

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) announced that it achieved good results in 2022. The company's oil and gas production reached 660,000 barrels as a result of improving the efficiency of fields and developing them using modern production technologies. This was announced during a media meeting by Steve Phimster, Managing Director of PDO. He said that the company aims to increase its oil and gas production to more than 700,000 barrels while reducing carbon emissions and unit operating costs. **DETAILS ON P13**



HM VISITS SULTAN OF OMAN'S ARMoured DIVISION AT RAO



IZKI: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, on Tuesday paid a Royal visit to the Sultan of Oman's Armoured Division at the Royal Army of Oman (RAO). His Majesty was accompanied by HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said and HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said.

Upon His Majesty's arrival at Shafa Garrison, the headquarters of the Sultan of Oman's Armoured Division, he was received by Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, RAO Commander, Commander of the Sultan of Oman's Armoured Division and commanders of the armoured vehicles.

His Majesty, the Supreme Commander, listened to a briefing on the Sultan of Oman's Armoured Division and its military capabilities.

His Majesty also inspected some models of tanks, armoured vehicles and military equipment at the Sultan of Oman's Armoured Division.

After that, a commemorative photo was taken to His Majesty, the Supreme Commander, with personnel of the Sultan of Oman's Armoured Division.

Then, His Majesty left Shafa Garrison, the headquarters of the Sultan of Oman's Armoured Division. — ONA

SEE ALSO P2

\$20bn worth green hydrogen project agreements inked

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, MARCH 14

Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom), a subsidiary of Energy Development Oman (EDO), on Tuesday signed multiple binding green hydrogen project agreements worth \$20 billion.

Hydrom Chairman Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, who is also Minister of Energy and Minerals, stated, "We are delighted to sign these binding commercial term sheets with the first green hydrogen projects developers in our journey towards decarbonisation. Today we are marking the

first real signatures of term sheets which actually puts a lot discussions we have had over the last year and half in real action."

Al Aufi said the the Sultanate of Oman has taken several bold steps following His Majesty's endorsement of the Net Zero target by 2050.

"While these agreements form the first testimony of our success towards decarbonisation, we look forward to signing more agreements once we receive the results of the first public auction round that is currently being conducted by Hydrom," he said.

DETAILS ON P13

GCC flays intolerance

GENEVA: The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries expressed their concern about the challenges facing the freedom of religion and belief, such as widespread acts of violence, incidents of religious hatred, increasing discrimination and religious intolerance, as well as attacks on religious sites.

This was cited in a speech delivered on behalf of the GCC states by Idris bin Abdulrahman al Khanjari, Permanent

Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations (UN) and International Organisations, in Geneva during his participation in the 52nd regular session of the Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

Al Khanjari affirmed that insulting sanctities and religions, such as the Holy Quran burning incident, represents a clear evidence of the gravity of intolerance that need to be confronted. **DETAILS ON P3**

AL MOUJ SARAI: MAJESTIC COLLECTION OF INCOMPARABLY EXCLUSIVE PALACES

Al Mouj Muscat has announced the launch of Al Mouj Sarai, an ocean front paradise comprising of 28 palaces designed to reflect the true essence of their owners.

A heaven for uncompromising majesty, Al Mouj Sarai is defined by grand spaces, sophisticated designs by international award-winning architects, bespoke amenities, and the most breath-taking panoramic views in Muscat. Quintessential and bespoke, each home is a work of art in its own right, gracefully blending the tranquility of nature with the grandeur of Oman's rich heritage, through six unique styles.

Thoughtfully imagined to frame and embrace its surrounding vistas, these styles embody the new paradigm of luxury – disconnecting from all that is stressful. With the maximum use of glass-walls, double-height and open spaces, each design concept removes the juxtaposition between indoor and outdoor, creating a seamless and holistic living experience that masterfully connects human and nature, privacy and transparency, leisure and living spaces.

LIVING ON THE AZZURE
Strategically located at the crescent

of the world-class luxury-lifestyle development, it offers homeowners the perfect symmetry between exclusivity and accessibility to Al Mouj Muscat — the most coveted address in Oman. Created for those looking for incomparable, rare, and unique experiences and properties, this regally beautiful collection is an ultra-exclusive gated community complete with enchanting water features and reflection pools, harmonious courtyards and lush gardens. It is the crowning jewel of Al Mouj Muscat imbued with the 'azure' beauty of nature.

PEERLESS PRESTIGE
The Al Mouj Sarai's carefully-selected designs can be customized to individual taste and style, featuring intricate details and bespoke finishes. Discerning homeowners can create their family palatial living spaces to their exact specifications including choosing the plot area, façade design, interior color schemes, layout and amenities which include private berths, invigorating saunas, dedicated cigar lounges, home theaters and cinema rooms — every corner can be designed to speak of complete indulgence, majestic pampering, and timeless luxury.

OCEAN SARAI
With uninterrupted views of the horizon, the Ocean Sarai palaces offer a perfect setting for serene moments that rejuvenate, inspire, and delight. Comprising of 12 palaces in four bespoke design styles, they range from 1,999 sqm to 3,483 sqm and include up to 7 bedrooms and bathrooms and 5 multi-purpose living and experiential spaces in addition to indoor and outdoor kitchens and parking space for 10 cars.

MARINA SARAI
A private paradise designed to nourish the mind, body and soul, Marina Sarai consists of 16 palaces in two unique designs, ranging from 1,514 and 1,638 sqm. In addition to their very own exclusive birth, they also include up to 5 bedrooms and bathrooms and 5 multi-purpose living and experiential spaces in addition to indoor and outdoor kitchens and parking space for 8 cars.



Today, Al Mouj Muscat is considered the most desirable integrated lifestyle destination in Oman that is already home to more than 8,000 residents from over 85 countries. Bridging people and culture in a spectacular oceanfront location,

it is home to a kaleidoscope of premium opportunities for leisure and relaxation, life and living through elevated residential offering, exclusive commercial and retail choices, exciting entertainment options, and a vibrant community.

HM visits Sultan of Oman's Armoured Division



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, on Tuesday paid a Royal visit to the Sultan of Oman's Armoured Division at the Royal Army of Oman (RAO). His Majesty was accompanied by HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said and HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said. Upon His Majesty's arrival at Shafa Garrison, the headquarters of the Sultan of Oman's Armoured Division, he was received by Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, RAO Commander, Commander of the Sultan of Oman's Armoured Division and commanders of the armoured vehicles.





Follow us on **Twitter**
@omanobserver

oman

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

WEDNESDAY | MARCH 15 | 2023

3

MoE approves GED first semester examination results

MUSCAT: Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, on Tuesday approved the results of the General Education Diploma (GED) first semester examinations for the academic year 2022-2023.

A total of 51,120 students sat the GED exams from the regular category achieving a success rate of 80.78 per cent. The GED for private bilingual schools achieved a success rate of 90.77 per cent out of 1,368 students.

At the Royal Guard of Oman

Technical College, 54 students sat the exams achieving a success rate of 100 per cent, the GED for Islamic sciences had a success rate of 98.26 per cent out of 115 whereas 62 students sat the exams from the GED for special education achieving a success rate of 90.16 per cent.

The results will be available from 3:00 pm next Thursday by sending an SMS containing the index number to 90200 via Omantel, Ooredoo and Vodafone. The results will be available later on Oman Educational Portal. — **ONA**



‘Insulting sanctities is evidence of intolerance, hate crimes’

GENEVA: The countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have expressed their concern about the challenges facing the freedom of religion and belief, such as widespread acts of violence, incidents of religious hatred, increasing discrimination and religious intolerance, as well as attacks on religious sites.

This was cited in a speech delivered on behalf of the GCC states by Idris bin Abdulrahman al Khanjari, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations (UN) and International Organisations in Geneva, during his participation in 52nd regular session of the Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

Al Khanjari affirmed that insulting sanctities and religions, such as the Holy Quran burning incident, represents clear evidence of the gravity of intolerance that need to be confronted.

He said that the GCC states agree with the Special Rapporteur



on the importance of ensuring respect for religions at the legislative and applied levels, and taking measures to consolidate respect for religions in societal thought.

Al Khanjari pointed out that the GCC states call on the Human Rights Council to set a global and humanitarian goal that must be achieved when celebrating the centenary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in order to achieve the Millennium Goals for the year 2030. This will ensure reaching a tolerant world that respects the idea of freedom of belief in its comprehensive dimensions. — **ONA**

Future cities of Oman: Seven pacts inked to design layouts



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning on Tuesday signed 7 agreements to assign the designing of layouts and future cities distributed over various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. These agreements come in implementation of urban regional strategies and to pursue balanced urban development in all governorates.

The agreements were signed on behalf of the ministry by Eng Ibrahim bin Hamoud al Waeli, Director of the Urban Strategy Office, with officials of companies

in the field of urban planning and building future cities.

Agreements were signed with consulting companies for the projects of ‘Future City of Salalah’, ‘Bausher City’ and ‘Future City of Suhar’. A number of other projects were also awarded to companies, such as the layout of Greater Nizwa, layout of Haima city, developing downtown of Ibri city and Khor Grama layout at Sur city.

Future cities provide an integrated model for various uses, with multiple features, represented in being easy to



access, flexible, healthy, smart, developed, highly efficient, safe and sustainable. The total area of such cities exceeds 20 million square metres, and they all accommodate more than 150,000 people and about 40,000 housing units, which is a new model for modern life that keeps pace with changes and meets the needs of the population.

Al Waeli said that the main goal of future cities is to provide services before distributing or investing in land plots. He pointed out that as many as 40,000 housing units are targeted

by these agreements, benefiting more than 150,000 people in different areas in the Sultanate of Oman. Ownership of these units will be available for Omanis and non-Omanis.

Moreover, since the beginning of 2023, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has approved the allocation of 51 land plots through the usufruct system for various uses in different governorates.

The ministry has also inked contracts worth RO 10.5 million during the Real Estate Development Conference. — **ONA**

Ambassadors visit Oman Across Ages Museum

MANAH: A number of ambassadors of Arab and Foreign countries accredited to the Sultanate of Oman paid a visit to Oman Across Ages Museum in the Wilayat of Manah, Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah.

They were received by Nasr bin Hamoud al Kindi, Secretary-General of the Royal Court Affairs, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Museum, and some officials.

The ambassadors toured various corridors of the museum as they viewed different items and manuscripts displayed in pavilions of the museum at the History Gallery and Renaissance Gallery.

They also viewed the latest interactive technologies in the museum, in addition to various facilities and services rendered by the museum for the visitors.

The ambassadors also went on tour of the Knowledge Centre and Hisn Al Shomoukh library. — **ONA**



11 per cent increase in mobile phone subscriptions

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 14

The number of mobile phone subscribers in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 11 per cent to 6,804,762 at the end of January 2023.

Statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) said the number of postpaid mobile phone subscriptions increased by 28.9 per cent, to reach 1,646,544.

The number of prepaid mobile phone subscriptions recorded a growth of 6.3 per cent by the end of January 2023, to reach 5,158,218, while fixed-line subscriptions



decreased by 1.3 per cent, to reach 562,987 lines.

Subscriptions for analog fixed-line telephone lines (including

prepaid and postpaid services) decreased by 13.7 per cent compared to 235,308 lines, and the number of public telephones stabilised at

6,801 phones, while digital network service lines increased.

Integrated services increased by two per cent to 49,732 lines. Fixed telephone subscriptions connected to Internet Protocol (IP) technology increased by 12.3 per cent. Wireless fixed lines decreased by 28.3 per cent to 836 lines.

The total number of fixed Internet subscriptions reached 539,908, and the total number of fixed broadband service subscriptions - (more than 256 kilobytes/second), which includes digital leased lines (DSL) and fiber optics to homes (FTTH), the 4G (LTE) service, the satellite

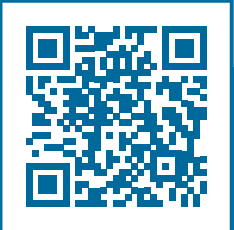
communications service, and the Internet Lease service was 538,182, while the number of low-speed Internet subscriptions (less than 256 kilobytes/s) that includes connectivity Dial-up and some leased Internet lines was 1,726.

The total number of active mobile broadband Internet subscriptions increased to 5,722,841 users, with an increase of 10 per cent by the end of January 2023, compared to the end of January 2022.

The statistics showed that the total international capacity of the Internet amounted to 2,492,935 megabytes in January 2023, recording an increase of 63.9

per cent compared to the end of January 2022 AD, while the number of leased local circuits reached about 5,138 circuits, and the number of beneficiaries of telex lines stabilised at 116 lines.

The Governorate of Muscat accounted for the largest proportion of analog fixed-line lines, reaching 62.54 per cent of the total lines, followed by the Governorate of North Al Batinah with a rate of 11.07 per cent, while the Governorate of Dhofar accounted for 8.27 per cent, and the share of the remaining governorates of the Sultanate of Oman amounted to 18.11 per cent by the end of January 2023.



NOT TO LITTER

LET'S

WE ALL NEED TO INSTIL THE 'CLEAN CULTRE'

DO

IN OUR CHILDREN AND FAMILY MEMBERS

THIS

WHenever we get together for a picnic just like we are

TOGETHER!

REQUIRED TO DO AT OUR HOMES

MAI AL ABRI

PICNICS are the ideal way to appreciate life's simple joys especially when the weather is suitable and in this regard, there's no better way to do so than grabbing some nice food and friends and go to a relaxing scenic location. Also, a picnic might do wonders if one needs a quick mood boost.

However, everyone must create a culture of cleanliness. We all need to instil the so called 'Clean Cultre' in our children and family members whenever we get together for a picnic just like we are

required to do at our homes. Encouraging children to leave places cleaner than they found them is a moral practice that is spreading among Omani families.

Jamal al Nabhani and his family are role models for environmentally friendly outing. Jamal advises his family to always leave the campground cleaner than when they arrived. "If you find a mess on the ground, you clean it up regardless of who made a mess," he says.

"You improve the environment on purpose for the next group of campers," he explains, while teaching his children to put their food in reusable containers and



utilise them to preserve leftovers for a snack later in the day or to carry home for another meal, and avoid leaving the leftovers for animals on their spot of picnicking.

"Leaving food around will attract bugs and vermin to the picnic spot, and you will be not be able to enjoy the rest of the picnic peacefully," he says.

ZERO-WASTE

As we all know, some of the food, products, and packaging used during picnics can pollute the environment. Whether you like it or not, zero-waste picnic is an achievable goal.

The Environment Authority continuously educates the public on proper picnic conduct as part of its efforts to maintain clean environment. Efforts usually begin in one's own home. Each family must collect garbage in trash bags rather than leaving it on the streets. And to save the environment more, we need to learn to use glass plates instead of plastic containers because glass produces zero waste.

In addition, people in the neighbourhoods need to help in cleaning the streets, planting trees, and prevent tossing waste from their cars onto the street for the better living environment.



Follow us on **instagram**:
omanobserver

oman

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

WEDNESDAY | MARCH 15 | 2023

5

MoHERI explores alliance with University of Tokyo

MUSCAT: A meeting between the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, and a delegation from the University of Tokyo in Japan, discussed possible areas of cooperation.

The two parties explored the exchange of students and researchers in the fields of health sciences, climate change and Asian studies, as well as the use of artificial intelligence techniques in environmental studies to simulate future environmental changes.

This was discussed during a meeting with Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, and Prof Hiroyuki Suzuki, Professor of the Sultan Qaboos Chair for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Tokyo, and his accompanying delegation, who is currently visiting the Sultanate of Oman.

The meeting also involved a proposal to hold an introductory symposium in Muscat showcasing the achievements of the Sultan



Qaboos Chair at the University of Tokyo, including Middle Eastern studies conducted by the Scientific Chair during the last period.

During the meeting, Dr Rahma emphasised the government's efforts to implement the objectives and pillars of Oman Vision 2040. This includes establishing a knowledge-based economy, developing national capacities and competencies that align with the labour market, and strengthening partnership bonds

with the government and private sectors.

The delegation was briefed on the expansion and development of the public and private higher education sectors in Oman, as well as the ministry's efforts to develop the vocational training sector, practical research, innovation and empowerment of sectors through partnerships with the private sector on electronic platforms such as the Ejad platform.

The minister also highlighted

the existing cultural and scientific relations between Oman and Japan. She noted that there are currently Omani students studying in Japanese universities, and the ministry has recognised over 30 Japanese universities.

The Sultan Qaboos Chair for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Tokyo was also praised for its significant role in strengthening research cooperation between the two countries. — ONA

Second edition of Observer Round Table discussion today

KABEER YOUSUF

[@kabeeryousef](#)

The second edition of the 'Observer Round Table' that aims at shedding more light on a contemporary topic will be held at the Ministry of Information premises at 10 am today.

The debate aims at brainstorming on a subject relevant to the country by experts on a monthly basis and exchange ideas on a social issue and to draw conclusions by the participants.

The key speakers of today's debate are Shatha al Maskary, Founder of Lahunna, and Managing Director of Protiviti, Dr Neelesh Sogani, representative of iosh and RoSPA ambassador, and Samir al Zadjali, Human Resources Advisor.

Topic for today's

discussions will be the mismatch between the skillsets that the youth possesses and the requirements of the future job markets and how they need to adapt themselves to the changing times and equip themselves for the future challenges by updating and learning newer skills that give them a cutting edge.

Abdullah Salem al Shueili, Chief Editor, *Oman Daily Observer* will be the guest of honour while Qasim al Maashani will take the role of presenter.

The topic of the first round table in the series was 'The emotional conundrum in the post Covid-19 era' delving into the various facets of the pandemic and the need to provide emotional support to those who are traumatised in several ways.

■ WOMAN FALLS FROM THE TOP OF MOUNTAIN IN NAKHL



A woman, who fell from the top of a mountain in the Wilayat of Nakhl in South Al Batinah, was rescued by the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDA) that responded immediately to the incident and provided necessary first aid. The woman was transferred to the hospital in a moderate condition for further treatment.

■ ASDS CHIEF RECEIVES DELEGATION FROM ARMY WAR COLLEGE



MUSCAT: Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies (ASDS), received in his office at Bait Al Falaj on Tuesday the officers' delegation studying in the supreme command course at the Army War College in India, led by Maj Gen Rajeev Puri, Commander of the Higher Command Wing at the Army War College. The two sides exchanged views on a range of joint academic and training topics. The meeting was attended by a number of senior officers at the ASDS. — ONA

CBFS conference on banking, finance, business begins today

MUSCAT: As part of research promotion initiatives, College of Banking and Financial Studies (CBFS) will hold the second International Conference on Banking, Finance and Business – ICBFB on March 15, 16. The two-day conference will be held under the auspices of Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi, Secretary-General, Ministry of Finance.

ICBFB 2023 is organised in strategic partnership with Central Bank of Oman and Oman Banks Association and knowledge partnership of University of Strathclyde, the London Institute of Banking and Finance and Institute of Chartered Accountants of India.

Tahir bin Salim al Amri, Executive President, CBO, Ahmed al Musalmi, CEO, Sohar International, Abdulaziz al Kharusi, Director Manager for Digital Transformation and Sector Empowerment, Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, C A Aniket Sunil Talati, President, Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, New Delhi, Prof Amany Elbanna,

Prof of Information Systems, Royal Holloway University of London, UK, Prof Yogesh K Dwivedi, Professor of Digital Marketing and Innovation, Swansea University, UK, and Dr Mejdal al Qahtani, Vice-President, Innovation Unit, King Saud University, Saudi Arabia, will be the keynote speakers for the main sessions.

The main objective of the conference is to provide a forum to the academics, scholarly experts and practitioners to share their knowledge and research experiences for the development of banking, finance, economics and business.

TDr Zahran bin Salim al Salti, Dean, CBFS, said that it is expected that the conference outcome and recommendations will provide insightful directions for effective policies, plans and strategies in the days to come for banking, finance, economics and business practices across the globe.

There will be best paper awards each under theme of banking and finance, economics and business technology and entrepreneurship.

Oman bags 9 medals at Gulf Mathematics, Chemistry Olympiads

MUSCAT: The students of Sultanate won 9 medals in the ninth Gulf Mathematics Olympiad, and the first Gulf Chemistry Olympiad held in Manama, Bahrain.

In the Mathematics Olympiad, the students bagged two silvers and four bronzes. Manar bint Mohammed al Dhahli, Aisha bint Abdul Qadir al Maamari, Rayan bint Abdullah al Kaabi and Al Baljaa bint Zahran al Abri bagged the bronze while the silver medals went to Al

Waqas bin Mahmoud al Khadouri and Reem bint Nabhan al Azwani. In the Chemistry Olympiad, Jumana bint Azzan al Amri won the bronze medal, while Mohammed bin Ahmed al Habsi and Al Rabee bin Habib al Dhafri won the silver medal.

Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Under-Secretary for Education, Ministry of Education, said at the ceremony, "I am glad of the achievement of our students at 9th

Gulf Mathematical Olympiad and the First Gulf Chemistry Olympiad. I am optimistic the students will compete in these Olympiads both at the Gulf and the international level. This students' participation is of high benefit from a psychological standpoint represented in their ability to compete with others and has a social standpoint as well, represented in meeting their peers in the Gulf countries and exchanging experiences."

The Gulf Olympiad is a periodic competition in mathematics and chemistry for students of the member states of the Arab Education Bureau for the Gulf States, organised and supervised by the Bureau and hosted by one of the member states. Bahrain hosted the event from March 10-14, and 10 students from the member states of the Bureau participated in it, with 6 of them in mathematics competitions, and 4 in chemistry.

Conference on respiratory diseases urges preparedness, collaboration

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

[@lakshmioman](#)

The 3rd Scientific Conference on Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI) and the 6th Meeting of the Eastern Mediterranean Acute Respiratory Infection Surveillance (EMARIS) Network, hosted by Oman at the Kempinski Hotel Muscat, reinforced preparedness, detection and response to the respiratory diseases in the eastern Mediterranean region.

Held in cooperation with the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, the Regional Office of the World Health Organization (WHO) for the



Dr David E Wentworth



Dr Richard Brennan

Eastern Mediterranean, the three-day conference had a series of workshops such as Infodemic and Community listening for Events of Respiratory Viruses caused by epidemics and pandemics - learning from the Covid-19 pandemic and new tools; establishment and expansion of seasonal influenza vaccination in the region - policy, programmatic

considerations and best practices and influenza disease burden estimation - data needs, methods and tools.

The scientific meeting and conference was held under the auspices of Dr Said bin Hareb al Lamki, Under-Secretary for Health Affairs, Ministry of Health, in the presence of senior officials from the ministry, WHO, and the Eastern Mediterranean countries.

Dr Al Lamki stated that over the past three years, the Covid-19 pandemic triggered an enormous scope of research, studies and scientific publications, which allowed the health policy makers and experts to be in a better



position than they were before the pandemic.

Dr Ahmed al Mandhari, Director, WHO, Eastern Mediterranean Region, indicated that in 2022, more than 55 outbreaks were reported compared with 31 in 2021 and 14 in 2020, many of which are attributed to respiratory infections.

Dr David E Wentworth, Chief, Virology Surveillance and Diagnosis, Influenza Division, Centres for Disease Control (CDC), called influenza as seasonal and belittled the impact it has. "They annually create epidemic all over the world and in the equatorial region, middle part of the globe, influenza circulates

all the time and it does not have seasonality. We really want to improve our ability to deal with the epidemic viruses and need to improve the technologies, capabilities and partnerships respond to pandemic threat."

Dr Richard Brennan, WHO's Emergency Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, said, "We have learned from the recent pandemic and now we have to build on the capacities that we have developed throughout the pandemic and sustain it by making sure that we continue to invest in laboratory capacity, surveillance capacity, clinical capacity and engaging with communities."



Diplomatic push sparks hope for ending DR Congo insurgency



Congoese police officers stand guard near internally displaced people gathered during the visit of a delegation of the UN Security Council at the Bushagara site. — Reuters

KINSHASA: Another failed ceasefire, a UN call for talks nobody seems to want, and a new influx of foreign soldiers: despite a flurry of diplomatic efforts there appears little chance a fresh insurgency in eastern DR Congo will stop any time soon.

International envoys as well as the Democratic Republic of Congo government say they want to give a chance to peace efforts for ending the insurgency by M23 rebels in North Kivu province.

Kinshasa and several Western governments say the rebels are backed by a Rwanda eyeing the natural resources across the

border, a claim angrily denied by Kigali.

Relations between the two neighbours have long been tense. The M23, associated with the Tutsi ethnic group, says it is fighting in part to protect Tutsis from rival Hutu extremist groups.

M23 also claims the DR Congo government has reneged on a pledge to incorporate the fighters into the national army.

UN ambassadors for France and Gabon, ending a three-day visit to the area, on Sunday stressed a political solution to end the fighting, which according to UN figures has displaced over 800,000 people. — AFP

China vows to ensure normal operations during ‘revival’

BEIJING: China will carefully implement state institutional reforms and ensure orderly operations, state media reported, citing the first cabinet meeting chaired by the new premier Li Qiang on Tuesday.

Li, the former Communist Party chief of Shanghai, was installed as premier on Saturday during the annual session of China’s parliament and is tasked with reviving the world’s second-largest economy after three years of Covid-19 curbs.

The institutional reforms remain “a major political task at present” and China will make sure that all the work is carried out normally, state media reported, citing comments from the meeting.

“The institutional reforms should be taken as an opportunity to adapt to the needs of building a new development pattern and promoting high-quality development.”

Last week, China’s parliament approved a plan for a sweeping reform of central government institutions, including the formation of a financial regulatory body and national data bureau and a revamp of its science and technology ministry.

Analysts and investors said the new financial watchdog, the National Financial Regulatory



China’s Premier Li Qiang (2nd R) speaks during a press conference after the closing session of the National People’s Congress at the Great Hall of the People. — AFP

Administration, will help bridge regulatory gaps, but it may also consolidate power at the top and could introduce more state and party intervention.

The new cabinet chaired by Li faces the challenge of getting the economy back on track after Covid-19 restrictions, weak consumer and business sentiment, slow global growth

and geopolitical uncertainties.

The National Bureau of Statistics will release the country’s economic activity data for the first two months combined on Wednesday, offering a snapshot to measure the strength of economic revival after the lifting of the anti-virus curbs late last year.

Recently, China has fully reopened its borders to visitors.

As the Foreign Ministry in Beijing announced on Tuesday, “all types of visas for foreigners will be issued again” as of Wednesday.

China reopened its borders at the beginning of January after three years of strict pandemic measures — but initially primarily for business travellers and family visits. — Reuters

Philippines beefs up efforts to contain oil leak from sunken tanker

MANILA: Philippine authorities have increased efforts to contain an oil spill from a sunken fuel tanker that has affected coastal towns and was still spreading, the environment ministry said on Tuesday, as the country grapples with clean-up challenges.

Improvised spill booms made from cog on grass and coconut materials were helping to restrict oil leaking from MT Princess Empress, the Philippine-flagged tanker that encountered engine trouble in rough seas before it went down off central Oriental Mindoro province, the ministry said in a statement.

The vessel was carrying about 800,000 litres of industrial fuel oil when it sank, according to the coast guard.

“The use of improvised spill booms is a feasible precautionary measure to prevent damage to marine



An aerial view shows the oil spill from the sunken fuel tanker MT Princess Empress on the shores of Pola, Philippines. — Reuters

environments,” it said, adding that the materials are readily accessible to communities

at risk.

Marine scientists at the University of the Philippines

have warned that the oil spill could also hit the Verde Island Passage, a body of

water between Batangas and Mindoro provinces south of Manila, which they said has the

highest concentration of marine biodiversity on the planet.

The spill could also reach the northern part of Palawan island, home to some of the country’s white-sand beaches.

Resorts in Oriental Mindoro, also known for world-class beaches and dive spots, have already been reeling from the impact of the oil spill, as tourists cancel reservations during what is supposed to be peak season.

A Philippine senate panel on Tuesday opened an inquiry into the incident, with legislators demanding the tanker owner, RDC Reield Marine Services Inc, to participate in the clean-up drive and extend immediate financial aid to affected communities.

They also raised concerns about whether the tanker owner could file insurance claims despite questions about the ship’s permit to operate. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

BANGKOK

Thailand searches for radioactive cylinder

Thai authorities are scrambling to find a cylinder containing dangerous radioactive material that went missing from a power station, officials said on Tuesday.

A weekend search failed to locate the 25-kilogramme tube containing highly radioactive Caesium-137, said Kittiphan Chitpentham of the National Power Supply Public Company, which owns the plant.

The missing cylinder is part of a device used to measure steam pressure at the plant. Officials have



not said how much Caesium-137 is inside it. The Office of Atoms for Peace said the plant was using surveillance footage to try to identify who took the cylinder, and warned against opening it.

TOKYO

Japanese PM reportedly mulling S Korea visit

Ahead of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol’s visit to Tokyo this week, the Kyodo news agency cited Japanese government sources on Tuesday as saying that Prime Minister Fumio Kishida was considering a return visit to Seoul this summer. Yoon is scheduled meet Kishida for bilateral summit talks in Tokyo on Thursday and Friday.

A government spokesman in Tokyo expressed the expectation that Yoon’s visit would contribute to the further development of



bilateral relations. The President’s Office in Seoul expressed the hope that the two-day visit would help to overcome what it termed the “unfortunate history” between the two countries.

JAKARTA

Merapi volcano ejects hot clouds of ash

Mount Merapi, one of the most active volcanoes in Indonesia, ejected hot clouds of ash and gas as far as 2 km down its slopes.

The eruption lasted for 160 seconds, sending hot volcanic debris travelling along the Krasak river, according to the Centre for Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation, a government agency that monitors volcanic activity. No casualties or damage were reported, but the agency warned residents and tourists to stay away from the



danger zone within a radius of 5 kilometres from the peak. Mount Merapi, which means “Fire Mountain” in Javanese, is located on the border of Central Java and Yogyakarta provinces.



omanobserver.com/podcast

world

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

WEDNESDAY | MARCH 15 | 2023

7

In brief

■ WASHINGTON



BIDEN TO SIGN GUN CONTROL MEASURE

President Joe Biden will address the US gun violence epidemic on Tuesday when he signs an order tightening background checks on firearms customers at an event in Monterey Park, California, where 11 people were gunned down in January.

The White House said Biden, whose Democratic Party has not been able to overcome Republican resistance to more meaningful gun control laws, will “grieve with the families and community impacted” in the mass shooting.

A sole gunman shot dead 11 people from the local Asian community in the Los Angeles suburb during their Lunar New Year celebrations.

■ BERLIN



NO CONCERN FOR GERMAN BANKS, SAYS SCHOLZ

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz sought to reassure savers on Tuesday about the health of the country's banks after the collapse of US lender Silicon Valley Bank sparked contagion fears. Asked whether German account-holders should be worried about their deposits, Scholz said he saw “really no reason why anyone here in Germany needs to have big concerns”.

Silicon Valley Bank — a key lender to start-ups — collapsed after a sudden run on deposits, prompting regulators to seize control last Friday. On Sunday night, US federal authorities stepped in to protect all depositors at SVB.

■ LONDON



JOHNSON TO BE QUIZZED OVER ‘PARTYGATE’

Former British prime minister Boris Johnson will be quizzed by a panel of lawmakers on March 22 over whether he intentionally misled parliament about illegal parties at his Downing Street office and residence during coronavirus lockdowns.

The British parliament's Committee of Privileges said Johnson would provide oral evidence to the committee in a televised session.

At the centre of the inquiry are statements Johnson made to parliament in December 2021 about parties at 10 Downing Street when coronavirus laws kept people at home and banned indoor gatherings.

UKRAINE SAYS DEAL REQUIRES 120-DAY RENEWAL

Black Sea grain talks continue as Russia seeks 60-day renewal

MOSCOW: Talks continue to extend a deal to allow grain shipments from Ukraine's Black Sea ports ahead of a deadline later this week, the United Nations and Türkiye said on Tuesday, after Kyiv rejected a Russian push for a reduced 60-day renewal.

Since Russia and Ukraine signed the UN-backed Black Sea Grain Initiative in Türkiye on July 22, millions of tonnes of grain and other food products have been exported from Ukrainian ports, helping to lower global food prices from record highs.

After Russia on Monday suggested allowing the deal to be renewed for 60 days, half the term of the previous renewal, the Tass news agency cited Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko as saying on Tuesday that a deal had been agreed for a 60-day extension.

“Indeed, the deal has been extended - it has been agreed that it has been extended for 60 days,” the Tass news agency cited Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko as saying on Tuesday.



A serviceman visits the Wall of Remembrance to pay tribute to killed Ukrainian servicemen during a commemorative ceremony to mark the Volunteer Day honouring fighters, in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Tuesday. — Reuters

It was not immediately clear how the deal could be extended for half of the previous duration of 120 days. Türkiye, which facilitated the deal alongside the UN, said in a defence ministry statement that Moscow had agreed to back a 60-

day extension to the deal but that talks continued.

A UN spokesperson said “informal dialogue” between the organisation and parties to the deal continued, though in-person talks with Russia had ended in Geneva.

Ukraine said it will stick to the terms of the previously agreed deal based on a 120-day duration that can be renewed. “We will follow the agreement strictly,” a senior Ukrainian government official said. — Agencies

Malawi's storm Freddy death toll jumps to 190

BLANTYRE, Malawi: The death toll in Malawi from tropical storm Freddy has jumped to 190 from 99 reported previously, the country's disaster management agency said on Tuesday.

Freddy, one of the strongest storms ever recorded in the southern hemisphere and potentially the longest-lasting tropical cyclone, has killed scores of people and left a trail of destruction in Malawi and Mozambique after it made landfall for the second time over the weekend.

As heavy rains continued to pummel Malawi on Tuesday, 584 people have been injured and 37 are still reported missing, the country's Department of Disaster Management Affairs said in a statement.

Meanwhile, survivors of



People walk up a hill in Blantyre on Tuesday, following cyclone Freddy's landfall. — AFP

Cyclone Freddy clung to dwindling hopes of finding missing relatives on Tuesday after the storm slammed into Malawi for its second strike on Africa in a

record-setting rampage.

Ninety-nine people have died in the country since Freddy smashed into southern Africa at the weekend, just weeks after it

made a deadly hit in late February, according to a provisional toll.

Many have died in mudslides that have washed away makeshift homes in the country's commercial capital, Blantyre.

Despair settled on Chilobwe, a township on the city's outskirts that accounts for around half of the victims.

Drenched in rains that have been falling for days, survivors milled about in disbelief, looking at flattened houses and structures.

Many believed there were still people trapped underneath the muddy rubble of earthen bricks — but there were no rescuers in sight.

John Witman, in his 80s, in a raincoat and woollen hat, with his 10 family members in tow, stood in front of what was his son-in-law's house. — AFP

French PM bets on majority to pass pension reform

PARIS: French Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne on Tuesday said she was confident she would manage to pull together a majority in parliament to pass a reform that will see the French work two years more to 64 before being entitled to a pension.

France has been hit by rolling strikes against the very unpopular reform, with key refineries blocked, railway transport disrupted and garbage piling up on the streets of Paris and other cities.

President Emmanuel Macron's camp does not have an absolute majority in the lower house of parliament and depends on the vote of lawmakers from other groups — with a lot of questions raised over whether the numbers would add up.

“A majority exists that is not afraid of reforms, even unpopular ones, when they are necessary,” Borne told the lower house of parliament.

One option would be to resort to a procedure, known as 49:3, which would allow the government to push the text through parliament without a vote, but that would risk further angering protesters, and Borne said she wanted a vote to take place.

“With my government, we are fully committed so that in the next few days, a majority votes for the pension reform,” Borne told lawmakers.

The next step, scheduled for Wednesday, is the convening of a joint committee of lower and upper house lawmakers to agree on a definitive version of the text. That day, unions plan a new day of strikes and protests.

The last and crucial moment would be a final vote on Thursday in both houses.

Macron's party needs the support of Les Republicains to ensure the bill is approved. But the conservative lawmakers are very divided on the issue and there are even cracks. — AFP

Exodus of healthcare workers from poor countries

GENEVA: Poorer countries are increasingly losing healthcare workers to wealthier ones as the latter seek to shore up their own staff losses from the Covid-19 pandemic, sometimes through active recruitment, the World Health Organization said on Tuesday.

The trend for nurses and other staff to leave parts of Africa or Southeast Asia for better opportunities in wealthier countries in the Middle East or Europe was already under way before the pandemic but has accelerated since, the UN health agency said, as global competition heats up.

“Health workers are the backbone of every health system, and yet 55 countries with some of the world's most fragile health systems do not have enough and many are losing their

health workers to international migration,” said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO director-general.

He was referring to a new WHO list of vulnerable countries which has added eight extra states since it was last published in 2020. They are: Comoros, Rwanda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, East Timor, Laos, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Jim Campbell, director of the WHO's health workforce department, told journalists safeguards for countries on the WHO list were important so they “can continue to rebuild and recover from the pandemic without an additional loss of workers to migration”.

Some 115,000 healthcare workers died from Covid around the world during the pandemic but many more left



A doctor registers blood after testing a patient at a local government hospital in Harare, Zimbabwe. — Reuters

their professions due to burnout and depression, he said. As a sign of the strain, protests and strikes have been organised in more than 100 countries since the pandemic began, he added, including in Britain and the United States.

“We need to protect the workforce if we wish to ensure the population has access to care,” said Campbell.

Asked which countries were attracting more workers, he said wealthy OECD countries and Gulf states but added that competition between African countries had also intensified.

The WHO says it is not against migration of workers if it was managed appropriately.

In 2010, it released a voluntary global code of practice on the international recruitment of health personnel and urges its members to follow it. — Reuters

‘Start-up’ from the college itself!

In the past, the education system around the world was to teach students to think casually, to set a goal, and then explore and acquire the means and resources to find the most suitable and efficient way of achieving it.

But in recent years, entrepreneurship has grown so explosively across the higher education landscape that creativity skills are taught, learned and developed, not by sitting in a classroom, but by experiencing and applying creative thinking processes.

Today, there are adequate resources and tech infrastructure for students to take the plunge. As long as they have the right idea, and the will to succeed, launching a business venture is a great option in the college itself!

Significantly, what students do is that they pitch their ideas, launch a start-up, and manage to acquire a good client base and thereby make decent earnings.

Entrepreneurship and start-up policies play a vital role in the economic and social development of a nation. In fast-developing economies like the Sultanate of Oman, these policies are critical and very important for innovators, entrepreneurs and start-ups in overcoming barriers.

The National Innovation Strategy in alignment with Oman Vision 2040 focuses on research that will lead to the development of a knowledge-based society and capable national cadres, which focuses on transferring knowledge into economic revenue.

One of the most significant components of the National Strategy is the support of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. Research and innovation, according to him, should be at the top of the national priorities.

Vision 2040 is a roadmap that will help Oman gain a place within the global competitive landscape through diversified and sustainable economic measures.

Represented by the Ministry of Education, Oman has witnessed, over the past years, steady growth through positive transformations that are taking place in line with the rapid



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyvp

The writer is a freelance journalist and author who has worked in India and Gulf countries

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND START-UP POLICIES PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF A NATION

global developments in various fields.

Several steps include a training system for professional development, diversification of its sources and linking it to the labour market, the establishment of solid bases for scientific research, innovation and entrepreneurship in the curricula, and supporting the establishment of innovative start-ups through various programmes.

A number of start-ups have arrived in the Omani industrial scene in the recent past. Many youngsters, both citizens and expatriates, have started recognising the power of start-up companies. Knowledge Oman is a very influential tech start-up, which has already been termed as an ‘outstanding new venture’ by World Human Resource Development Congress.

The Omani government is keen to learn from the experience of other nations in encouraging a strong start-up sector. The leadership believes that a vibrant start-up community is central to the country’s ambitious plans for growth and sustainable development goals.

A healthy start-up sector would not only bring greater economic diversification, it could also inject new levels of innovation and disruption into its established industries and sectors attracting high levels of investment, such as hydrogen and other green energy sources. Entrepreneurial start-ups create digitally enabled solutions that could benefit the entire economy.

With regard to achieving sustainable development goals, especially the fourth goal related to education, a United Nations report has already ranked Oman in first place among the Gulf Cooperation Council countries in achieving the goals of sustainable development of the United Nations for the year 2022.

The report also indicated that Oman is on the right track in achieving goals related to many aspects, including equality in education, which reflects the pivotal importance of the sustainable development file within the national agenda.

CHERRY BLOSSOM SEASON



People take photos as they come out to Ueno Park to see the early cherry blossoms in Tokyo on Tuesday. Japan announced the official start of Tokyo’s cherry blossom season on Tuesday, 10 days earlier than usual and tied with a record early start seen only twice before. – AFP

The shakeup the World Bank needs

Major changes are afoot at the World Bank, but few people seem to be paying attention.

Beyond devising a new, greener mission, the Bank is undergoing a leadership transition, with important implications for its relationship with the Global South and the institution’s long-term relevance.

By the time David Malpass, the World Bank’s president, announced his resignation last month, tensions over the Bank’s stance on climate change had been building for months. Chosen for the job by former president Donald Trump’s administration, Malpass faced considerable pressure when Joe Biden took over, with the US Treasury expressing dissatisfaction with the Bank’s failure to show genuine climate leadership.

Criticism of Malpass escalated in September, after he refused to acknowledge the role of human greenhouse-gas emissions in driving climate change. While he subsequently did so, his backpedaling did nothing to diminish accusations that, under his leadership, the World Bank was not doing nearly enough to align its lending with global emissions-reduction goals.

A month later, a group of ten major economies – the G7, plus Australia, the Netherlands and Switzerland – submitted a proposal for a “fundamental reform” of the Bank that would lead to greater progress on this



Ana Palacio

The writer is a former minister of foreign affairs of Spain and former senior vice-president and general counsel of the World Bank Group, is a visiting lecturer at Georgetown University

IF AJAY BANGA IS CONFIRMED AS WORLD BANK PRESIDENT – AS IS LIKELY – HE WILL HAVE TO FIND WAYS TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF A GLOBAL SOUTH THAT IS EAGER FOR CHANGE

front. The Bank’s climate action plan remains, according to many Western countries, too short on ambition.

Malpass’s resignation was thus probably a relief – not least to the United States. Almost immediately, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen reiterated America’s commitment to “evolve the World Bank” into an engine of the green transition. Soon after, Biden nominated Ajay Banga – the Indian-born former Mastercard executive who oversaw the firm’s emergence as a global payment platform – to succeed Malpass.

Banga was not necessarily an obvious choice. The World Bank’s Board of Executive Directors “strongly encouraged” the nomination of women candidates, of which there were several solid options with extensive development experience, including Gayle Smith, a former USAID administrator, and the agency’s current head, Samantha Power. In the world of multilateral development institutions, Banga is an outsider.

But Banga’s selection may prove to be a shrewd move by Biden. Yes, his confirmation would uphold the longstanding tradition of the US – the World Bank’s biggest shareholder and the largest donor to its concessional arm, the International

Development Association – handpicking the Bank’s head. This custom, together with the tacit understanding that a European should lead the International Monetary Fund, has rightfully generated discontent in the Global South, with countries there calling for more representative multilateral governance. Banga does represent a nod to India and the Global South more broadly. The question is whether this will translate into more effective leadership on development, including the climate trends that threaten it.

The World Bank was originally conceived as a tool for reconstruction. Development later became the Bank’s primary focus, thanks not least to its former president and key architect, Robert McNamara, who

sought to promote the Western model of economic development. Despite being a signatory to the Bretton Woods Agreement, the Soviet Union never joined the World Bank, not least because it viewed the Bank as a platform for promoting the West’s free-market philosophy.

What would it take to effectively support prosperity in the emerging world today? For starters, contentious debates about the possible expansion of the World Bank’s agenda – including how climate action fits into it – will need to be settled. At the same time, the Bank will have to overcome internal disagreements on debt relief and restructuring for distressed countries. (As it stands, discussions are effectively paralysed by Chinese demands

that the Bank accept loan write-downs.)

While such discussions unfold – or stall – the crises fueling them continue to escalate. The World Bank must mobilise adequate resources to help countries confront a perfect storm of climate, energy, food and debt crises. At a time of rising protectionism and global economic fragmentation, this will be especially difficult. Only a leader with both technical and political savvy can hope to succeed.

Ambition and scale will be crucial. A compelling case has been made for a far larger World Bank. But even barring such an institutional transformation, a dramatic increase in lending to clients across the income distribution is badly needed. Though the Bank’s commitments have nearly doubled since 2019 – reaching \$115 billion – lending has been lagging behind global economic growth since 2017. Reforming lending policy is particularly important for the Bank to regain influence in middle-income countries, which have long looked elsewhere to finance their development needs.

But more funding is just the beginning. The World Bank must also do a much better job of listening to developing countries.

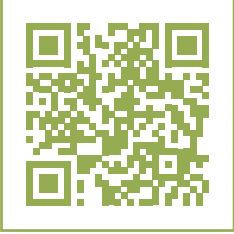
@Project Syndicate, 2022



Ajay Banga was not necessarily an obvious choice.

sport

Follow us on
omanobserver.om/sports
sport@omanobserver.om



REAL LOOK TO CONTINUE ADVANTAGE

MADRID: Real Madrid will go on the attack against Liverpool this week instead of trying to protect their Champions League last 16 first leg advantage, coach Carlo Ancelotti said on Tuesday.

Holders Madrid thrashed Liverpool 5-2 at Anfield in February, with Karim Benzema and Vinicius Junior scoring twice, along with an Eder Militao header, after the hosts had moved two goals ahead.

Despite their three-goal cushion, Ancelotti said his team had to focus on winning against the visitors on Wednesday at the Santiago Bernabeu to reach the quarterfinals.

“It’s quite simple, we don’t have to make calculations, instead try to play the best that we can, try to play a game like we did in the first leg,” Ancelotti told reporters.

“Our ideal is not in making calculations, we have to play at maximum intensity, with maximum hope, trying to win the game.”

The Italian coach believes the clash will be an open game, as Liverpool need to mount a huge comeback, while his team will not sit back and defend.

“We’ve looked at what we did in the first leg, we did a lot of things well, above all in attack,” Ancelotti said.

“We’ll not play a game thinking about our advantage, we will play our football, attacking football.

“Tomorrow will be an open game, Liverpool will try and change the dynamic of the tie, so we have to do two things well — defending and attacking.”

Madrid striker Benzema missed the win over Espanyol on

“It’s quite simple, we don’t have to make calculations, instead try to play the best that we can, try to play a game like we did in the first leg. Our ideal is not in making calculations, we have to play at maximum intensity, with maximum hope, trying to win the game

CARLO ANCELOTTI
Real Madrid Coach

Saturday in La Liga with an ankle problem but is fit again.

“Yes, tomorrow he’s at 100 per cent, he trained on Sunday, he’s done good sessions, he’s at his best, motivated — for Karim and for the club it’s a very important competition,” said Ancelotti.

Madrid defender Antonio Rudiger said the team had to defend better than at Anfield, when Liverpool struck two early goals through Darwin Nunez and Mohamed Salah.

“Not sleeping in the first 15 mins, I think this is very important, as well as finding the right balance,” Rudiger told reporters.

“This is very important for us, not only to come and defend and say ‘OK, we have a three-goal lead’ we also have to please our fans and gain confidence for ourselves.” — AFP

ANCELOTTI
FOCUSES
ON BEATING
LIVERPOOL

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
2022-2023

Last 16 - 2nd leg
Wednesday
March 15, 2000 GMT
Santiago Bernabeu Stadium, Madrid
(1st leg 5-2)

VINICIUS JR
FORWARD

Mohamed SALAH
FORWARD

REAL MADRID				C1				LIVERPOOL			
CARLO ANCELOTTI (ITA) Coach				2022 - 2023				JURGEN KLOPP (GER) Coach			
				5	WIN	5					
				1	DRAW	0					
				1	LOSS	2					
SHOTS				on target				SHOTS			
123				48				51			
GOALS				conceded				GOALS			
20				8				11			
				passing accuracy (%)							
				91.2				85.7			
				conceded							
				11				19			

LAST 5 SEASONS

(2017-2018, Winner) (2021-2022) Best performance (2018-2019) Winner

Source: UEFA

AFP

Bangladesh whitewash T20 world champions England 3-0

DHAKA: Liton Das smashed a Twenty20 career-best 73 as Bangladesh stunned world champions England to sweep the series 3-0 on Tuesday in a massive upset in front of an ecstatic home crowd.

In a major humiliation for England’s normally clinical white ball unit ahead of the 50-over World Cup in India later this year, Bangladesh won the third and final T20 in Dhaka by 16 runs.

Bangladesh had taken the first game by six wickets and the second by four wickets to give the home side their first series victory over defending T20 and ODI World Cup champions England in any format.

“It’s really disappointing obviously to lose but congratulations to Bangladesh. They outplayed us and they deserve their victory,” said England captain Jos Buttler.

Set 159 to win after winning the toss and opting to bowl, England

managed only 142 for the loss of six wickets despite a strong start as Taskin Ahmed took 2-26.

Debutant Tanvir Islam dismissed Phil Salt for a duck in the very first over.

But Dawid Malan, who survived on review after being given out lbw for six, and Buttler looked to be cruising, putting England on track with a second-wicket stand of 95.

Mustafizur Rahman added the first twist in the contest by removing Malan for 53, which brought him his 100th T20I wicket.

DIRECT HIT

Buttler was soon run out for 40 with a direct hit from Mehidy Hasan that brought Bangladesh firmly back into the contest and got the crowd going. Buttler admitted that his dismissal “potentially cost (us) the game.”

“(I was) really disappointed in myself for not diving and not



making my ground. You know you should be fully committed to making that run,” Buttler said after the match.

Taskin claimed the wickets of Moeen Ali (nine) and Ben Duckett (11) before Shakib Al Hasan got rid of Sam Curran (four) to complete

the rout.

Put into bat, opener Liton had given Bangladesh a positive start, putting on 55 runs with Rony Talukdar in the opening stand.

England’s first breakthrough came when Adil Rashid dismissed Rony for 24 but Najmul Hossain and

Liton added 84 runs for the second wicket to keep up momentum.

England missed a chance to dismiss Liton soon after the right-hander completed his ninth T20I half-century when Duckett dropped him on 51 at deep mid-wicket off Jofra Archer.

Chris Jordan brought an end to Liton’s 57-ball innings, forcing him to give a catch to Salt at deep mid-wicket.

England did well to contain the Bangladeshi batsmen after Liton’s dismissal with only one boundary struck in the death overs. But Najmul, who survived on 40 after being given lbw off Jordan, ensured Bangladesh still had a decent score with his third 40-plus innings in the series.

Bangladesh skipper Shakib said his batsmen had performed well on a tricky wicket. “We were really good in this T20 series, I thought we fielded exceptionally throughout these three matches. I think all the bowlers bowled well, they have been always good.”

“I thought we batted really well on a tricky wicket,” he said. “We knew we had to bowl well and... stick to our plans,” the Bangladesh skipper added. — AFP

ZAHIA, SABA AND MILLION CLAIM HONOURS



AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MARCH 14

His Majesty the Sultan's Cup for Camel Racing 2023 continued with an exciting second day of competitions at the

Al Fulaij Racecourse in the Wilayat of Barka on Tuesday.

The competitions are part of the annual festival of private camel racing, concluding its 20th season with the HM's Cup for Camel Racing 2023. Thirteen rounds were allocated for the 'Lagaya' category for three-year-old camels (5 km), with six cars, two icons, and a cash prize for the top ten.

The second day of competitions saw fierce competition among the owners and their camels, with each round bringing new winners to the podium.

The opening round was won by 'Zahia', owned by Mubarak

bin Hamad al Jedili, followed by 'Moawad' owned by Sulayem bin Ali al Hashemi in the second round. The third round saw 'Aryam' owned by Abdullah bin Tuwarish al Wahibi claim victory.

'Saba' owned by Mohammad bin Taib al Zari won first place in the fourth round, while the fifth round was snatched by 'Watan' owned by Fael bin Hamad al Owaisi. In the sixth round, 'Million', owned by Salim bin Mohammed al Saadi came first.

In the seventh round, 'Jamara' owned by Humaid bin Sultan al Dari, came first. 'Wadoah' owned by Nasser bin Alabd al Wahibi snatched the eighth round honours. 'Nabh' owned by Ali bin Rashid al Omari claimed the ninth round and the 10th round was taken by 'Ehtefal' owned by Saeed bin Mubarak al Omari.

'Alhather', owned by Salim bin

HM CUP DAY 2 RESULTS

Round	Camel name	Owner	Time	Prize
1	Zahia	Mubarak bin Hamad al Jedili	7:52:75	Car & icons
2	Moawad	Sulayem bin Ali al Hashemi	7:47:37	Car & icons
3	Aryam	Abdullah bin Tuwarish al Wahibi	7:52:45	Car
4	Saba	Mohammed bin Talib al Zari	7:55:18	Car
5	Watan	Fael bin Hamad al Owaisi	7:53:43	Car
6	Million	Salem bin Mohammed al Saadi	7:49:03	Car
7	Jamara	Humaid bin Sultan al Dari	8:04:42	Cash
8	Wadoah	Nasser bin Alabd al Wahibi	8:06:01	Cash
9	Nabh	Ali bin Rashid al Omari	7:57:21	Cash
10	Ehtefal	Saeed bin Mubarak al Omari	8:07:12	Cash
11	Alhather	Salem bin Hamad al Wahibi	8:01:35	Cash
12	AlObour	Ghoshn bin Saeed al Muslimi	8:09:22	Cash
13	Slhoud	Saeed bin Mohammed al Harthy	8:08:66	Cash

Hamad al Wahibi, came first in the 11th round. In the 12th round 'Al Obour', owned by Ghoshn bin Saeed al Muslimi, took first place. The last round of the day was claimed by 'Slhoud' owned by Saeed bin Mohammed al Harthy.

The competition will continue on its third day, with 15 rounds divided into three categories. 'Al Ythaa' for four-year-old camels for 5 km with three cars, two

icons, and a cash prize for the top ten. In addition, three rounds are allocated for 'Al Ythaa' five years old for 6 km with a car and two icons as rewards. Four rounds will be held in the 'Al Hool' category (6 years and above for 8 km) with a car and three icons as rewards. Also, there will be one round for 'Ardah', a category for human riders for 2 km, with a prize of a car.

LOCAL FLAVOUR

335 karatekas to take part in Karate Pioneers Championship



MUSCAT: The Karate Pioneers Academy has completed the preparations for holding the sixth edition of the Open Karate Pioneers Championship under the umbrella of the Omani Karate Committee, which is hosted by the sub-hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, Muscat Governorate, on March 17 and 18. As many as 335 male and female karatekas representing 27 clubs from 9 countries: the Sultanate of Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Yemen, Iraq, Sudan, Iran,

and the United Kingdom will take part in the competition on Friday and Saturday. The tournament activities are divided into kata (mock fighting) and kumite (free fighting) competitions for males and females, according to the specific weights and age groups by the organising committee. The International Karate Federation regulations will be applied, as the championship competitions will be managed by a group of international and national referees.

OOC takes part in ISSF General Assembly



MUSCAT: Eng Khalfan bin Saleh al Naabi, member of the Board of Directors of the Oman Olympic Committee, accompanied by Mohammed bin Hamad al Rahbi, Acting Executive Director, participated in the Extraordinary General Assembly meeting of the Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation (ISSF), which was hosted by the Saudi Olympic and Paralympic Committee in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on Monday.

The meeting was presided over by Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki al Faisal, ISSF President.

During the meeting, the report of the fifth Islamic Solidarity Sports Games that was held in Turkiye in August 2022 was reviewed, in addition to approving the appointment of Nasser al Majali as Secretary-General of the federation. The meeting approved the mechanism for selecting the host city for the Sixth Sports Games of Islamic Solidarity 2025 in addition to designating the city of Riyadh to host the 12th general assembly meeting of the federation, which will be held in August.

Vanderlande to face Israr Ghala in Senior Knockout final

MUSCAT: The final of the Oman Cricket T20 Knockout Tournament – Senior and Junior powered by Khimji Ramdas LLC is to be held on March 17 at the Municipality Cricket Ground in Al Amerat. The senior knockout was contested between OC League teams from B, C and D divisions while Junior Knockout was contested between OC League teams of E, F and G divisions.

In the Senior KO first semifinal, Vanderlande beat Bank Muscat by 25 runs. Batting first, Vanderlande scored 195-3 in 20 overs courtesy of Vinayagam Barathwaj's 87 off 48 balls.

In reply, Bank Muscat could only reach to 170 with Haja Hussain claiming 4 wickets and Aasim Mohammed bagging 3 wickets and confirming Vanderlande's berth in the final.

In the Senior KO second semifinal between PDO and Israr Ghala, PDO were all out for 129 in 19.4 overs courtesy of 3 wickets each from Mobeen Mohammed and Mohammed Islam. In reply, Israr Ghala chased down the target in 15.4 overs confirming their berth in the final.

MAZOOON DAIRY TO MEET EARN TRUST CT

In the Junior KO first semifinal, Mazoon Dairy beat KCA Deutag by 55 runs. Batting first, Mazoon Dairy scored 193-4 in 20 overs courtesy of Yusuf



Earn Trust CT's Imran Ali and Maanas Kapoor.

Patanwala's 66 off 42 balls. In reply, KCA Deutag were all out for 138 in 18.4 overs with Hemantha Kumar and Yusuf Patanwala claiming 3 wickets each to lead Mazoon Dairy into the final.

In the Junior KO second semifinal, Earn Trust CT beat Skill Vision and NTS CT by 9 runs. Batting first, Earn Trust CT scored 201-6 in 20 overs with Imran Ali's hitting 77 off 44 balls.

In reply, Skill Vision and NTS CT fought until the last over falling short by 9 runs scoring 192-5. Santosh Varikkath scored 94 from 60 balls.

FINAL FIXTURES

Senior KO Final – Vanderlande vs Israr Ghala
Junior KO Final – Mazoon Dairy vs Earn Trust CT
Match Start: 8:30am

Speedo Mixers emerge champions in women's volleyball tournament

MUSCAT: Speedo Mixers beat Mixers team to win the title in the second edition of Joyalukkas Exchange Women's Volleyball Tournament in Muscat recently.

Joyalukkas Exchange & Instant Cash conducted the women's volleyball tournament season 2 in connection with International Women's Month celebration on March 10 at the Bausher Club.

As many as 20 teams participated with players from 10 different nationalities including Omani citizens in one of the biggest women's tournaments in Oman for women.

In the semifinals, The Mixers beat Slasher and Speedo Mixers beat Muscat Blazers. In the thrilling final, Speedo Mixers took the first two sets and sealed the season 2 championship.

Sariyah al Hadiyah, Member of State Council, was the chief guest of the concluding ceremony and delivered prizes to the winners.

Speedo Mixers collected the winners medals and trophy, while The Mixers were presented the runners-up trophy and medals and Muscat Blazers claimed the second-runners prize.

The event was graced by Rahel Mwanake, Labour Administrative



Attache, Embassy of Kenya, Nihass Noorudheen, Country Manger and Mumtaz al Balushi, Director of Administration in OPAZ.

Among individual awards, Baslin won the most valuable player award, Mara was the best setter, Lara became the best spiker, Joice was selected as the best blocker and Maryam won the best server award of the tournament.

Earlier in the morning, Nixon Baby, General Manager Joyalukkas Exchange, welcomed the chief guest and other dignitaries during the opening ceremony.

Nixon highlighted the organising of such events that focus on the importance of women empowerment. "Joyalukkas Exchange is committed to such social awareness to the public through various activities in our branches," he said.

The inaugural function was graced by Mary Antony Jos, Director Joyalukkas Group and Anjali Menon, Chief Business Officer. The inspirational speech by Anjali Menon related to the empowerment of women was one of the highlights.

Mary Antony said: "This

type of sports events will be continued to be organised by Joyalukkas Exchange to empower women in our society and for their socioeconomic development. This was also one of the biggest tournaments conducted by an exchange house in the Sultanate."

He added that the women's month will be celebrated in all Joyalukkas Exchange Divisions including UAE and Kuwait.

The Joyalukkas management said the annual tournament will continue with its third edition in 2024.

ALCARAZ, SWIATEK MARCH ON

MURRAY FALLS TO
COMPATRIOT DRAPER

Spain's Carlos Alcaraz acknowledges the crowd after defeating Netherlands' Tallon Griekspoor during their ATP Indian Wells Masters third round match in Indian Wells, California. — AFP

Iga Swiatek (POL) reacts at match point defeating Bianca Andreescu (CAN) in the third round at the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden. — USA Today Sports

INDIAN WELLS, UNITED STATES:

Carlos Alcaraz fended off tenacious Tallon Griekspoor 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 on Monday to reach the fourth round at Indian Wells as he and women's top seed Iga Swiatek passed tough tests in the California desert.

Alcaraz, 19, had a testing time breaking through against his determined Dutch foe, who had won their only prior hard court meeting. He didn't face a break point in the first set, nor could he convert either of his two. A strong start in the tie-breaker proved the difference, Alcaraz locking up the set with a forehand winner on his second set point.

He rolled from there, breaking Griekspoor in the second game on the way to a 3-0 lead in the second set.

"It has been a really tough match," Alcaraz said of his 100th ATP Tour match win. "Tallon is playing great, I had to be really focused. Of course playing with a lot of wind like today is also tough.

"I had chances at the beginning of the first set, I didn't take it.

"The second set, I took my chances that I had in the beginning and thanks to that I was able to play more relaxed."

Alcaraz will face Britain's Jack Draper for a place in the quarter-finals after Draper overcame former world number one Andy Murray 7-6 (8/6), 6-2.

Women's world number one Swiatek, seeking to become the first woman since Martina Navratilova in 1990 and '91 to win back-to-back titles in the combined WTA and ATP Masters 1000 event, elevated her game when she had to for a 6-3, 7-6 (7/1) victory over Canadian Bianca Andreescu.

Andreescu, whose 2019 Indian Wells title proved the springboard to a breakout season that included a US

INDIAN WELLS ATP
AND WTA RESULTS

MEN (THIRD ROUND)

Carlos Alcaraz (ESP x1) bt Tallon Griekspoor (NED x31) 7-6 (7/4), 6-3; Jack Draper (GBR) bt Andy Murray (SCO) 7-6 (8/6), 6-2; Tommy Paul (USA x17) bt Hubert Hurkacz (POL x9) 4-6, 6-2, 6-4; Felix Auger-Aliassime (CAN x8) bt Francisco Cerundolo (ARG x27) 7-5, 6-4; Taylor Fritz (USA x4) bt Sebastian Baez (ARG x30) 6-1, 6-2; Marton Fucsovics (HUN) bt Alex Molcan (SVK) 6-4, 6-2; Jannik Sinner (ITA x11) bt Adrian Mannarino (FRA) 7-6 (9/7), 6-4; Stan Wawrinka (SUI) bt Holger Rune (DEN x7) 6-2, 6-7 (5/7), 7-5

WOMEN (THIRD ROUND)

Iga Swiatek (POL x1) bt Bianca Andreescu (CAN x32) 6-3, 7-6 (7/1); Emma Raducanu (GBR) bt Beatriz Haddad Maia (BRA x13) 6-1, 2-6, 6-4; Sorana Cirstea (ROM) bt Bernarda Pera (USA) 6-3, 6-1; Caroline Garcia (FRA x5) bt Leylah Fernandez (CAN x30) 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 6-1; Marketa Vondrousova (CZE) bt Ons Jabeur (TUN x4) 7-6 (7/5), 6-4; Karolina Muchova (CZE) bt Martina Trevisan (ITA x23) 6-4, 3-6, 6-4; Elena Rybakina (KAZ x10) bt Paula Badosa (ESP x21) 6-3, 7-5; Varvara Gracheva (RUS) bt Daria Kasatkina (RUS x8) 6-4, 6-4

Open crown, pushed Swiatek through punishing baseline rallies, trading six breaks of serve with the reigning French and US Open champion in the second set only to be overpowered in the tie-breaker.

"Bianca can change the rhythm pretty well on this surface, it can get tough," Swiatek said, but added she was "glad that I had a chance to play under pressure a little bit more and see how I'm going to cope with that."

Swiatek next faces another former US Open champion in Britain's Emma Raducanu, who earned an impressive

6-1, 2-6, 6-4 victory over big-hitting Brazilian Beatriz Haddad Maia.

Raducanu, who has battled nagging wrist trouble and tonsillitis in recent weeks, notched her best win by ranking since she captured the US Open two years ago.

Reigning Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan punched her ticket to the fourth round with a 6-3, 7-5 victory over former champion Paula Badosa of Spain.

Rybakina, ranked 10th in the world after a runner-up finish to Aryna Sabalenka at the Australian Open in January, had lost her last three matches against Badosa — her doubles partner this week.

Fourth-seeded Tunisian Ons Jabeur, playing her first tournament since missing Doha and Dubai in the wake of knee surgery, was beaten 7-6 (7/5), 6-4 by Czech Marketa Vondrousova — the same woman who upset Jabeur in the second round of the Australian Open.

In another rematch of an Australian Open second-round clash, fifth-seeded Caroline Garcia beat Canadian Leylah Fernandez 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 6-1.

FRITZ EASES THROUGH

In other men's action, defending champion Taylor Fritz cruised past Argentina's Sebastian Baez 6-1, 6-2.

Three-time Grand Slam champion Stan Wawrinka, 37, beat 19-year-old seventh seed Holger Rune 6-2, 6-7 (5/7), 7-5.

A former world number three now ranked 100th, Wawrinka avenged a first-round defeat to the Dane at the Paris Masters in November, where Rune saved three match points to launch his run to a first Masters title.

Murray, 35 and trying to grind his way back after hip replacement surgery, couldn't pull off a similar feat against his 21-year-old compatriot Draper. — AFP



PDO unveils new corporate strategy for low-carbon future



HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, MARCH 14

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) unveiled its new corporate strategy yesterday at the Oman Sustainability Week in Muscat. According to Managing Director Steve Phimister, the new strategy is a direct response to Oman's commitment to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

"If energy systems and country economies have to shift in line with global and regional changes then companies are the vehicle together with governments to do that. So we will all move our energy systems to sustainable low carbon energy systems within Oman," he stated, adding, "Our purpose is to build a sustainable and low carbon future to maximise value to Oman."

The new strategy will focus on reducing the company's carbon emissions while simultaneously increasing production.

"Oil & Gas has a role in the global energy system for decades to come, but hydrocarbon development must be sustainable. We have a responsibility to sustain the current energy system whilst we build the new [low carbon] energy system. PDO has bold plans to safely increase oil & gas production whilst at the same time halving its emissions" shared Phimister.

To achieve this the company's updated strategy will focus on cost and carbon competitiveness. Phimister stressed the importance of cost competitiveness.

"If oil and gas demand is going to come down in the world... you must be competitive economically or else customers are going to buy the cheapest barrel elsewhere."

The company intends to increase its daily production of oil from 660,000 barrels per day to over 700,000 barrels per day.

"Oman and PDO need to ensure that they are cost competitive. ... and we will continue to ensure that we are cost competitive," he added.

In regards to carbon competitiveness, Phimister shared the company's plans of halving its carbon emissions by 2030, and achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

The company plans to do so by resorting to electrifying its operational systems and using renewables, reducing flaring, utilising carbon capture and storage technologies.

Last year, Petroleum Development Oman signed a memorandum of understanding with Shell Development Oman to explore Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) opportunities in Oman.

Oman signs green hydrogen project deals worth \$20bn

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, MARCH 14

Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom), a subsidiary of Energy Development Oman (EDO), signed multiple binding green hydrogen project agreements worth \$20 billion yesterday in Muscat.

Hydrom Chairman Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, who is also Minister of Energy and Minerals, stated, "We are delighted to sign these binding commercial term sheets with the first green hydrogen projects developers in our journey towards decarbonisation. Today we are marking the first real signatures of term sheets which actually puts a lot of discussions we have had over the last year and half in real action."

Al Aufi said the Sultanate of Oman has taken several bold steps following His Majesty's endorsement of the Net-Zero target by 2050. "While these agreements form the first testimony of our success towards decarbonisation, we look forward to signing more agreements once we receive the results of the first public auction round that is currently being conducted by Hydrom," he stated.

The green hydrogen agreements signed today include 6 projects located in the proximity of Duqm or Salalah ports: BP Alternative Energy Investments



THE GREEN HYDROGEN AGREEMENTS SIGNED INCLUDE 6 PROJECTS LOCATED IN THE PROXIMITY OF DUQM OR SALALAH PORTS: BP ALTERNATIVE ENERGY INVESTMENTS LIMITED (FOR A PROJECT IN DUQM AND ANOTHER IN DHOFAR), GREEN ENERGY OMAN (GEO), GREEN HYDROGEN AND CHEMICALS SPC (OWNED BY ACME), HYPOT DUQM CONSORTIUM AND SALALAH2 CONSORTIUM.

Limited (for a project in Duqm and another in Dhofar), Green Energy Oman (GEO), Green Hydrogen and Chemicals SPC (owned by ACME), Hypot Duqm consortium and Salalah2 consortium.

The projects, which have been initially signed prior to the

establishment of a clean hydrogen regulatory framework, have been dubbed as "Legacy Initiatives".

Director General of Renewable Energy and Clean Hydrogen at the Ministry, Eng Abdulaziz al Shidhani commented: "Today's milestone is another step to deliver on Oman's green hydrogen strategy announced on 23rd October last year. We witnessed today commitments made by key developers coming from Belgium, Japan, UK, Netherlands, India, UAE, Kuwait, Singapore, Germany, and Oman."

Dr Firas al Abduwani, Acting Managing Director of Hydrom, shared: "The Legacy Initiatives have followed Hydrom's process since its inception and agreed to the main commercial principles set out in the public auction which enables fair and transparent

allocation of lands.

We are looking forward to closing the final forms of agreements soon with our partners. We will also begin with our bid evaluation process on the public auction to deliver our promise to the Government."

Commenting on the signing ceremony, Eng Mazin al Lamki, Energy Development Oman CEO stated: "Oman is delighted to see the Legacy Initiatives sign the agreements, which are the result of long and hard work from both sides, and marks an important milestone for Oman as a leading green hydrogen hub"

Hydrom Oman launched its first public auction for lands in November 2022 and expects to receive bids by March 15, followed by announcement of the winners towards the end of April 2023.

Sembcorp consortium wins Manah Solar II project



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 14

Leading Singapore-headquartered energy and urban solutions company, Sembcorp Industries, has announced that it has, through an 80 per cent-owned joint venture to be set up by its wholly-owned subsidiary Sembcorp Utilities with Jinko Power Technology, received an award by Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWP) to build, own and operate the Manah Solar II Independent Power Project (IPP) in Manah,

Sultanate of Oman.

The 500MW solar plant is expected to be operational by 2025 and will be backed by a 20-year power purchase agreement with OPWP.

EXISTING CAPABILITIES

This project will complement Sembcorp's existing capabilities and track record in the region.

The Salalah Independent Water and Power Plant, one of the most energy-efficient power and water plants in Dhofar Governorate in Oman, is 40 per cent owned by Sembcorp.

OIA announces Oman Cement stake sale to strategic investor

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MARCH 14

The Oman Investment Authority (OIA) has begun the process of selling its majority stake in Oman Cement Company to Hong-Kong based strategic investor Huaxin Cement Company Limited.

"The exit from the Oman Cement Company comes within the framework of the authority's plan to achieve several goals, one of which is to attract foreign investments to the Sultanate of Oman," said Ibrahim bin Saeed al Eisri, Director of the Private Equity Department at the Omani Investment Authority, in a



statement to ONA.

Oman Cement added in a filing that the transaction is subject to certain conditions, including Oman and People's Republic of China regulatory approvals and filings. The transaction is scheduled to close on June 1, 2023.

Publicly listed Oman Cement noted that the upfront fee payable at the time of execution was \$193.1 million, representing 59.58 per cent of the company's share value on December 31, 2022, according to the stock purchase and sale agreement.

In addition to being listed on the Shanghai and Hong Kong Stock Exchanges, Huaxin Cement Co, Ltd is among the top 10 cement producers in the globe.

Its use of contemporary technologies will help Oman Cement expand its operations, improve the efficiency of its production lines, raise its competitiveness locally and

regionally, and improve the overall perception of the Omani industrial sector.

The move by the Oman Investment Authority (OIA), the Sultanate of Oman's integrated sovereign wealth fund, is in line with its strategy to increase investments across its large portfolio in 2023 while exiting some other investments as part of an investment alignment strategy.

The plan calls for the exit of eight investments in 2023, with three in the energy sector, three in aviation, industry, and tourism, and two in communications and information technology, with returns exceeding RO 500 million.

Ominvest unveils real estate project ‘La Vie’ at Muscat Hills

MUSCAT: Oman Real Estate Investment and Services LLC (ORIS), the real estate arm of Oman International Development and Investment Company (Ominvest), has unveiled details of its latest project in Madinat Al Erfan, named ‘La Vie’, which translates to ‘The Life’ in French. The project was announced during Ominvest’s 40th anniversary celebrations.

Touching on the project’s objective, Abdulaziz al Balushi, Group CEO at Ominvest, said, “Through this project, Ominvest aims to support the Sultanate of Oman’s efforts in enhancing the role of tourism and sports sector in the diversification of the country’s economy.

La Vie will be a valuable addition to the sector’s infrastructure, attracting top brands in tourism and sports from around the world to operate its various facilities. It will also provide several job opportunities for Omani nationals,



which aligns with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

As an enabling body, Ominvest is committed to realising this vision in a way that meets everyone’s aspirations.” Nasser al Shibli, Chief Real Estate Officer at Ominvest, explained that “following the successful

completion of our iconic ‘Ominvest Business Centre’, we embarked on a search for a new project that could offer something unique and add value to the city of Muscat. This was why we selected Muscat Hills. It was the ideal location to develop a distinctive residential, sports, and tourism

project that could embody the city centre concept while serving as a natural hub for entertainment and family activities. This dream has become a reality today, and the project, once completed, will undoubtedly be a wonderful addition to the area’s aesthetic appeal.”

Malabar Gold & Diamonds adds more sparkle to their gold rate protection offers

MUSCAT: With an impressive retail network of over 305 outlets across 10 countries, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally has enhanced their gold rate protection offer by providing customers with a free diamond gift voucher worth RO 10 for 10 per cent advance bookings made on or before April 2. The additional incentive was announced by the brand after the resounding acceptance of their gold rate protection offer which was unveiled on the 1st of March, through which customers can just pay 10 per cent advance for their favourite jewellery and block the gold rate until April 23, 2023, protecting themselves from any increase in gold rate during this period. If gold rate increases at the time of purchase, customers can avail the blocked rate and if it reduces they can still draw mileage of the reduced rate.

This offer will be valid across all Malabar Gold & Diamonds showrooms. Customers can either pay the advance directly at the outlet or online, via Malabar Gold



& Diamonds’ mobile app. The free gift voucher will be available to the customers through the brand’s mobile app and can only be obtained for the first 10 per cent advance booking made by a customer before April 2. The gift voucher can be redeemed at any Malabar Gold & Diamonds showrooms in the country of issue. “In the short period

since we have introduced the gold rate protection offer, our valued customer have seized the opportunity to invest in gold, which is one of the safest assets to invest in, without having to worry about the constant change in prices.

By paying just 10 per cent as advance, customers can ensure that they reap the benefits of the fluctuating prices, regardless of whether it goes up or down. As Malabar Gold & Diamonds steps into its 30th year of providing exemplary jewellery shopping experience, we are providing our customers with an added benefit of free diamond gift vouchers to ensure that they get to enjoy the upcoming festive season to the fullest extent”, commented Shamlal Ahamed, MD-International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

With the upcoming festive season, this exclusive offer from Malabar Gold & Diamonds will help customers shop for their favourite jewellery, without having to worry about the gold price.

Bank Nizwa leads the way in sustainable banking at OSW 2023

MUSCAT: Bank Nizwa, Oman’s leading and most trusted Islamic bank, announced its participation in the upcoming Oman Sustainability Week 2023 as the Islamic Banking Partner. An event that aims to promote sustainable practices and environmental conservation is set to take place at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. Hosted by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, this event will provide a platform for showcasing Oman’s unwavering commitment towards sustainable development and environmental preservation.

Oman Sustainability Week is a platform that encourages dialogue on sustainable development and addresses issues related to climate change, biodiversity, and energy efficiency. The event brings together government representatives, business leaders and experts to discuss sustainability issues and solutions.

Bank Nizwa’s participation in the event as the Islamic banking partner is a reflection of the bank’s commitment to sustainability and



social responsibility.

Commenting on the occasion, Khaled al Kayed, Chief Executive Officer of Bank Nizwa said, “We are honoured to participate in Oman Sustainability Week as the Islamic Banking Partner. At Bank Nizwa, we are committed to sustainability and have taken various initiatives to promote green finance and sustainability awareness.

Our participation in Oman Sustainability Week aligns with our vision of promoting sustainable development and contributing to Oman’s green

economy.

As a responsible financial institution, we believe it is our duty to support and encourage sustainable practices in the communities we serve.

Through our participation in Oman Sustainability Week, we aim to showcase our commitment to sustainability and contribute to the collective effort towards achieving sustainable development goals. We look forward to collaborating with other stakeholders in the industry to drive positive change and create a better future for Oman.”

Own a Toyota and avail biggest excitement benefits

MUSCAT: Toyota’s much awaited Biggest Excitement campaign in back! This season own a Toyota and get exclusive benefits. The benefits include service from 2 years/20,000 kms up to 5 years / 50,000 kms (whichever is earlier) and insurance 1 year or cash gift in lieu of insurance RO 125 to RO 300 and 8 Toyota Raize SUV Raffles.

The campaign is valid until May 10, 2023. (Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms & Conditions apply. Customers can visit any Saud Bahwan Automotive showroom for exact details.)

Toyota vehicles are one of the most preferred high quality

and dependable vehicles that have continued to make a lasting impression on customers in Oman.

Toyota’s legendary Land Cruiser still remains unbeatable in many aspects and continues to be a leader in terms of its inspiring strength, durability and reliability. Powering the Land Cruiser is a choice of two powertrain options.

The Toyota Hilux is one of the most dependable and powerful pick-ups in its category. In Oman, customers have a choice of two versions of the Hilux.

The rugged Hilux with J-Deck and the sporty 4.0 Litre V6 Hilux Adventure with the A Deck. The 4.0 Litre V6 Toyota Hilux Adventure is a truly exciting mean machine that’s been developed by



Toyota to get your pulse racing.

The Toyota Camry takes style and performance to high levels with stylish exterior, advanced range of features and technology.

The Camry is available with a choice of three powertrain options. They include a 2.5-litre four-cylinder Dynamic Force engine that produces 204 hp and 243 nm

of torque which is paired with an eight-speed Direct-Shift Multi-mode automatic transmission.

Toyota Corolla continues to be an inspiration for the industry with popular combination of stylish design, advanced features, well-detailed interior and more.

Toyota popular Yaris promises a dynamic driving experience thanks to its four-cylinder engine that is equipped with 16-valve DOCH and dual VVT-I. The vehicle is available with 1.5-liter capacity engine that delivers smooth acceleration and a quick response, producing 105 horsepower and 138 Nm of torque with fuel consumption of 20.5 km/l.

Specifications of vehicle imported from Toyota Motor

Corporation are as per the GSO Conformity Certificate applicable to the model/grade. Parameters such as vehicle weight, dimensions & fuel economy could vary from the GSO Conformity Certificate due to fitment of dealer installed accessories. Pictures and colours shown may differ from actual specifications. For the latest Press Releases, Test Drive requests and more, please visit www.toyotaoman.com, www.youtube.com/toyotaoman, www.facebook.com/toyotaoman, and instagram.com/toyotaomanofficial/. For any further details & to ascertain availability of stocks, please visit your nearest Saud Bahwan Automotive Showroom.



Abraj shares list on MSX following successful IPO

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MARCH 14

Omani drilling services company Abraj Energy Services – a subsidiary of OQ – was formally listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) on Tuesday, enabling the start of trading in the shares of the company – the first local energy firm to be listed on the Omani bourse.

Taking part in the listing ceremony were a number of dignitaries, including Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, President of the Oman Investment Authority (OIA), Mohammed bin Mahfouz al Ardhi, Chairman of the Muscat Stock Exchange, and a number of officials representing



the stakeholders, interested parties and securities traders. Abraj Energy recently

completely a successful public subscription via an Initial Public Offering (IPO) as part of an exit plan announced earlier by parent holding organisation - the Oman Investment Authority.

In remarks at the listing ceremony, Haitham bin Salem al Salmi, CEO of MSX, said the listing of Abraj Energy marked the start of a new chapter in the growth of the stock exchange in light of the maiden addition of an energy company into the exchange's base of publicly traded companies.

Eng Ayad bin Ali al Balushi, Chairman of the Board of Abraj Energy Services Company, expressed his gratitude to all parties that supported the listing of the company, which garnered huge investor interest during the IPO.

He added that the successful public subscription of Abraj Energy Services boded well for the success of other OIA-linked companies and affiliates lined

up for divestment as part of the Authority's exit strategy.

Abraj Energy Services received orders totalling RO 790 million – equivalent to an eight-fold oversubscription.

Following the listing of Abraj shares, the scrip gained 16 per cent in value during trading, local economist Mohammed Ali told the *Observer*.

The stock closed at 291 baisas, which was up 16 per cent over the offer value.

A total of 42 million shares worth RO 12 million were traded on the opening day.

The MSX30 Index closed at 4,920.862 points – its highest performance in more than three years.

Business activity rebounds strongly in Europe



ANDY JAIL
andyjail@aol.com

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

Europe's biggest economies beat expectations as business activity returned to growth, boosting the chances they can stave off recessions.

Gauges of private output in Germany and France both signalled expansion last month after pullbacks in January, while the UK's purchasing managers' index showed the first positive reading in six months – jumping to 53 from 48.5. In the 20-nation eurozone, activity rose at the fastest rate since May last year.

The numbers suggest the economic downturns many analysts had forecast after Russia's war in Ukraine sent energy prices sky-high may not materialise, though the Bundesbank says Germany may yet endure a slight contraction this year.

There are potential knock-on effects for monetary policy. As fears of economic damage recede and firmer growth underpins inflation, the European Central Bank and the Bank of England may be more inclined to push with raising interest rates.

"Growth has been buoyed by rising confidence as recession fears fade and inflation shows signs of peaking," Chris Williamson, an economist at S&P Global, which compiled the PMIs, said. "Manufacturing has also benefitted from a major improvement in supplier performance."

The numbers follow a slight advance in Australia's PMI and an unchanged growth reading in Japan. US figures are expected to show improvements, but still indicate a contraction.

The Euro area's performance was fuelled by services, which saw the strongest growth since June. Manufacturing output also improved as bottlenecks eased further.

In the UK, the sharp uptick in February's PMI was driven by rising customer demand and increasing confidence among business

executives after a subsidence in the market turmoil triggered by then Prime Minister Liz Truss's budget plan.

Williamson said: "The survey's inflation gauges add to the likelihood of the Bank of England tightening policy further, and potentially more aggressively."

That could also be the case in the euro region, where officials are determined to continue raising borrowing costs to what they call "restrictive" levels.

The ECB lifted rates by a half-point last month and all but promised an identical step in March. Governing Council member Olli Rehn said in comments released last month that further hikes beyond that are likely, and that the peak will probably be reached in the summer.

"The combination of accelerating growth and stubbornly elevated price pressures will naturally encourage a bias toward further policy tightening in the months ahead," Williamson said.

Among the EU countries Ireland's economy has grown steadily and the country is in line for ratings upgrades as bonds outperform peers. Irish debt levels are set to fall to just 39.3 per cent of GDP by the end of next year, according to Davy forecasts – far below the eurozone average of 91.4 per cent estimated by the European Commission.

A combination of prudent debt issuance by the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) and windfall taxes due to a post-Covid rebound in economic activity have dramatically improved the metrics.

The NTMA's strategy of long-term debt issuance means that Ireland's funding requirements will be negligible and low compared with peers, according to Davy – Ireland's leading provider of stockbroking, wealth management and financial advisory services.

Ireland has just 9bn euros in debt maturing this year, all of which could be met with cash reserves. All the main ratings agencies, with the exception of S&P, upgraded Ireland's sovereign debt rating last year in recognition of its strong budgetary position and robust growth outlook.

Last November, S&P raised its outlook on Ireland from stable to positive and said that although the economy would start to slow this year, it wouldn't dip into negative territory.

The NTMA raised 3.5bn euros in early January, meeting a substantial portion of the Government's external funding requirements for 2023.

be'ah inks pact to supply waste as fuel to Oman Cement

MUSCAT: Omani Environment Services Holding Company (be'ah) and Oman Cement Company signed on Tuesday a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to use fuel derived from municipal solid waste treatment as an alternative fuel for cement manufacturing.

The MoU was signed by Eng Tariq bin Ali al Amri, CEO of be'ah, and Eng Salim bin Abdullah al Hajri, CEO of Oman Cement Company. The signing of the memorandum is in line with be'ah's strategy to convert municipal solid waste from landfills through sustainable waste management practices.

It is also part of the material and energy recovery process to enhance local value-added initiatives and reduce waste disposal costs. The project also aims to introduce alternative fuel types in the cement manufacturing process, instead of relying on gas, to boost production.



The fuel derived from municipal solid waste consists of different types of municipal waste, such as non-recyclable plastic and paper waste, wood chips and sawdust, and other mixed and combustible processed waste according to the required specifications.

be'ah also signed a research agreement with Sohar University aimed at finding ways to utilise electronic waste and develop a database on the amount of waste generated in the Sultanate of Oman.

This agreement was signed by Kumail bin Ahmed al Lawati, be'ah's Vice-President for Business Development

and Prof Hamza Idris, Sohar University's Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. The research team at Sohar University will be tasked with developing a database for electrical and electronic devices in homes, companies, commercial buildings, and industrial areas.

The team will also determine the amount of similar waste in the Sultanate of Oman and current disposal methods in order to facilitate the establishment of an effective system for managing electrical and electronic equipment waste and support the development of the recycling sector. — ONA

Raysut Cement Group's net loss revised upward to RO 97.6m for 2022

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MARCH 14

Raysut Cement, the largest cement producer in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced a revised net loss incurred by the Group for the financial year 2022 to RO 97.634 million, up from RO 90.924 million in initial unaudited financial results earlier this year.

The revised figures were disclosed following the meeting of the Salalah-based publicly listed company's interim Board of Directors last week.

An interim Board of Directors, constituted by the Capital Market Authority (CMA), is currently overseeing governance issues at Raysut Cement following the discovery of financial anomalies that threatened to destabilise the group.

In a new filing this week, company officials said the Group had incurred a consolidated loss



of RO 97.634 million in 2022 versus a loss of RO 13.585 a year earlier. The parent company racked up a loss of RO 93.761 million in 2022, up from RO 12.924 million in 2021.

It attributed the upward revision of the Group's consolidated net losses – involving a differential of RO 6.710 million – to "adjustments made in the Group and subsidiary companies".

It included an impairment

loss of RO 5.868 million incurred by Duqm Cement Factory LLC against 'Capital Work in Progress' (CWIP), as well as finance charges of RO 0.203 million and impairment loss against advances of RO 0.224 million sustained by the new Duqm outfit.

Also contributing to the differential were provisions towards Expected Credit Loss (ECL), finance charges, among other factors, in the case of 100

per cent owned subsidiaries Pioneer Cement Industries and Sohar Cement Factory. At the Group level, a deconsolidation adjustment of RO 3.35 million was also recognised.

Invoking its powers under the Commercial Companies Law and the Securities Law, the market regulator stepped in last December when Raysut Cement failed to suitably address concerns over "material misrepresentations" uncovered by the Authority in the Group'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.

Sembcorp consortium wins 500MW Manah Solar II project

FROM PAGE 13

Andy Koss, CEO of UK & Middle East, Sembcorp Industries, said, "The Manah Solar II IPP will mark Sembcorp's first renewables project in the Middle East.

To be constructed in the Sultanate of Oman, the project will leverage our strong network and presence for over 10 years in the country built through Salalah Independent Water and Power Plant.

We are delighted to be awarded this project and look forward to working with Jinko Power to support the global energy transition."

This project is expected to be financed through a mix of internal cash resources and external bank borrowings. It is not expected to have a material impact on the earnings per share, net asset value per share and leverage of Sembcorp for the financial year ending December 31, 2023.

WJ Towell Group Company



Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

• Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
• Choose from a wide range of brands & models
• PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
• Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

أوربيت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds



To receive news updates from OMAN OBSERVER,

WhatsApp
 <your name> to
96473232

WEDNESDAY

MARCH 15, 2023 SHAABAN 22, 1444 AH

Observer Classified Section

Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

Ali al Maashari: 99639264
ali.almashari@omandaily.om

Saada al Rashdi
95919344

94501166
24649593
24649595

النماني للشحن
AL NAMANI CARGO
 DOOR TO DOOR AIR AND SEA CARGO WORLD WIDE

DOOR TO DOOR CARGO

INDIA BANGLADESH NEPAL PHILIPPINES UAE INDONESIA EUROPE UK CANADA USA

WHATSAPP **96353654** TOLL FREE NUMBER **80066766**
 Follow us: f i n t www.alnamanicargo.com

Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)

Contact No: 99074072

SIT. WANTED

ACCOUNTANT and audit assistant, Indian male, 27 years, M. Com and competed 3 years of CA articleship, have more than 5 years of experience in this fields in India. Seeking a position in accounts/audit fields. Contact Mobile: 78052900, email: ranjithdevan24@gmail.com

HAVE A PROPERTY FOR RENT?

Advertise with us.

Contact us on: **99639264**

EAGLE FREIGHT EXPRESS
 DOOR TO DOOR COURIER SERVICES
 INDIA | NEPAL | BANGLADESH

25 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE FAST DELIVERY EXCELLENT SERVICES

WORLD WIDE CARGO SERVICE Tel.: 99432926, 78211708, 92319472, 93350126
 Head Office (H.O.) Room No.: 218, 1st Floor, Aircargo Complex, Branch Al-Hail, Email: eaglefreightexpress@gmail.com

AIR & SEA CARGO FREE PICKUP & DELIVERY SERVICE

AUDIT, ACCOUNTING, VAT, TAXATION

Contact: **97239696**
95355638

Gulf Center Consultancy & Audit
 Muscat, Sohar, Salalah, Sur

سماء الخضراء للتجارة
SAMA AL KHADRA TRADING

SERVICES:

PIPING SYSTEMS VALVES
 DRAINS INTERCEPTORS

Tel: 24501568, 24502479 • Fax: 24503566
 Email: sales@samaalkhadra.com
 Website: www.samaalkhadratradingco.com

FOR RENT

FLATS 2BHK and 1 bhk in Mumtaz. Contact 99341138 and 90991079.

Fat for rent

- 1) Darsait, near Indian School. Two bedroom flat, bath attached, hall, kitchen and guest toilet. One bedroom flat, hall, kitchen and toilet.
- 2) Al Khuwair, near Rawasco: One bedroom, bath kitchen, AC, curtains.
- 3) Al Ghubrah near Mars Hypermarket Two bedroom flat with attached bath, hall kitchen and guest toilet. One bedroom flat with attached bath, hall kitchen and guest toilet.
- 4) Al Ghubrah near Indian School. Two bedroom flat with attached bath, hall kitchen and guest toilet. *All flats provided with air conditioners. Contact GSM: 91473374 97886085

FLAT for rent, in Darsait, 4 bedrooms, kitchen with small sea view near RO 240 monthly, Contact: 99315986.

ROOM for rent in Darsait with a bathroom and a kitchen, electricity and water is free, RO 100 monthly. Contact: 99315986.

2 BEDROOMS luxurious furnished apartment, location Muscat Hills Golf Tower building, size 170 square metre. Available for rent, please call and Whatsapp# 99250801/ 99685330.

QUANTITY surveyor / estimator, Sri Lankan, Bachelor degree in QS (R), diploma in QS and AutoCAD with 5 years experience. Certificate in graphic design. Contact: 77523087. Email: ilm.mhmaneeef@gamil.com

ACCOUNTANT (male) with 8+ years of experience in accounts and finance department (MBA finance), experience in SAP S/4 HANA FICO. Looking for a suitable position. Contact: 99685330, email: hussain_ca87@yahoo.com

STORE manager/In Charge, Indian, above 18 years experience in Supermarket and leading retail chain in Oman and India, on visit visa, seeks immediate placement. 99697179 E-mail: mailshaijuvarghese@gmail.com

INDIAN male graduate Executive Secretary/ Stenography/ Oman DL and Muscat experience available. Contact: 79256679.

SIT. WANTED

EXPERIENCED (5 years) Indian male 30, diploma in Graphic design on visit. Looking for suitable position. Skills: Photoshop, 3ds max ect. Contact: 92055251, hafizfora@gmail.com

PMP. Indian male Civil Eng. Around 10 years experience in construction projects. Softwares: Primavera P6, MS Office, ERP, having Oman driving licence. Ready to join, email: engineer4planning@gmail.com, Call: 78002582.

PLANNING engineer, INDIAN female (M Tech Civil Structural Engineering) having 7 years experience as Quantity Surveyor cum Quality Control Engineer, looking for suitable position. Contact: 96154505.

SENIOR accountant, Indian male, 39 years, 15 years experience in accounts & finance at Oman. With Oman D/L, Seeking a senior position in accounts. Available to join immediately. Contact: +968 97921596.

ELECTRONIC Engineer, seeking job Experienced Electronic and Instrumentation Engineer (male) with BE and Diploma seeking job. Skills: plant engineering, electronics maintenance, SMT operation, control systems, software (C++, C, PLC). Contact: 92929736. Email: farookjalal5@gmail.com

CHARTERED accountant with 16 years experience in Oman. Looking for suitable opening. GSM: 95782629.

SIT. WANTED

31 YEARS old Indian Male, MBA Finance Marketing, 6 years of wide experience in Finance and accounts in international company on visit visa, please call 79582329.

GENERAL manager with 16+ years experience in Oman, MBA — BE, seeks suitable placement. Contact: 94008034.

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN Male, B.Tech (Civil Engineer). Total 8 years experience included 4 years in Oman. Valid Oman D/L. Experience in Government and Private Projects. Looking for suitable positions in reputed firms. Valid visa/NOC available. Join Immediately. Contact: 96354303.

RENT A CAR

Buttercup Rent A Car
AMAZING OFFERS
 ○ Rent a car for 10 days and get an extra free day.
 ○ Rent for one month and get 5 days free.
 All the cars are 2016 brand new special prices for public departments, companies and long-term contracts. ☎97249490.

LUXURIOUS Toyota bus 2016, air-conditioned, 30 passengers, offered for daily/monthly/annually, Muscat. Contact: 98080609, 96316269.

FOR SALE

For sale a salon and spa management company. Owns 3 distinct branches in Muscat. Receives about 3 thousand customers per month. Well respected brand. For more information, please contact us with number: 94838177.

SERVICES

AL SUMRI AC maintenance. We are ready to repair and install all types of Air-Conditioner within Muscat Governorate. 94301888.

Autocad/revit arch MEP, part/full- time. Contact WhatsApp: 97103168.

BUILDING of 1.500 sqm 3 stories, accommodation, store and office at Misfa. ☎99432177, 99010964.



OMAN **Observer** DAILY

For Advertisements
 Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office

Mohd Al Rashdi
99841230
 m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

Salalah Office

Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
 bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Ali Al Maashari
99639264
 wadialmeeh@yahoo.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
 nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suham Office

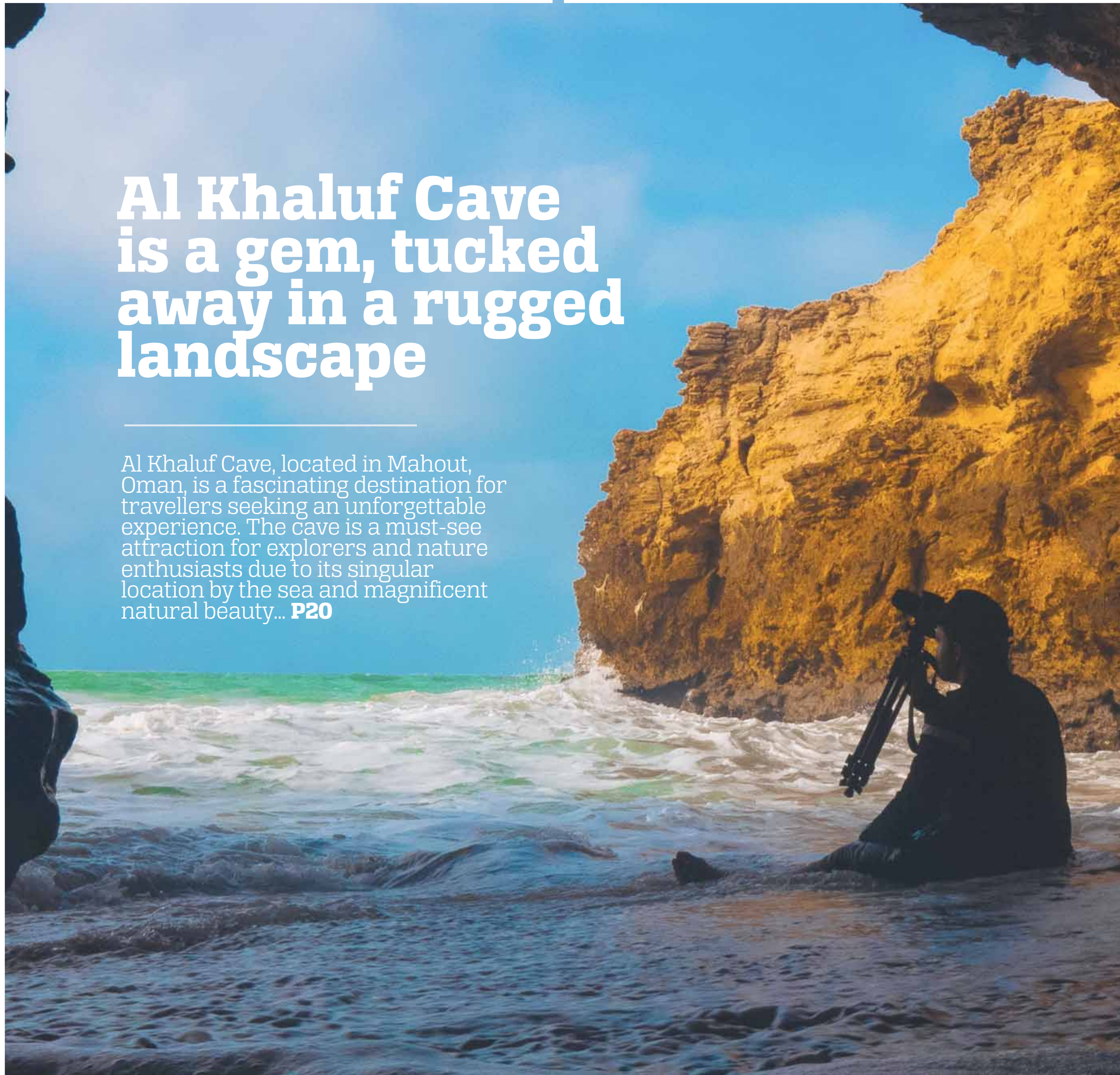
Musalam Al Saidi
99429192
 sohardaily@outlook.com



@omanobserver
 www.omanobserver.om

Al Khaluf Cave is a gem, tucked away in a rugged landscape

Al Khaluf Cave, located in Mahout, Oman, is a fascinating destination for travellers seeking an unforgettable experience. The cave is a must-see attraction for explorers and nature enthusiasts due to its singular location by the sea and magnificent natural beauty... **P20**



Versace reaches for new heights with starry LA rooftop show

ITALIAN FASHION house Versace made its Fall/Winter 2023 show a star-studded affair on Thursday, moving its catwalk from Milan to Los Angeles three days before this year's Oscars ceremony.

Held on the roof-top of the Pacific Design Centre in West Hollywood, the open-air show was brought forward by a day due

to a heavy rain forecast. Singers Dua Lipa, Cher, Elton John and Lil Nas X, actors Anne Hathaway, Ke Huy Quan and Demi Moore and television personalities Christine Quinn and Tan France were among the celebrities invited.

Gigi Hadid led models on the runway dressed in a black pencil skirt and power-shouldered blazer. Black featured heavily

in designer Donatella Versace's collection, alongside pops of orange and pink. Dresses were often short, made of silk and paired with long opera gloves. Versace offered denim trousers and jackets for more casual options. Men were dressed in snakeskin leather, sequined suit jackets and tops and square toe shoes. — **Reuters**



READ

SHE IS A HAUNTING

BY TRANG THANH TRAN

Jade Nguyen travels to Vietnam with her younger sister, Lily, to visit their father who's restoring an old French colonial house which is haunted.



DISCOVERY

1000-year-old medieval treasure discovered in Hoogwoud, Netherlands, consisting of jewellery and silver coins, is shown in this undated handout picture obtained by Reuters. — **Reuters**



FASHION

A model displays a creation from the IRENISA 2023 A/W collection by Japanese designers Yu Kobayashi and Yuji Abe at Tokyo Fashion Week in Tokyo. — **AFP**





New York state vs New York City: the war over foie gras

IN NEW YORK, one of the most celebrated culinary centres in the world, a war over foie gras is pitting the city, backed by animal rights activists, against duck farmers and restaurant owners, whose position is supported by the state.

Karen Frommer, enjoying a meal at an upscale restaurant in Manhattan, shrugs when asked about the Big Apple's ban on the sale, consumption and possession of the controversial delicacy.

"We will never be able to deal with vegans at all," the 78-year-old tells AFP.

"But if they are always focused on the feeding of the ducks, let them watch a film on a slaughtering process of lambs, or housing of chickens in huge buildings," she adds.

The retiree developed a taste for foie gras in southwestern France half a century ago and often eats it terrine, whole or pan-fried at the restaurant 15East @ Tocqueville.

For director Marco Moreira, a Brazilian of Italian origin, "It's hard to imagine no fine dining without foie gras."

For now he doesn't have to, as the courts consider a challenge to New York City's ban that was supposed to take effect last November.

All of the foie gras in New York is made exclusively in the state of 20 million people, as France no longer exports the controversial delicacy.

Ex-NYC mayor Bill de Blasio signed off on municipal legislation outlawing foie gras in November 2019, following a similar move in California and after lobbying by animal welfare associations.

Lawmakers ruled it was cruel to force-feed ducks and geese to fatten their livers for human consumption, and the ban prohibiting any establishment from selling, serving or even possessing foie gras was due to take effect three years after its passage.

But last September, New York state's two largest duck farms and foie gras producers — Hudson Valley Foie Gras Farm and La Belle Farm — won a stay on the ban from a local court.

Late last year, restaurant owners and farmers then won the support of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, which challenged the legality of New York City's law.

The dispute deepened further when in January the city, led since last year by centre-right Democrat and vegan Eric Adams, countered by suing the state to get the ban



back in place.

Farmer and producer Marcus Henley is equally certain of his rights, with foie gras legal everywhere else in New York state.

Resembling an old rocker, and with a slow, soft-spoken delivery, the vice president of Hudson Valley Foie Gras Farm gives AFP a tour of his huge duck and chicken operation in Ferndale, two hours northwest of Manhattan.

WORRISOME

Employing 320 mostly Latin American farm workers who force-feed, slaughter, bleed, pluck and then remove the livers from the ducks, Henley says he generates \$25 million in annual sales.

He would lose a quarter of that if the ban comes into force.

"Anytime you go into court, it's always a little worrisome," the 66-year-old says.

"(But) you can't pass a local law that negatively impacts farming in a state-certified agricultural district,"



he adds, showing off pens full of tens of thousands of ducks, which are raised from three days old until they are killed at 105 days.

Under huge, creaking sheds amid a pungent smell typical of poultry farming, three-month-old ducks are force-fed with compressor machines bearing plastic pipes and tubes that send grain mixed with water into their gizzards.

The practice is banned in several countries, including Britain.

"I can tell you as a farmer, that, no, absolutely not, the animals don't suffer," insists Henley, who believes the gizzard has a natural storage function.

"It's easy to anthropomorphize," says the trained scientist. (But) animals and people are different," he adds.

Bryan Pease, a lawyer for the Voters for Animal Rights association, which worked on the New York law, is shocked by the ducks' treatment.

"The vast majority of people believe that all animals deserve to be humanely treated, even animals raised for food," he said.

Pease is convinced that foie gras will disappear from New York City tables for good "in a few months."

But until judges rule on the final decision, all predictions are for now just speculation. — **AFP**

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Does Your Latte Need a Shot of Olive Oil?



OLIVE OIL-INFUSED COFFEE? Starbucks bets you'll drink it. It wouldn't be the oddest food and beverage product that olive oil has seeped into. We mix it into ice cream and whisk it into chocolate cake. On TikTok, olive oil fans knock back shots of the liquid, saying it clears their skin and helps them lose weight. You can dunk grapefruit in olive oil or dribble the liquid into a dirty martini, add it to granola or beat it into lemon curd.

Nutrition experts tout olive oil as a health-conscious component of your meal. Olive oil is linked with a range of health benefits, from lowered blood pressure to reduced inflammation, said Julia Zumpano, a registered dietitian at the Cleveland Clinic.

A wealth of research has linked the Mediterranean staple to promising health outcomes: a reduced risk of cancer, potential prevention of Alzheimer's disease, even a lower risk of early death. But many of these studies have looked at the health outcomes of people who eat olive oil as part of a larger Mediterranean diet, in which olive oil replaces less healthy sources of fat like butter, as opposed to isolating the health effects of olive oil itself.

It's tricky to tease out just how large a role that olive oil played in those health outcomes, said Marta Guasch-Ferré, a research scientist at the Harvard T H Chan School of Public Health. But the most robust research we have focuses on olive oil's benefits for the heart, she added.

Guasch-Ferré led a study published in 2022 that found that people who consumed more than half a tablespoon of olive oil per day had a roughly 19 per cent lower chance of dying from cardiovascular disease than those who rarely or never consumed olive oil. And a 2022 review of 13 studies showed strong



associations between higher olive oil consumption and reduced risk for cardiovascular disease and death from other causes.

Researchers have circled around a few theories as to why olive oil might protect the heart. Olive oil contains monounsaturated fatty acids, which can reduce levels of low-density lipoprotein, or LDL — sometimes called "bad" cholesterol — in your blood, according to the American Heart Association. High amounts of LDL can build up in the inner walls of the blood vessels, forming thick deposits called plaques that can narrow and clog major arteries; monounsaturated fats may help stave off this damage.

Olive oil is also rich in antioxidant compounds called polyphenols, which can help protect your cells from damage, said Dr. Selvi Rajagopal, an assistant professor of medicine at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

Despite the cardiovascular benefits of olive oil, it's still a fat, Rajagopal said, which means it's fairly high in calories. Drinking olive oil straight or mixed into a beverage may just add unnecessary calories into your diet.

The way that olive oil is made can alter its health benefits, too. The less processed the oil, the higher it is in polyphenols, Zumpano said. Exposing the oil to extreme heat or chemical solvents may degrade the polyphenols, she said. So opt for extra-virgin olive oil (typically made just by mechanically crushing olives) or virgin olive oil, which typically retains polyphenol levels, over a regular bottle of olive oil.

No matter what kind of olive oil you choose, it will still have some health perks, Rajagopal said: "You don't have to get the most cold-pressed, pure, expensive kind."

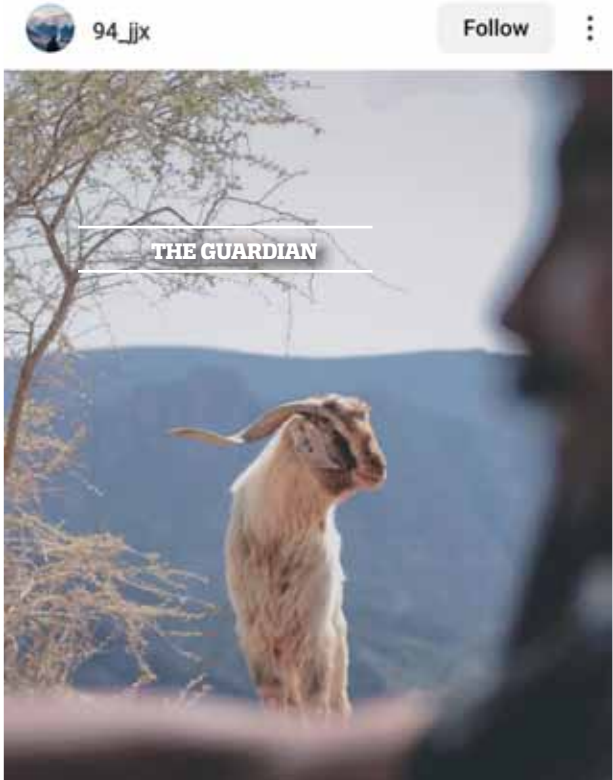
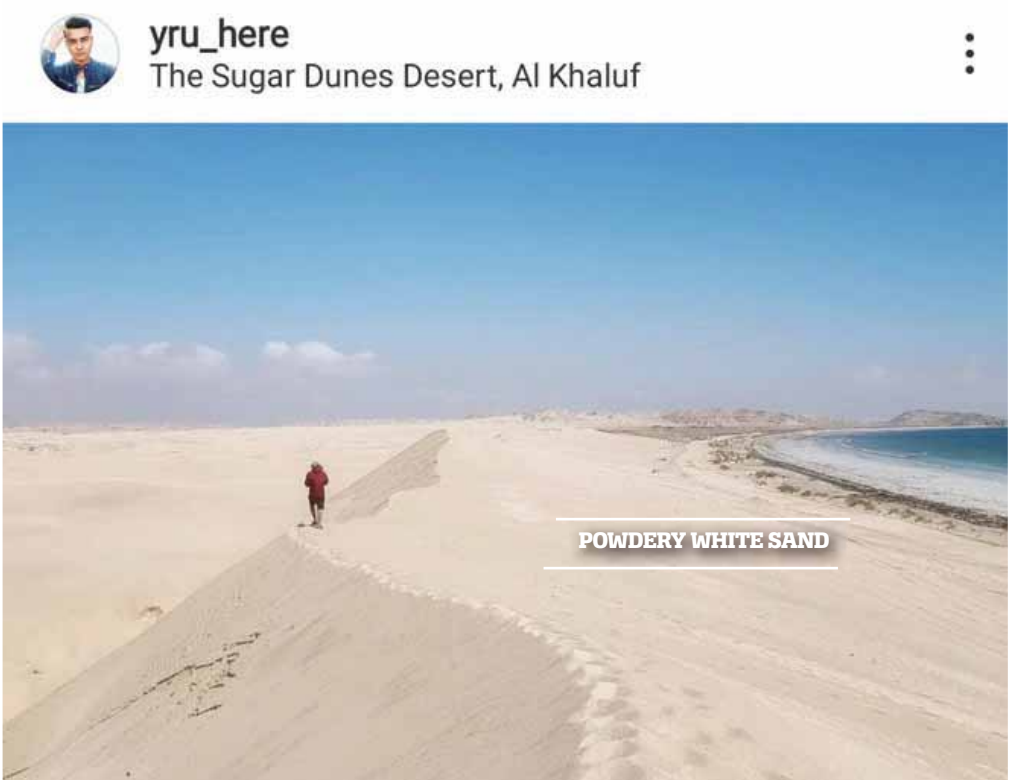
Guasch-Ferré recommended using olive oil as a replacement for less healthy fat sources — especially butter and full-fat dairy products, which contain saturated fats that can raise your LDL levels. Cook with olive oil instead of butter, or mix it with herbs and spices to drizzle over a salad instead of a creamy dressing, Zumpano said. But aim for no more than three or four tablespoons of olive oil per day, Guasch-Ferré advised. And don't expect olive oil, on its own, to transform your overall health.

"You can't take that one thing in isolation and say, let me just ramp it up and hope that my health improves," Rajagopal said. "You have to look at your whole diet." — **NYT**



find us on
TWITTER
Scan the QR Code or follow us on
www.twitter.com/omanobserver

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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



AROUND THE WORLD

CELEBRATION

Qatar's biggest international food festival returns



THE PINNACLE EVENT in Qatar's culinary calendar, the 12th Qatar International Food Festival (QIFF) is welcoming thousands of visitors to the newly-opened Lusail Al Sa'ad Plaza – the street synonymous with the Fifa World Cup 2022 final celebrations. QIFF is Qatar's largest and longest-running food and drink festival and is on until March 21, 2023.

From fireworks and family-friendly entertainment to chef masterclasses at the Qatar Airways cooking theatre, the festival offers something for all ages to enjoy. Foodies can choose from 100 vendors offering global cuisines, from local shawarma to Mexican tacos and Liberian rice bread. On a daily basis, all leftover food is collected and distributed by the festival's charity partner Qatar Charity.

Shaikha Hessa al Thani, Head of Marketing and Planning at Qatar Tourism, said: "Qatar International Food Festival is a celebration of our country's unique and diverse melting pot of cultures, which for more than a decade has shone an essential spotlight on the thriving culinary scene here in Qatar. With so many recent outstanding restaurant openings, Qatar's gastronomic landscape is incredibly exciting, and we are delighted to showcase all that's on offer to visitors from around this world."

THIS YEAR'S QIFF HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE

FAMILY-FUN ENTERTAINMENT — A suite of varied and lively entertainment options for the entire family is on offer every day at QIFF 2023. Throughout the festival there are roaming acts and a nightly fireworks show. Guests can even get their skates on at a custom-made ice rink.

CHEF MASTERCLASSES AND WORKSHOPS — Daily live cooking theatres feature some of the world's most dynamic and respected chefs, and food-loving festival-goers can attend ticketed interactive food masterclasses where they have the unique opportunity to sharpen their skillset with some of the industry's finest.

IMMERSIVE DINING EXPERIENCES — There is a host of unusual dining options available for guests at QIFF, including a unique experience with Le Petit Chef, an interactive dining experience using 3D mapping, in collaboration with The Ritz Carlton, Doha. And the festival's customary cornucopia of world cuisine food trucks will make a return too. From Arabian spices to gorgeously flavoursome Filipino Kare Kare, guests are sure to find something mouth-watering amongst the variety of carts.

CULTURAL DELICACIES — This year, QIFF has an area dedicated to Indonesia, home to the famed Spice Islands, in celebration of the Qatar-Indonesia Year of Culture 2023. QIFF will also feature a special Qatari cultural tent that includes local delicacies.

VEGAN AND GREEN DESERT ZONE — An entire section of the festival exclusively houses vegan cuisine and healthy food options.

Additionally, to celebrate the upcoming International Horticultural Expo 2023 Qatar, which will take place in October under the theme "Green Desert, Better Environment," a special kiosk is offering special plant giveaways for festival visitors.

Organised by Qatar Tourism in partnership with Qatar Airways, the 12th Qatar International Food Festival is free to the public and runs daily until March 21 from 16:00 - 22:00 on weekdays, and 16:00 - 01:00 on weekends.

LIFESTYLE

Ukrainian choir lifts spirits at London's 'actor's church'



IN THE HEART OF London's central Covent Garden district, the small church of St Paul's is unusually bustling for a midweek evening.

As the clamour subsides, 130 London-based members of a Ukrainian choir make their way to their positions in the church, affectionately known as the city's "actor's church".

A hush falls, and then, steadily, energy fills the air as the choir launches into a performance of an aria from a Verdi opera.

It is only the sixth time that the choir, many of whose members fled the Russian attack of their country a year ago, has sung together.

Iryna Stepanova, 32, from the city of Kharkiv in eastern Ukraine, said it was imperative their cultural heritage be preserved.

"I think that now more than ever we need to defend Ukraine on the cultural front," she said.

SINGING NATION

"We used to be known as the 'singing nation' and the music in our culture is very important," she said. The choir, which is being accompanied by 45 members of the chorus of the nearby Royal Opera House, is due to perform on March 16 in a sold-out concert dedicated to Ukraine.

Stepanova said singing with top professionals from the Royal Opera House (ROH) had made her feel nervous but excited at the same time.

"I'm a bit stressed but I'm mostly excited because I think it will be a unique experience for all Ukrainians," she said.

William Spaulding, the ROH chorus director, who is guiding the choir before its performance, said he realised he was dealing with "something extremely special" when he first heard the group sing.

"What's been really moving is when they sing their Ukrainian music — to hear that special connection between one's native

home, one's native language, one's native music."

Jillian Barker, ROH director of learning, said they had been overwhelmed with applications to join the choir.

"We were hoping to bring together 45 singers, and we received 360 applications," she said.

Those selected are from all

just standing at the back crying because the sound is so powerful," she said.

Barker said the group had immediately bonded and created an instant singing community.

As a professional singer, Dmytro Hovorov admits that he was apprehensive about singing with amateurs. "But I was really surprised, the level is very high."



age groups and are mostly women, as the men are fighting on the frontlines, she said.

Some are professionals while others had never sung before.

To make the project work, the organisers worked on a repertoire made up of opera arias "that can be sung by non-professionals" and Ukrainian patriotic and folk music.

Barker said the choir's first meeting had brought a tear to the eye.

POWERFUL MESSAGE

"The first rehearsal they sang on their own together, and we were

TRAVEL TALES

Sheep come to the rescue of Pompeii ruins



A FLOCK OF GRAZING sheep is helping archaeologists to preserve the ancient ruins of Pompeii, the Roman city that was buried under metres of pumice and ash in the calamitous eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79.

Archaeologists have uncovered only around two thirds of the 66-hectare (163 acres) site at Pompeii since excavations began 250 years ago.

Preserving the unexplored sections of the ancient city against erosion by nature and time is a priority for those who manage the site.

"If grass and other plants grow in or on the ancient walls and houses this is a problem. So we try to have a sustainable approach to the whole environment in order also to avoid using substances then to avoid growing plants, having plants growing on the walls and ruins," said Gabriel Zuchtriegel, the director of the Pompeii



Archaeological Park.

The flock of 150 sheep has been deployed to Regio V, a northern section of the city, where grassy hills are dotted with the ruined remains of ancient houses and shops.

Regio V is still off limits to the millions of visitors who come to Pompeii each year, but as part of its conservation efforts the archaeology park has in recent years launched new excavations at the site.

Among the striking discoveries since 2018 where vibrant frescoes, a snack shop and the skeletal remains of people killed in the eruption.

Zuchtriegel said the sheep initiative helps to save money and preserve the landscape.

"We try to explain that this is actually a sustainable project and it helps the ruins," he said.

"It's also something which really gives an idea of how Pompeii was in the time when it was rediscovered. It was woods, vineyards, sheep and it was this kind of rural environment and in the midst of that you had Pompeii." — Reuters

art & life

Local Scene

f t i y t u @omanobserver

WEDNESDAY | MARCH 15 | 2023

Al Khaluf Cave is a gem, tucked away in a rugged landscape

By Zuwaina Al Sulimani

The caves in Oman are a hidden gem, tucked away in the rugged landscape of the country. These caves have been formed over millions of years, and each one is a unique masterpiece of nature.

The cave system of Oman is also significant from a historical perspective. The country has a rich history, and many of the caves were used by ancient civilisations for various purposes. For example, the Al-Khamis cave was used as a burial site during the Iron Age.

Al Khaluf Cave, located in Mahout, Oman, about five hour drive from Muscat, is a fascinating destination for travellers seeking an unforgettable experience. The cave is a must-see attraction for explorers and nature enthusiasts due to its singular location by the sea and magnificent natural beauty.

Al Khaluf Cave's interior is an expansive, naturally beautiful grotto.

Visitors are captivated by the distinctive geological structures inside the cave and are astounded by the breathtaking scenery. The natural light that enters the cave creates a mesmerising atmosphere that visitors can enjoy while exploring the cave.

In addition to exploring the cave, visitors can immerse themselves in the local culture and traditions of Oman. The cave is situated in the heart of a traditional fishing village, offering a glimpse into the locals' way of life. Visitors can interact with friendly fishermen and learn about their traditions and culture.

The surrounding area of Al Khaluf Cave provides a range of activities for visitors to enjoy, including hiking along the coastline, camping on the beach, and exploring the nearby attractions. The region is home to a variety of attractions, such as ancient forts, beautiful beaches, and pictur-

esque wadis. The area provides a rich cultural and historical experience for tourists.

For nature enthusiasts, Al Khaluf Cave is a great spot for snorkelling and diving. The area is home to a variety of marine life, including small schools of fish and crabs. The crystal-clear waters make it a popular spot for tourists looking to experience the underwater world.

The best time to visit Al Khaluf Cave is between October and April, when the temperature is cooler, making it the perfect destination for those looking to escape the heat. The cave's unique location by the sea provides a refreshing breeze, adding to the overall experience.

Emad al Rujaibi, a documentary filmmaker, has visited Humrat Cave twice, the first time in 2021 and the second time in 2022.

"The cave was among a series of sites we planned for in our maritime border trip. After 5 months of planning, research, and exploration, we found this location. The route to the cave is very easy; it is through the coastal route from Barr al Hikman area to Al Khaluf. The road is paved and accessible for cars. The distance from Al Khaluf to the cave ranges from 10 to 15 minutes by car," Emad shared.

"The feeling of amazement always accompanies me when I remember the visit. The first moment of entering the place, it feels like being on an island in Portugal or even Spain, a feeling that words and language can't fully describe," he shared.

"The second visit was for camping since it was a stop on a long trip. Unfortunately, there are no services for anything in this area. Perhaps you should take all precautions in advance in the city centre before heading out, and it's about half an hour away," he noted.

Finally, he recommends all tourists visit and enjoy Humrat Cave.

