haitham al Hadidi finished third in the national category. The winners in three categories were crowned by Ahmed al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, in presence of Brigadier (retd) Salim al Maskari, Chairman of OAA.

The third round of Oman International Drift Championship will take place on February 9 and 10 at the OAA. **OIDC ROUND 2 RESULTS International** 1. Benediktas Cirba (Lithuania) 2. Ali Makhseed (Kuwait) 3. Alan Hynes (Ireland) **Mena (Middle East/North Africa)** 1. Ali Makhseed (Kuwait) 2. Ahmed al Amri (Oman) 3. Ahmed Daham (Jordan) **National** 1. Ahmed al Amri 2. Ali al Balushi 3. Haitham al Hadidi

Rohit lauds pace bowlers as India clinch ODI series

RAIPUR, India: Skipper Rohit Sharma on Saturday hailed India's seam bowlers after the hosts hammered New Zealand by eight wickets to clinch the series in the second one-day international. Pace spearhead Mohammed Shami returned figures of 3-18 to help dismiss the Black Caps for 108 after India elected to bowl first in Raipur. Rohit made 51 as India romped home in 20.1 overs to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series. And the captain said his bowlers had made an impression with their seam movement at home since the recent ODI sweep of Sri Lanka when Mohammed Siraj led the charge with nine wickets. "These last five games (including three against Sri Lanka), bowlers have really stepped up," Rohit said after the win. "You expect that kind of

bowling, that kind of seam movement outside India. But these guys have got a lot of skills, they have been working on that for all this and you could see the reward." Indian pitches are known to be spin-friendly, in contrast to wickets in Australia and England where fast bowlers have a bigger role. At the toss Rohit took a while to announce his decision to field, and told the presenter he "forgot" about the team call. But things soon turned serious when Shami struck in the first over and with his fellow quicks had the tourists reeling at 15-5 by the 11th over. "I feel that the more you work with the ball in practice, the more success will come," said man of the match Shami. "As a new-ball bowler, it's important to assess the conditions and pass the message quickly to



the other bowlers as well." Glenn Phillips made 36 as he combined with the middle- and lower-order batsmen including Michael Bracewell (22) and Mitchell Santner (27) to take the total past 100, but the innings lasted only 34.3 overs. After Shami's opening-ball heroics, fellow quick Hardik Pandya and spinner Washington Sundar took over to return two wickets each. **ROHIT ON FIRE** Shami bowled Finn Allen on the fifth ball of the first over, at a venue making its international debut. Siraj sent back Henry Nicholls, caught at slip for two, before Shami

and Pandya took two wickets caught-and-bowled to rattle the visitors, whose skipper Tom Latham fell for one. Phillips and Bracewell attempted to rebuild and hit back in a 41-run sixth-wicket stand before Shami broke through. He got Bracewell, who hit 140 in his team's 12-run loss in the opener, caught behind. Phillips kept up the defiance in another partnership with the left-handed Santner. The pair put on 47 before Pandya bowled Santner. Phillips departed in an attempt to hit out spinner Sundar only to be caught at mid-wicket, and the innings soon folded. "We just couldn't build partnerships at the top," said Latham. "Guys lower down tried to fight but it wasn't easy. We didn't adapt well today, considering the surface." The Indian openers Rohit and

Gill, who hit a match-winning 208 in the previous match, put on 72 runs for the first wicket. Rohit struck some delightful boundaries including a six off his trademark hook shot to ease into the target. He kept up the charge as he reached his 50 in 47 balls but soon fell lbw off fast bowler Henry Shipley. Virat Kohli hit a few boundaries before he was stamped by Latham off Santner for 11. Gill hit the winning four with the left-handed Ishan Kishan at the other end. The final match is on Tuesday in Indore. — AFP **BRIEF SCORES New Zealand** 108 all out in 34.3 overs (G Phillips 36, M Bracewell 22, M Santner 27; M Shami 3-18, H Pandya 2-16, W Sundar 2-7) v India 111-2 in 20.1 overs (R Sharma 51, S Gill 40 not out; H Shipley 1-29, M Santner 1-28) **Result:** India won by eight wickets **Series:** India lead the three-match series 2-0



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IRENA applauds Oman’s green energy accomplishments

QASIM AL MAASHANI
ABU DHABI, JAN 21

The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) has welcomed efforts by the Sultanate of Oman to transition away from fossil-fuels for its energy requirements towards a sustainable energy future based on renewable energy resources.

A top official of the UAE-headquartered intergovernmental organisation underlined the important strides that the Omani government has made in promoting the adoption of renewable and sustainable energy resources. Gauri Singh, Deputy Director General — IRENA, said: “Within the framework of Oman’s Vision 2040, coupled with the efforts of the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR), the Sultanate of Oman has devised a policy of moving towards alternative energy sources, with a utilisation rate that will increase to 39 per cent by 2040.”

Oman is a member of IRENA, an intergovernmental organisation that supports countries in their transition to a sustainable energy future and serves as the principal platform for international cooperation. Speaking at a media briefing on the sidelines of the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (ADSW) last week, Singh also commended Oman on its policies designed to attract foreign investments into the power sector.



The Sultanate of Oman has devised a policy of moving towards alternative energy sources, with a utilisation rate that will increase to 39 per cent by 2040.

GAURI SINGH
Deputy Director General, IRENA

“With the intention of liberalising the electricity market and luring in additional investments, it has a direct market for power sales in the Middle East. It also started the 500-megawatt Ibri Solar Project, which is its biggest renewable energy project in Oman,” she stated.

Another natural resource that Oman has tapped is wind energy, Singh noted. A 50 MW capacity wind farm, operating in the south of the country, is the first of its kind in the area to generate power from wind energy, she said.

The IRENA official also congratulated the Sultanate of Oman on its commendable

ranking in the region for the high standard of its regulation of the renewable and sustainable energy sector.

The ‘Regulatory Indicators for Sustainable Energy (RISE), a World Bank initiative to help policymakers to compare national policy frameworks for sustainable energy and identify opportunities to attract investment, had recently rated Oman’s regulatory standards as the best in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

“The Sultanate of Oman’s accomplishment of advanced outcomes in the sustainable energy regulatory indicators is a sign that it is making progress towards one

of the most significant goals of the “Oman Vision 2040”, which is the aim of global competitiveness. It also reflects favourably on the current regulatory and policy frameworks. This will help to draw investments in the energy sector-related areas,” the official stated.

Referring to Oman’s ambitious green hydrogen strategy, IRENA’s Deputy Director-General also underscored the important role that Oman’s well-developed port and maritime infrastructure will play in the export of green ammonia to international markets.

“The significant factor is that the ports of the Sultanate of Oman have experienced qualitative changes in development that have significantly aided in the state’s recent commercial and economic renaissance.

Rather than serving as isolated hubs for maritime and freight transportation, the ports have evolved into integral parts of the nation’s overall economic system whose function extends beyond logistics services.

Additionally, through the free zones connected to the ports, it has created a comprehensive environment for business development and expansion,” she said.

All three major Omani ports at Suhar, Duqm and Salalah are being eyed as export gateways for green hydrogen derivatives, chiefly green ammonia, when major green energy projects come on stream starting from 2030.

\$150 million pharma project set for launch in Salalah Free Zone



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 21

Salalah Free Zone will celebrate on Wednesday, January 25, the official launch of Philex Pharmaceutical Industries’ factory under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health.

The factory marks the latest project of its kind in the field of pharmaceutical industries in the Sultanate of Oman, serving to place Salalah Free Zone as a regional centre for the pharmaceutical and biological industries.

The \$150-million project is developed over 3 phases that include the establishment of an advanced factory for pharmaceutical products and a research and development centre.

Further, Philex Pharmaceutical Industries

Company is planning to produce more than 100 pharmaceuticals, including various types of medicines in the current phase.

However, at a later stage, the factory will produce vaccines with a production capacity of one billion tablets and one billion capsules annually as a first phase.

The factory is currently attracting local and international opportunities with its operational plans. Therefore, its products are being promoted in various potential markets like the Sultanate of Oman, Qatar and a number of other countries in the region.

On the other hand, the factory was built with high international specifications and standards, which qualify it to compete in the global markets.

Omani firm to set up 100 MW solar PV project in Suhar

Captive supply: Muscat-based Solar Wadi to implement project as part of cooperative arrangement with Madayn

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JAN 21

Omani independent renewables-based power company Solar Wadi has announced that it has secured a licence to set up a commercial-scale solar PV power project catering to the green energy requirements of Suhar Industrial City — one of the biggest manufacturing hubs of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn).

The proposed project, sized at between 86 – 100 MWp of capacity, aims to provide the tenants of Suhar Industrial City “with a cheaper source of electricity, while



also allowing them to meet their decarbonisation targets thereby maintaining their competitive advantage”, Muscat-based Solar Wadi said.

An area of over 1 million square

metres has been earmarked within Phase 7 of the Suhar Industrial City plan for the installation of vast arrays of solar panels and other facilities linked to the project.

As part of a competitive tender launched by Solar Wadi earlier this month, qualified companies have been invited to submit Expressions of Interest (EoI) to register their interest in bidding for the contract to implement the solar PV scheme.

The deadline for submission of EoIs is January 26, 2023. The successful bidder will receive a contract for the design, engineering, procurement, construction, commissioning, operation, and maintenance of the solar PV project in Suhar.

According to an indicative procurement timeline disclosed by Solar Wadi, a Request for Proposals (RfP) is expected to be issued to suitably qualified bidders as early as February 2, 2023. A

shortlist of preferred bidders is anticipated by around May, culminating in an award soon thereafter.

Significantly, the entire electricity output from the project is earmarked exclusively for use by the tenants of Suhar Industrial City, with no option for any portion of this supply to be injected into the main grid. Plant capacity could be increased through the addition of energy storage systems, Solar Wadi noted.

Ranked among the largest private developers of renewable-based power capacity in the Sultanate of Oman, Solar Wadi is backed by a group of pension funds, Omani investors and international solar developers.

The company’s promoters have, between them, delivered over \$5.5 billion of renewable energy investments across a number of countries over the past 20 years.

Bank Muscat extends 40% discount on GIG Home Insurance till January 31



MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to offer the best services and value to its customers, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced that the 40 per cent discount currently being offered on Home Contents and Personal Belongings insurance will be extended to January 31, 2023.

The bank pointed out that homes and their contents are the most valuable possessions most people own in their lifetimes.

Hence, in line with the excellent feedback received so far, and in an effort to ensure that the maximum number of people in the Sultanate of Oman can protect their homes and everything under its roof against damage or destruction caused by natural disasters or accidents, the bank decided to extend its special offer till the end of the month.

Through its tie-up with GIG Gulf, the No. 1 regional insurer, the bank has successfully served over 200,000 customers with personalised, top-notch solutions such as Life, Saving, Health, and Motor insurance since 2016.

In particular, GIG Home Insurance plan is an ideal solution for protection against unexpected events that might take away one's most valued possessions. It offers exceptional value to both homeowners and tenants.

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

The plan also includes the Owner's and Occupier's Liability Cover, which protects the insured from any claim made against them, and the Tenant's Liability Cover, which protects the insured if they are legally held liable for property damage.

As an added benefit, the insured can choose to cover domestic helpers under the home insurance policy for both medical coverage and repatriation of mortal remains.

Customers can purchase their Home Insurance plan and redeem the 40% discount on Home Contents and Personal Belongings insurance cover at Bank Muscat branches with GIG Gulf help desks or through the online portal: <https://bit.ly/3OFcuCT>.

For more information on the Home Insurance plan available with GIG Gulf, please call 24032672.

Interim board issues first update on embattled cement firm

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JAN 21

An interim board constituted by the Capital Market Authority (CMA) to stabilise the functioning of Raysut Cement, amid the discovery of financial anomalies in its accounts, has begun its deep dive into the factors that triggered last month's financial crisis at the publicly traded Omani company — the nation's largest cement producer.

In a filing on Thursday — its first since it was set up by the regulator last month, the interim board outlined actions it has since taken to get a better understanding of the company's inner workings and the contributory factors behind its recent troubles.

Over the month or so since it has taken temporary charge, the Board and its subcommittees held multiple sessions primarily to ascertain the current operational status of Raysut Cement and its challenges. It also held meetings with senior management executives, and undertook an initial visit to the Salalah site of Raysut Cement's flagship cement complex, it said.

"The main focus of the Board is to ensure that the operations of the company and its subsidiaries are uninterrupted, and Governance and Control measures are in place to ensure the sustainability of the company going forward," the



interim board noted in its filing.

Just earlier, Raysut Cement had revealed that it had racked up a post-tax loss of RO 93.686 million in initial, unaudited results for the financial year ended December 31, 2022. This compares with a loss of RO 12.924 million incurred by the parent company in 2021.

Invoking its powers under Commercial Companies Law and the Securities Law, the market regulator stepped in last month when the company failed to suitably address concerns over "material misrepresentations" uncovered by the Authority

in Raysut Cement's financial reporting for Q2 2022.

The Authority intervened to dissolve the existing Board of Directors — powers it has exercised only for the second time in its history — and instituted a new 'temporary board' with a mandate to restore the company's organisational and operational stability and thereafter to also address all of the shortcomings that led to its recent upheaval.

A key part of the interim board's remit is to strengthen corporate governance, evaluate internal controls and enhance measures to

safeguard the company's value.

At the same time, it has to ensure that Raysut Cement's key assets in Salalah, Suhar and Ras Al Khaimah (UAE) are operating normally to ensure a steady inflow of revenue for the organisation.

According to market experts, shares of Raysut Cement have significantly improved from 106 bz per share at the outset of the crisis, to 150 bz presently — a reflection of the sense of investor confidence returning to the company following the appointment of the temporary board to govern its affairs.

Toyota Gazoo racing shines at 2022 World Endurance Championship

MUSCAT: Toyota celebrated a spectacular finish to the 2022 World Endurance Championship (WEC) season recently with a one-two victory at 8 Hours of Bahrain that saw the Toyota Gazoo racing team achieve a clean sweep of this year's FIA WEC titles.

Mike Conway, Kamui Kobayashi and José María López claimed their second win of the season in the No. 7 GR010 Hybrid Electric Hypercar, enabling Toyota to be crowned as Hypercar Manufacturers' World Champions.

Teammates Sébastien Buemi, Brendon Hartley and Ryo Hirakawa finished second to



become Drivers' World Champions, adding to their 2022 24 Hours of Le Mans win.

Buemi and Hartley write their names in the record books as the first drivers to win three titles in the top WEC category and its predecessor, the World Sportscar Championship. Hirakawa also capped a remarkable rookie season by becoming Japan's third WEC champion.

A perfect result in Bahrain was a fitting end to a highly successful season for Toyota Gazoo racing, which now has a fifth world title double from 10 years of WEC competition, adding to achievements in 2022 that include a fifth-consecutive Le Mans win and eighth victory at Fuji Speedway.

Kia's popular Telluride now with exclusive benefits

MUSCAT: Now own the Kia Telluride and get a chance to be a winner with Kia! On offer is a chance to win a brand new Kia Niro Hybrid Electric Vehicle and comprehensive service up to 50,000 kms, 1 year insurance and cash gift. (Conditions apply. Please visit Kia showroom for details.)

The popular Telluride is a stunner with its attractive design, advanced features, space and comfort. It is the perfect companion especially when planning journeys with family and friends.

The Telluride is equipped with a power-packed 3.8L GDI engine that produces 291 hp and 36.2 kg.m. torque. Complementing this powerful SUV is the 8-speed automatic transmission.

The Telluride's exterior of underlined by its Bi-Function Projection Headlamps, LED Daytime Running Lights, 20" Alloy Wheels, LED Rear Combination Lamps and more.



The Remote Start Engine feature encourages better experiences especially during summers.

The Remote window control feature, can be a much needed advantage.

Faster cooling, happier journeys. Inside the Telluride the cabin that has enough room to welcome occupants right up to the third row along with their well-packed belongings.

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Customers looking to own a Kia can visit any showroom and experience a Kia.

The campaign will end on January 26, 2023 (Conditions apply). 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.

Opportunities in the post-pandemic Omani tourism sector



STEFANO VIRGILLI stefano@virgilli.com

The author is a member of the International Press Association.

The Omani government is actively promoting the country as a tourist destination and has invested in infrastructure and tourism development to attract more visitors.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is also working to diversify the country's tourism offering, with a focus on eco-tourism, adventure tourism and cultural tourism.

This growth in tourism also presents opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to gain from the tourism industry, particularly in areas such as local food and beverage, transport and accommodation, and tour guiding services.

As a former resident of Oman, I can attest to the country's beauty and richness in culture that draws visitors from all over the world. From the deserts and mountains to the beaches and wadis, the natural landscapes here are truly

brehtaking.

According to the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Oman received 4.8 million visitors in 2019, a steady increase from the previous years. It's worth noting that the data of the number of visitors and the revenue breakdown by sector are from 2019, as that was the nearest dataset available that was not influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Despite the pandemic, Oman continues to be one of the preferred tourism destinations in the GCC, and with the continued efforts of the government to promote the country and invest in infrastructure, Oman has the potential to grow its tourism attractiveness in the next few years.

Oman's government is striving to diversify its tourism offering, with a focus on eco-tourism, adventure tourism, and cultural tourism which will increase the attractiveness of Oman as a tourist destination.

DESPITE THE PANDEMIC, OMAN CONTINUES TO BE ONE OF THE PREFERRED TOURISM DESTINATIONS IN THE GCC, AND WITH THE CONTINUED EFFORTS OF THE GOVERNMENT TO PROMOTE THE COUNTRY AND INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE, OMAN HAS THE POTENTIAL TO GROW ITS TOURISM ATTRACTIVENESS IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS.

Additionally, Oman's safety and stability compared to other countries make it a more desirable destination for tourists.

Places such as the Jabal Shams National Park and the Oman Dolphin Reserve offer a chance to see the local wildlife and appreciate the country's natural beauty.

I enjoyed taking on hikes, camel trekking, and dune bashing, which are all popular activities there. The adventure tourism sector has been growing in Oman, accounting for around 14 per cent of the total tourism revenue in 2019.

A specific attraction within the adventure tourism is the desert safari, where visitors can experience the thrill of driving through the desert, camping under the stars and enjoying the beautiful scenery.

Oman's cultural heritage is also something that should not be missed. The country has a rich history dating back to ancient times and visitors can explore this through visits to museums,

forts and traditional markets. I always took the opportunity to show visitors around my city, the traditional arts and crafts, and the hospitality of Omani people.

Cultural and heritage tourism accounted for around 20 per cent of the total tourism revenue in 2019. For those looking for luxury, Oman offers a range of luxurious resorts and five-star hotels. These resorts offer visitors a range of amenities including spas, golf courses and fine dining.

The country has also been focusing on eco-tourism, which accounted for around 10 per cent of the total tourism revenue in 2019.

Even though I am not currently living in Oman, I miss the country and I always recommend it to visitors as a destination worth visiting. With its stunning natural landscapes, rich cultural heritage and luxurious resorts, Oman has something to offer everyone, including the exciting experience of a desert safari.

Bank of Japan has learnt danger of half-measures

PETE SWEENEY

Governor Haruhiko Kuroda's battle with market forces has entered a new phase. The Bank of Japan (BOJ) made no adjustments to its yield-curve control (YCC) policy that keeps interest rates ultra-low on Wednesday.

That is stinging traders who bet the central bank would be forced to widen a 10-year government bond's trading band again, having expanded it to 0.50 per cent from 0.25 per cent in December under market pressure.

However, that tweak's failure to reduce the need of central bank intervention has left the BOJ with little appetite for more compromises.

At its meeting, the central bank maintained its yield targets, set around 0 per cent for 10-year tenors and made no change to its policy allowing trade to fluctuate 50 basis points either side of that, even though the market had begun testing that limit right after it was implemented last month. That's why some investors expected the BOJ would offer yet another adjustment by perhaps widening the band to 0.75 per cent.

Instead Kuroda rolled out a new tool to hold interest rates down, signalling intervention will continue. The central bank spent 10 trillion yen (\$77 billion) buying bonds on Friday and Monday alone, according to an analysis, and it already owns more than half the sovereign fixed-income market.

The yen softened as much as 2.6 per cent against the dollar in response before pulling back, while bond traders pulled the benchmark yield down to 0.41 per cent, well within the band.

THE CENTRAL BANK MAINTAINED ITS YIELD TARGETS, SET AROUND 0 PER CENT FOR 10-YEAR TENORS AND MADE NO CHANGE TO ITS POLICY ALLOWING TRADE TO FLUCTUATE 50 BASIS POINTS EITHER SIDE OF THAT, EVEN THOUGH THE MARKET HAD BEGUN TESTING THAT LIMIT RIGHT AFTER IT WAS IMPLEMENTED LAST MONTH.

The BOJ's policy stubbornness reflects intractable realities. Whatever Kuroda does, it hurts, including doing nothing.

The real Japanese economy is in rocky shape and inflation data is muddy.

In that context, policymakers have cause to await spring wage negotiations — and perhaps Kuroda's retirement in April — before concluding that a sustained demand-driven price rise is underway and sufficient to justify higher rates.

Until then, the current policy template will continue to smother bond market liquidity and distort corporate lending rates, which is how the BOJ justified its decision to widen the trading range on December 20.

The market's rejection of Kuroda's attempt to buy time may have persuaded him that further half-measures would put him on a slippery slope towards a de-facto interest rate hike that would inhibit economic recovery.

If the US Fed stops hiking ahead of schedule, say, or spring wage negotiations go particularly well, his patience will look prescient. If not, his successor may inherit a market mess. — Reuters

Central bankers' green lines



HOWARD DAVIES

The author, a former deputy governor of the Bank of England, is Chairman of NatWest Group.

Climate change has come to represent a major challenge for central banks. How much should their monetary policy and approach to banking supervision be influenced by it?

On one hand, there is growing evidence that global warming, particularly through its effect on agriculture, may create inflationary pressures. And there is even stronger evidence that the physical and transition risks created by climate change are having, and will continue to have, a major impact on the value of financial assets and financial firms, which those responsible for the stability of the financial system cannot ignore.

On the other hand, policies to increase energy costs and lower emissions are hugely controversial, especially in the United States. A proactive approach might lead the central bank into a political war zone, vulnerable to attack from both sides. So far, central banks have tended to see this as territory they cannot avoid.

A group of them, principally Europeans, pushed for a new coalition of the willing, and the Network for Greening the Financial System was established at the end of 2017. The US Federal Reserve was initially a wallflower but became a full member after President Joe Biden's election.

The People's Bank of China was there from the start, and for a time it seemed that a consensus on central banks' appropriate posture would emerge. That is no longer the case. Two camps have formed, and they seem likely to drift further apart. In the brown corner, so to speak,

we find Fed Chair Jerome Powell.

At a conference in Stockholm earlier this month he nailed his colours to the mast. "We are not, and will not be, a 'climate policy-maker,'" he asserted. Integrating climate-change considerations into monetary and banking supervision policies "would have significant distributional and other effects on companies, industries, regions and nations."

Powell, no doubt influenced by the fact that one of Biden's nominees for the Fed Board had to withdraw in the face of congressional opposition to her views on climate change, insists that the Fed should not go there.

Others in the brown camp include Mervyn King, the former Bank of England governor, who argues that taking on climate responsibilities "would put at risk central-bank independence."

No greater risk to human life can be imagined. Otmar Issing, the European Central Bank (ECB)'s first chief economist, has also weighed in. "There can be no such thing as a 'green' monetary policy," he insists. But there are docty fighters in the green corner, too.

Mark Carney, an enthusiast since he led the Bank of England, encourages central banks to "examine how to revise their... monetary-policy operations to be more consistent with the

legislated climate objectives." ECB President Christine Lagarde herself has described climate change as "mission critical."

Frank Elderson, the responsible ECB board member, has engineered a "tilt" in the bank's bond-purchase schemes away from firms with high carbon emissions, in favour of more climate-friendly companies and industries.

He describes the bank as a "prudent realist," rather than "an environmental activist" (though some bankers supervised by the ECB would probably disagree). "Banks will be at the forefront of the energy and climate transition, whether they want to be or not," he says, and the supervisor's role is to encourage banks to manage their loan portfolios with that in mind.

On the monetary-policy front, Isabel Schnabel, the German ECB Board member, recently described how and why the bank would incorporate climate-change considerations in its approach.

In addition to "removing the existing bias towards emission-intensive firms," the ECB plans to make "climate-related disclosures compulsory for bonds to remain eligible as collateral in our refinancing operations." Tough love.

The ECB seems unconcerned

by Powell's argument that climate policy is not for the central bank, and it justifies its approach by noting that the bank's statute requires it to support the European Union's economic policies, in addition to maintaining price stability. But critics warn that the ECB may soon be challenged in court for overstepping its mandate.

The British seem to be positioned in the middle of the Atlantic, as is often the case. The Bank of England did, in fact, conduct a climate stress test on British banks.

It was an illuminating exercise: the risks to banks were greatest if governments delayed effective action on carbon pricing, and if the necessary adjustments to achieve the new net-zero objective for emissions were sudden and disruptive. That understanding has driven change by banks themselves.

But the UK regulators have so far set their face against the idea of manipulating capital requirements to raise the cost of lending to high carbon emitters (the so-called brown penalising factor) or to incentivise green lending (the green supporting factor). There is more enthusiasm for such manipulation in the euro zone, where the Banque de France is in favour.

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A news conference held by Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell is displayed at the New York Stock Exchange. — Reuters

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Bibliophiles gather under one roof to share love of reading

The third edition of the Book Fest organised by the Indian Social Club and Al Bhaj Book Store under the Indian Embassy was inaugurated early this month. The three-day event was packed with various activities that engaged not just readers but some of the most prolific Omani and expat writers based in Oman... **P20**

Saint Laurent opens Paris Fashion Week with chic evening wear for men

FRENCH LUXURY HOUSE Saint Laurent kicked off Paris Fashion Week's menswear shows on Tuesday night with a sleek lineup of sharply tailored evening looks for men, drawn up by designer Anthony Vaccarello.

The Kering-owned label took to the circular Bourse de Commerce — a historic wheat exchange refurbished to house the Pinault Collection of contemporary art — sending models around the space in dark trench

coats with prominent shoulders and white blouses, dressed up with oversize bows, or cut low, showing skin.

Models strode on pointy, heeled boots, their turtlenecks pulled up high, while tightly cinched overcoats were worn with the collars turned up.

For the finale, the room darkened and singer Charlotte Gainsbourg slipped into the piano seat, playing music as the models wrapped up the show with one more round.

She continued to play as Vaccarello walked out for his



bow, prompting a burst of applause and cheers from the audience.

Paris Fashion Week's menswear collections run through January 22, and will feature shows from high-end labels including Louis Vuitton, Dior Homme, Givenchy, Hermes and Maison Margiela.

— Reuters

READ

IT STARTS WITH US

BY COLLEEN HOOVER

Atlas and Lily attempt to rekindle the love they felt for each other as teenagers, but must deal with the repercussions their love may have now as adults. Hoover illustrates a beautiful, innocent love between Atlas and Lily. Atlas and Lily love each other like kids.



ODDLY ENOUGH

Hundreds of Spanish pet owners took their animals to church on Tuesday where Catholic priests blessed them on the Day of St Anthony the Abbott, the patron saint of animals. — Reuters



ANIMAL PLANET

Scientists have discovered a new species of lizard in a protected natural area in Cusco, southeastern Peru, national park officials said on Monday — AFP





Young Egyptians battle plastic plague

ENTREPRENEURIAL YOUNG Egyptians are helping combat their country's huge plastic waste problem by recycling junk-food wrappers, water bottles and similar garbage that usually ends up in landfills or the Nile.

At a factory on the outskirts of Cairo, run by their start-up TileGreen, noisy machines gobble up huge amounts of plastic scraps of all colours, shred them and turn them into a thick liquid. The sludge — made from all kinds of plastic, even single-use shopping bags — is then moulded into dark, compact bricks that are used as outdoor pavers for walkways and garages.

"They're twice as strong as concrete," boasts co-founder Khaled Raafat, 24, slamming one onto the floor for emphasis.

Each tile takes about "125 plastic bags out of the environment", says

concentrate in marine life, threatening the health of people who consume seafood and fish caught in Africa's mighty waterway — mirroring what has become a worldwide environmental scourge.

- 'THEIR CHILDREN'S FUTURE' -

TileGreen, launched in 2021, aims to "recycle three billion to five billion plastic bags by 2025", said Shalan.



his business partner Amr Shalan, 26, raising his voice above the din of the machines.

Raafat said the company uses even low-grade plastics and products "made of many different layers of plastic and aluminium that are nearly impossible to separate and recycle sustainably".

Egypt, the Arab world's most populous country, is also the biggest plastic polluter in the Middle East and Africa, according to a multinational study reported by Science magazine.

The country generates more than three million tonnes of plastic waste per year, much of which piles up in streets and illegal landfills or finds its way into the Nile and the Mediterranean Sea.

Microplastics in the water

The start-up last year started selling its outdoor tiles, of which it has produced some 40,000 so far, and plans to expand into other products usually made from cement.

Egypt, a country of 104 million, has pledged to more than halve its annual consumption of single-use plastics by 2030 and to build multiple new waste management plants.

For now, however, more than two thirds of Egypt's waste is "inadequately managed", according to the World Bank — driving an ecological hazard environmental groups have been trying to tackle.

On the shores of the Nile island of Qursaya, some fishermen now collect and sort plastic trash they net from

the river as part of an initiative by the group VeryNile.

As the Nile has become more polluted, the fishermen "could see their catches decreasing", said project manager Hany Fawzy, 47. "They knew this was their future and their children's future disappearing."

Over three-quarters of Cairo fish were found to contain microplastics in a 2020 study by a group of Danish and UK-based scientists published in the journal Toxics.

Off the port city of Alexandria, further north, microplastics were detected in 92 per cent of fish caught, said a study last year by researchers at Egypt's National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries.

VeryNile, started five years ago with

a series of volunteer clean-up events, buys "between 10 and 12 tonnes of plastic a month" from 65 fishermen, paying them 14 Egyptian pounds (about 50 US cents) per kilogramme, Fawzy said.

- 'GOOD STEP FORWARD' -

VeryNile then compresses high-value plastic like water bottles and sends it to a recycling plant to be made into pellets.

Low-quality plastics such as food wrappers are incinerated to power a cement factory which, Fawzy said, keeps "the environment clean with air filters and a sensitive monitoring system."

"We can't clean up the environment in one spot just to pollute elsewhere," he said. The Egyptian programmes are part of a battle against a global scourge.

Less than 10 per cent of the world's plastic is recycled, according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The OECD said last year that annual production of fossil-fuel-based plastics is set to top 12 billion tonnes by 2060, with waste exceeding one billion tonnes.

In Egypt, activists have hailed what they see as a youth-led push for sustainability that has created demand for environmentally-minded solutions and products.

But while the change is welcome, they say it remains insufficient.

"What these initiatives have done is find a way to create a value chain, and there's clearly demand," said Mohamed Kamal, co-director of environmental group Greenish.

"Anything that captures value from waste in Egypt is a good step forward. But it's not solving the problem. It can only scratch the surface." — AFP

ANIMAL PLANET

Two thirds of reef sharks and rays risk extinction: Study



NEARLY TWO THIRDS of the sharks and rays that live among the world's corals are threatened with extinction, according to new research published on Tuesday, with a warning this could further imperil precious reefs.

Coral reefs, which harbour at least a quarter of all marine animals and plants, are gravely menaced by an array of human threats, including overfishing, pollution and climate change.

Shark and ray species — from apex predators to filter feeders — play an important role in these delicate ecosystems that "cannot be filled by other species", said Samantha Sherman, of Simon Fraser University in Canada and the wildlife group TRAFFIC International.

But they are under grave threat globally, according to the study in the journal Nature Communications, which assessed extinction vulnerability data from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to look at 134 species of sharks and rays linked to reefs.

The authors found 59 per cent of coral reef shark and ray species are threatened with extinction, an extinction risk almost double that of sharks and rays in general.

Among these, five shark species are listed as critically endangered, as well as nine ray species — all so-called "rhino rays" that look more like sharks than stingrays.

KEEPING REEFS HEALTHIER

"It was a bit surprising just how high the threat level is for these species," Sherman said.

"Many species that we thought of as common are declining at alarming rates and becoming more difficult to find in some places."

Sherman said the biggest threat to these species by far is overfishing.

Sharks are under most threat in the Western Atlantic and parts of the Indian Ocean, whereas the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia are the highest risks for rays.



These regions are heavily fished and do not currently have management in place to reduce the impact on these species, said Sherman.

Last year, countries at a Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species summit approved a plan to protect dozens of shark and ray species, adding 21 coral reef species in addition to the 18 species already covered by the regulations.

Sherman said this was "a step in the right direction", but added that a global effort was needed to improve implementation, while the regulations themselves do not stop these species being killed as "bycatch".

She added that the study showed greater risks to rays on coral reefs, but that they enjoy fewer protections.

"The solutions are similar for both sharks and rays — limits on fishing, well placed and properly implemented Marine Protected Areas, and alternative livelihood solutions to reduce the number of fishers on coral reefs," Sherman said.

Coral reef fisheries directly support the livelihoods and food security of over half a billion people, but this crucial ecosystem is facing an existential threat by overexploitation and global heating.

Human-driven climate change has spurred mass coral bleaching as the world's oceans get warmer.

Modelling research has shown that even if the Paris climate goal of holding global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius is reached, 99 per cent of the world's coral reefs will not be able to recover.

At two degrees of warming, the number rose to 100 per cent.

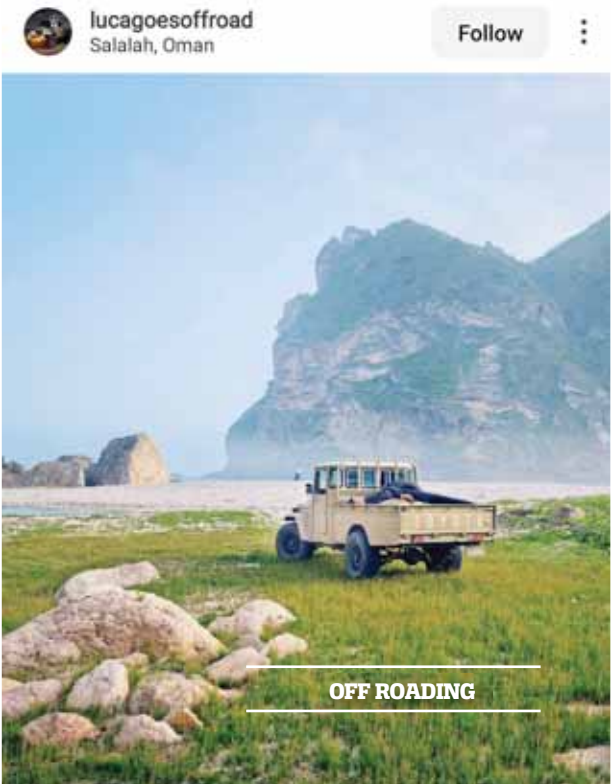
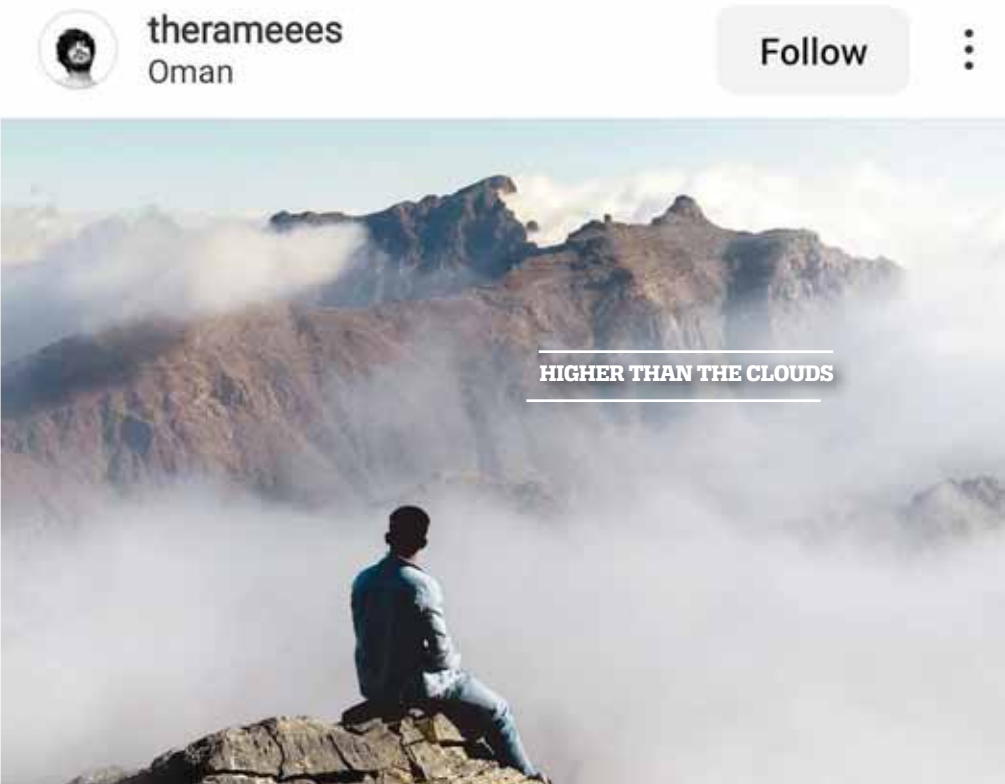
"We know coral reef health is declining, largely due to climate change, however, coral reef sharks and rays can help keep reefs healthier for longer," said Sherman.

The study was carried out by an international team of experts from universities, government and regional oceanic and fishery organisations as well as non-governmental organisations across the world. — AFP



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AROUND THE WORLD

ART

Is It Bad to Drink Coffee on an Empty Stomach?



Q: I'VE HEARD THAT DRINKING COFFEE WITHOUT FOOD IN THE MORNING CAN DAMAGE THE STOMACH LINING. IS THAT TRUE?

A: For many people, enjoying a freshly brewed cup of coffee first thing in the morning is a nonnegotiable way to start the day. But the idea that taking a sip without food could harm your gut — or contribute to other ills like bloating, acne, hair loss, anxiety, thyroid issues or painful periods, as some on social media have claimed — has garnered as much popularity as incredulity.

Researchers have been investigating the benefits and harms of drinking coffee, especially as they relate to the gut, since the 1970s, said Kim Barrett, a professor of physiology and membrane biology at the University of California, Davis School of Medicine, and a member of the governing board of the American Gastroenterological Association. Fortunately, the stomach can withstand all kinds of irritants, including coffee. “The stomach has so many ways to protect itself,” Barrett said. For example, it secretes a thick mucus layer that creates a powerful shield between the stomach lining and whatever you ingest. That shield also protects the stomach from its own natural acidic environment needed to break down food, she explained.

You’d have to consume a very harsh substance “for the defenses of the stomach to be breached because it’s constantly in a very adverse and damaging environment,” she said. “That’s just how the stomach does its job.”

HOW DOES COFFEE AFFECT THE GUT?

Irritants like alcohol, cigarette smoke and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs — such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or naproxen (Aleve) — are well known to alter our stomach’s natural defence mechanisms and injure its lining, said Dr. Byron Cryer, chief of internal medicine at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas.

His research lab specialises in understanding how different medications and other chemicals can harm the stomach and small intestine. While certain irritants can make the stomach more vulnerable to acid and ulcer formation, multiple large studies have found that this is not the case with coffee. A 2013 study of more than 8,000 people living in Japan, for example, found no significant association between coffee consumption and ulcer formation in the stomach or intestine — even among those who drank three or more cups per day.

“Coffee, even in a concentrated form, is not likely to cause objective injury to the stomach,” Cryer said. “And much less at the typical doses in usual beverages.”

Nonetheless, coffee does have an effect on the gut — it can speed up the colon and induce a bowel movement, and coffee increases acid production in the stomach. Outside of the gut, the caffeine from coffee is well known to increase heart rate and blood pressure. And if you drink it too close to bedtime, it can disrupt your sleep. But these changes are temporary, Cryer said.

WILL INCREASED STOMACH ACID CAUSE ANY ISSUES?

Drinking coffee on an empty stomach is unlikely to cause any damage to your stomach, but it could theoretically provoke heartburn, Barrett said.

We know that coffee sets off stomach acid production, but if you have food in your stomach, or if you drink your coffee with milk or creamer, that will aid in creating a buffer that helps to neutralise that acid. So drinking coffee, especially if it’s black, without a meal can reduce the stomach’s pH more than it would if you drank it with milk or with a meal, Barrett said.

Although a slightly lower pH is no problem for your stomach lining, it could pose an issue for the lining of your esophagus because it is far more vulnerable to damage from acid. Furthermore, a few studies have shown that coffee can relax and open the sphincter that connects the esophagus to the stomach, which hypothetically could allow acid from the stomach to more easily splash upward into the esophagus and cause unpleasant heartburn symptoms. — NYT

TRAVEL TALES

Hummus, Tahini and Other Tastes of Home in Jerusalem’s Old City

THERE IS PERHAPS no other city in the world where you can hear three languages spoken by the locals to a soundtrack of church bells, the voice of the muzzelin and the chatter of tourists from every corner of the globe. But Jerusalem, where I grew up in a Palestinian family, is also two universes within each other: one inhabited by its residents, another reserved for those briefly passing through its arched alleyways.

The Old City is divided into four quarters — Muslim, Christian, Armenian and Jewish — although the streets often intertwine and overlap, making it hard to delineate exactly where you are. The majority of these food stops are in the Muslim quarter (best entered through Damascus Gate), with some bordering the Christian one. Most do not have addresses, and there’s even disagreement about the names of the streets they are on. A map application will not serve you well in the winding paths of this millennia-old town. Your best guide? The vendors seated outside their storefronts. Simply ask for one of these places by name, and they will tell you exactly where to walk, where to climb stairs and how many left or right turns to make.

These places take only cash, and no meal will cost you more than \$10.

START AT DAMASCUS GATE

You do not need directions to find the female farmers seated on the ground flanking the entry through Damascus Gate. Up by the crack of dawn, they make their way from surrounding villages with seasonal produce they harvest from their fields. Depending on the season, you might be in luck with the sweetest summer figs, cactus pear and mulberries you’ll ever taste. In the late fall and early winter, you have raisins and a delicious nut-filled grape leather known as malban, but you also enter olive harvest season and might get lucky with freshly preserved olives and pressed oil. After the first rain, the foraged herbs — like mallow and dandelion — start to pop up as well.

STOP FOR TAHINI

At the bottom of the stairs leading from the gate to the Old City, and about a two-minute walk to the left, is Al Jebrini Tahini, one of the oldest tahini mills in Jerusalem, dating back 1 1/2 centuries. Walking in, you see a tiny, unassuming shop with staples like dried legumes, flour, sugar and milk, but peek through a small doorway, and you’ll find the stone mill where the sesame seeds are ground. “We only produce 15 to 20 kilograms of tahini a day,” Abu Ibrahim Jebrini, the current owner, proudly explained (that translates to about 35 pounds). “It only comes in four variations,” he added: “hulled, unhulled, toasted red and nigella seed.”

A TWO-STOP BREAKFAST

If you’ve started the day early and breakfast is what you’re after, then the most filling and nourishing meal will require only two pit stops. First, make your way to



Makhbaz Al Razim, the bakery I have been frequenting since I was a few years old, for ka’ak-al-quds (the oval ring-shaped, sesame-studded breads for which Jerusalem is famous). Tucked away on a side street near the Ethiopian patriarchate, the bakery has no sign. You find it through graying metal doors and a few stone steps descending into a room lined with piles of wooden trays. At the back is a wood-fired oven, more than 100 years old. Grab a couple of ka’aks (if you like hard-boiled eggs, you can also get a couple of eggs that have roasted in a box of wood shavings for six hours in that same wood oven) and head a few steps down to the best-kept hummus secret in the Old City.

Abu Shukri hummus may be the most recognised name for hummus in Jerusalem, with the well-known restaurant near the Via Dolorosa featured on countless online travel message boards and in TV shows. But the real gem is this hole-in-the-wall shop where Ziyad Abu Shukri, a bald man with a small patch of white hair on each side and smiling green eyes, still grinds his hummus by hand with a mortar and pestle the way he has since he took over from his father 30 years ago. “Those are my brothers,” Abu Shukri said of the owners of the well-known restaurant. “Everyone is good, everyone does what they like, but this is the original shop my father opened up 82 years ago.”

Locals refer to his shop by his name or as Abu Shukri el Falafel (and sometimes jokingly as Abu Shukri el Aqra’a — the bald Abu Shukri). With just five tables, the space is tight, and you might find a line of residents picking up their breakfast to take home, but the delights within are worth the wait. His offerings are simple: hummus; msabaha (a deconstructed hummus made from whole warm chickpeas mixed with a tahini sauce and topped with a lemon garlic chili sauce); ful (cooked and spiced fava beans) and falafel. Everything you order is brought out with pita bread and a plate of sliced tomatoes,

onions and pickles.

ON TO LUNCH

If you manage to digest this all after some walking, then sit down for lunch at Kabab al Sha’ab located at the entrance to the spice market, or Suq el Atareen, as it is locally known. There is only one thing on the menu here: kebab, served either as two skewers in a sandwich or as five skewers on a plate. Owned by the Kirresh family — famous butchers — it is frequented almost exclusively by locals. The 150-square-foot restaurant has



only four tables positioned across from the coal-fired grill, which churns out the ground lamb-beef kebab mix nonstop throughout the day. The meat is served with grilled tomatoes and onions and pita bread. The most you can order on the side is a drink, including a yogurt one.

DESSERT STOP

I assume most people find a meal incomplete until it ends it with a sweet bite. While many places offer baklava, for a true taste of Palestinian sweets, opt for helbeh, a fenugreek-flavoured semolina cake whose bitter pungency is punctuated with the sweetness of aniseed and sugar syrup. Or try hareeseh, an orange blossom semolina cake that crumbles in the mouth. And if made fresh, definitely go for knafeh, a crunchy kataifi (shredded phyllo dough) or semolina crust filled with slightly salted cheese and soaked in a floral syrup. Al Aseel Sweets on Al-Wad Street, just off the Via Dolorosa, has been making these kinds of sweets for more than 50 years, and you can see the kitchen at the back of the store where everything is churned out fresh daily. Knafeh, however, is only made on Fridays and Saturdays. — NYT

ART

Painter Awarded \$2.5 Million in Dispute Over Work He Denied



ARTIST PETER DOIG, who fought efforts by a former corrections officer and a gallery to attribute a painting to him — even going so far as to sue him when he denied painting it — has won a \$2.5 million judgment against those parties and their former lawyer.

Judge Gary Feinerman of the US District Court for Northern Illinois ruled in the artist’s favour last month in an unusual case in which Doig had been accused of disowning a landscape that the corrections officer and the gallery had hoped to sell.

Feinerman had previously ruled in Doig’s favour in the case in 2016, finding that the artist had not painted the work, after which the artist sought sanctions. In his December 30 ruling, Feinerman supported the sanctions because he said the parties pursued the case against Doig even when “it should have been absolutely clear to them that their claims were factually meritless and stood no chance of success.”

The ruling comes in one of the stranger art authentication cases, one that had pitted Doig, a well-known artist whose works routinely sell for many millions of dollars, against the former corrections officer, Robert Fletcher, who sued in 2013 on grounds that a painting he owned, an untitled acrylic on canvas of a rocky desert scene, signed “Pete Doige 76,” was an early work by Doig.

Fletcher said he had met Doig in the 1970s at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada. He said they met again in the prison where he worked and where he said Doig made the work, which he later bought for \$100.

Fletcher and Peter Bartlow, a Chicago art dealer who agreed to help sell the painting, argued that Doig was denying authorship because of a vendetta against Fletcher.

But Doig testified that he had never attended Lakehead and had never been incarcerated. Instead, he and his lawyers said the work in question had been painted by another man, Peter Edward Doige, who died in 2012 and had been an inmate at Fletcher’s prison.

A lawyer for Doig, Matthew S Dontzin, said in a statement that Doig would donate any share of the money he received from the ruling to a nonprofit that gives incarcerated people opportunities to make art.

“We are relieved to finally bring this absurd case to a just conclusion,” Dontzin said in the statement.

Fletcher could not be reached for comment. In a telephone interview, the former lawyer for Fletcher and the gallery, William F Zieske, noted that Feinerman had allowed the case to proceed to trial and insisted that he and his former clients “certainly operated completely ethically and with a full good-faith basis.”

He criticised the long delay in the sanctions decision and said he would seek reconsideration from another judge in the same court, and could then appeal to a higher court. He said the decision against him “will chill the inclination of lawyers to take on cases like this against those who have literally unlimited means at their disposal.”

In a telephone interview, Bartlow said he still believed that the evidence would ultimately show that Doig had created the painting. He said he was considering an appeal “or other options.” — NYT

SUNDAY | JANUARY 22 | 2023

Bibliophiles gather under one roof to share love of reading

How does one instil a love for reading especially among kids? Organisations across the country had been putting together creative projects to guide future generations to embrace books making them an important foundation for their

The third edition of the Book Fest organised by the Indian Social Club and Al Bhaj Book Store under the aegis of the Indian Embassy aims to create a space for book lovers and to put under the spotlight some Omani authors whose works are acclaimed during the fest.

event was part of the festivities of India's 75th year of independence. The four-day Book Fest featured several works of well-known Omani authors, sessions on book recommendations, and panel discussions. Also, the event saw the launching of several books whose authors are based in Oman.

discussions which gathered the authors and readers to discuss different literary topics ambitiously setting up panel discussions per day.

On the first day, the panel discussion put the spotlight on the impact and importance of storytelling at an early age. The other panel discussions conducted the rest of the days include an



The fest featured other events such as competitions, book launches, and different sessions. The fest also witnessed a colouring competition for school students from grades one to three. There were also poem recitation competitions and a short

The event hoped to embrace a large number of reading lovers. It brought authors and readers from different levels to the same event. Thus, the event witnessed participants and visitors from different ages and stages: several authors, poets, students, and other

Anisha Bansal Bhatia, the founder of Oman Book Lovers Club which has been invited to engage and organise the event, shared that it was a great opportunity to engage people who share with them the same interest and to meet important writers in

She added that the event was very emotional for her as they received so many compliments as organisers.

"I was glad, and I found it a joyous moment whenever I introduced writers to each other. It was amazing to see that we manage to create a network for them and connect them," she added.