



HM, Syrian President review ties

FROM PAGE1
During the session, His Majesty the Sultan and the Syrian President reviewed the march of the bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries and fields of the joint cooperation. The two leaders also exchanged viewpoints on the regional and international arenas, as well as the endeavours to consolidate pillars of security and stability in the region and the world.

The official session of talks was attended from the Omani side by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, Dr Hamad bin Said al Aafi, Head of the Private Office, Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, Abdulsalam bin

Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), Sayyid Turki bin Mahmoud al Busaidy, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Syrian Arab Republic.

The session was also attended from the Syrian side by Dr Faisal Mekdad, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Mansour Fadlallah Azzam, Minister of Presidential Affairs, Dr Samer Al Khalil, Minister of Economy and Foreign Trade, Luna Al Shibl, Special Presidential Adviser,

and Idris Maya, Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Sultanate of Oman.

After that, His Majesty the Sultan and the Syrian President held a closed-door session.

President Dr Bashar Al Assad of the Syrian Arab Republic and his accompanying delegation left here earlier this evening after concluding his working visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

The guest was seen off at the Royal Airport by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence

Affairs and some officials.

During the visit, the Syrian President was accompanied by an official delegation comprising Dr Faisal Mekdad, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Mansour Fadlallah Azzam, Minister of Presidential Affairs, Dr Samer Al Khalil, Minister of Economy and Foreign Trade, Luna Al Shibl, Special Presidential Adviser and Idris Maya, Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Sultanate of Oman.

— ONA





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Syrian president thanks Oman's solidarity





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Infrastructure projects get boost



Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, and officials in Muscat on Monday.



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The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning underlined the importance given to key development projects, which will give a boost to tourism, trade, and economic growth.

The key infrastructure project of the railway got a boost during the announcement made at ‘Towards Thriving Communities’ during the third media briefing of the Ministry of Housing and Urban

Planning in Muscat on Monday.

The ministry said that it would compensate 521 affected cases affected by North Al Batinah and Al Buraimi within six months as part of the activities involving the Oman Railway project as per mechanisms approved by the government.

It may be noted that the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates have signed an agreement in the field of cooperation between Oman Railways and Etihad Rail.

With investments amounting

to about RO1.160 billion (\$3 billion), Oman Rail and Etihad Rail will establish a joint company to implement and operate a 303 kilometres railway network linking Sohar Port with the UAE national railway network.

The passenger train will travel at 200 kilometres per hour to cover the distance between Suhar and Abu Dhabi in 100 minutes and 47 minutes between Suhar and Al Ain, while the speed of freight trains will have a maximum speed of 120 kilometres per hour.

The trains will have a capacity to ferry 12,000 passengers per day and 250,000 containers at the start of the line’s operation.

AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR CONNECTIVITY

It was also revealed that two sites had been identified for alternative roads to reach Al Jabal Al Akhdhar project from South Al Batinah – of the two probable routes, one will be from Wadi Mistel on the Nakhal – Al Rustaq road and the second from Wadi Bani Kharous in the

Wilayat of Al Awabi.

“Al Jabal Al Akhdhar has so much potential. Presently, there is only one road to reach Al Jabal Al Akhdhar which is hard to navigate for smaller cars. So, the ministry is looking into one or two alternatives where even smaller cars could travel with ease,” a top official at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) told the Observer.

The ministry will also seek to complete the process of handing

over the cash compensation to those affected by the Al Batinah coastal project this year.

The government also unveiled plans to establish sustainable future cities in Salalah, Nizwa, Suhar, and Muscat, on an area of 5 million square meters, including 10,000 to 30,000 housing units and accommodating 50,000 to 130,000 people.

It was said that the time frame to complete the Greater Muscat plan is 12 months, and work will continue for another six months.

Layout for Al Jabal Al Akhdhar in 2023

23,000

RESIDENTIAL PLOTS
TO BE DISTRIBUTED

30,000

APPLICATIONS
REGISTERED FOR
VERIFICATION

700

FAMILIES (RO 350
MONTHLY INCOME)
EXEMPTED FROM
HOUSING LOANS

1,600

FAMILIES (RO 450
MONTHLY INCOME)
EXEMPTED FROM
HOUSING LOANS

HOUSING ASSISTANCE
EXCEEDED
1,400
BENEFICIARIES
(RO 35 MILLION)

500

LANDS GRANTED
WITH USUFRUCT
RIGHTS



FROM P1

FINANCIAL COST

The ministry said the number of families benefited from exemption of housing loans during 2021 stood at more than 700, whose monthly income is less than RO 350. The financial cost of exemption stood at more than RO 13 million. In 2022, the number of families exceeded more than 1,600 whose monthly income is less than RO 450 at a cost of RO 29.7 million.

As for social housing programmes, the ministry said that the number of families benefiting from housing assistance exceeded 1,400 with an amount of RO 35 million during 2022. The ministry pointed out that it continues to provide housing assistance to more than 1,200 families at a value of RO 35 million during 2023. The housing units programme delivered 53 completed units, in addition to 143 residential units “under implementation” from 2022 until this year (2023).

E-SERVICES

The ministry affirmed that it is seeking, within the framework of initiatives of the paradigm digital shift, to render services of high level of proficiency and professionalism with the aim of streamlining and improving the procedures and services provided. To this end, “Amlak” platform operated 23 electronic services in 2022, and continue to complete the operation of 36 services so as to launch all 59 of

its services during 2023.

“Tatweer” platform for real estate development services is witnessing remarkable developments, as the electronic bidding has been activated with the usufruct system, by bidding on more than 200 land plots under the usufruct system in 2022. The platform is linked with more than 10 departments and institutions concerned. The investment opportunities service is being activated.

The ministry explained that it is exploiting government lands in an optimal and sustainable investment way through the usufruct system. It granted more than 500 lands with usufruct rights and more than 200 lands were offered under the public bidding system. The collection of contracts’ renewal fees in 2022 exceeded RO 8.6 million. As many as 400 lands will be offered for use by electronic bidding, as well as offering 250 land plots for use of investment opportunities for the activities specified for 2023.

GROWTH WITNESSED

With the growth witnessed in the value of real estate trading during the past years, from RO 2.5 billion in 2020 to RO 2.6 billion in 2021, and doubling last year to RO 2.7 billion, the ministry changed its real estate directions to become an enhancer of investment opportunities in terms of products and services in the housing and real estate development sector.

The ministry has initiated

the establishment of future sustainable cities in Salalah, Nizwa, Suhar and Muscat on an area of 5 million square metres. These cities will host a number of housing units ranging from 10,000 to 30,000 units, accommodating between 50,000 to 130,000 people, according to a model that achieves its goals and requirements by providing basic services for building integrated urban communities.

The ministry is also preparing a layout for Al Jabal Al Akhdhar which will be completed in 2023. It will also launch the identity of the same project, which is a multi-use investment destination that aims to raise economic potential while preserving its geographical nature.

Besides the minister the media briefing was attended by Eng Hamad bin Ali al Nazwani, Housing Under-Secretary; Dr Mohammed bin Ali al Muttawa, Urban Planning Under-Secretary, public and private officials, and media representatives.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning announced that it had received 91 communications during the past year as part of the “Disclosure” initiative. The ministry stated that the reports it received, most of them outside the framework of the initiative and related to services and transactions. While 29 reports were within the competence of the initiative committee and the real reports were dealt with and resolved, and measures were found to prevent their occurrence.



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TUESDAY | FEBRUARY 21 | 2023

5

GOVERNOR RECEIVES DEPUTY PM OF SLOVAKIA



Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Governor of Muscat received Stefan Holy, Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, in Muscat on Monday. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed aspects of cooperation in various fields. They also discussed means of enhancing relations to serve the aspirations of the two countries. — ONA

Conference on scientific research management to be held on Feb 27

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The First International Conference on Scientific Research Management will be held from February 26 to 27 in Muscat. It is organised by Qatar University, Sultan Qaboos University, and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation in the Sultanate of Oman.

Many international experts from prestigious international universities and research centres are taking part in the conference hosted by Sultan Qaboos University. It aims to direct scientific research towards finding solutions to the problems of society, and to benefit from research results, in addition to expanding scientific research financing programmes, and spreading research culture among industrial institutions.

It also aims to exchange best practices in scientific research management regionally and identify international practices to measure the quality of scientific research and its impact on society.

During the two days of the conference, the participants will study the strategies of scientific research management and their efficiency in

terms of centralisation and decentralisation.

Dr Mariam Ali Al Maadeed, Vice President of Qatar University for Research and Graduate Studies, said: “This conference reflects the commitment of Qatar University and Sultan Qaboos University to employ the outputs of scientific research in developing society and promoting research and innovation in implementation of economic and social development programmes in the region in particular and the Arab world in general, as both are academic institutions. They are known for the quality of their knowledge, scientific and research production at the regional and international levels.”

She also added that one of the most important pillars of this cooperation between the two universities is joint conferences and events.

By holding conferences, the two universities continue their steady growth in the fields of higher education and scientific research, adopting the best international standards towards excellence, as well as partnerships between the two institutions in line with the needs of the local community and industry, which directly contributes to the social and economic development in the region.

STEM OMAN trains 12 teachers

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, FEB 20

The Ministry of Education, represented by the Department of Innovation and Scientific Olympiad, is implementing a three-day training workshop for the STEM Oman programme at the Wyndham Garden Muscat. The workshop is targeting 12 teachers from 6 schools as part of the plan to expand the application of the programme in all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, with the support of the private sector.

The STEM Oman programme is a global educational system that aims to combine the four basic education subjects, mathematics, engineering, science and technology, and link and mix them in an integrated manner in creative ways based on scientific experiments to transform ideas into practical applications that focus on linking education to daily life through developing creative and critical thinking skills among students. It also aims to the creation of a generation capable of actively participating in sustainable development in society and entering the world of



knowledge-based economy in the fields of science, mathematics, engineering, and technology.

The preparation process includes providing halls equipped with the tools necessary to implement the programme, including furniture, experimental tools, electronic devices, and guides for scientific activities, in addition to practical

and theoretical training on implementing the programme. Some schools in the Sultanate of Oman began implementing the programme in 2017, as it witnesses a continuous expansion in the number of schools implementing the programme on a phased basis, with the support of private sector institutions, bringing the number by the year 2025 to 100

public schools distributed in all governorates.

It is worth noting that the STEM Oman programme won the Arab Excellence Award as the best implemented government programme to support the education sector in the Arab world, at the awards ceremony that was held in Cairo last January.

ICAO Secretary-General visits Oman Airports



MUSCAT: Juan Carlos, Secretary-General of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), who is visiting Oman to take part in the 2nd edition of the Civil Aviation Legal Advisers Forum (CALAF/2), visited Oman Airports company on Monday.

During the visit he met with Shaikh Ayman bin Ahmed al Hosni, CEO of Oman Airports.

In the meeting, they reviewed prospects of joint cooperation in a bid to serve joint objectives and boost travel and aviation movement among countries of

the world.

Oman Airports gave a presentation on its airports and plans of increasing the operational capacity of airports.

The ICAO Secretary-General also visited Muscat International Airport and viewed the preparations and facilities offered by the airport to aviation companies and passengers.

The 2nd edition of the Civil Aviation Legal Advisers Forum (CALAF/2) will kick off on Tuesday with the participation of 63 countries and 3 international organisations. — ONA

Bus accident raises safety concerns

VINOD NAIR

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The accident involving a bus ferrying company workers has raised questions about the safety of such a transport system. It may be noted that four people lost their lives as the bus carrying 53 people collapsed at the exit of the Qantab road towards Al Bustan -Wadi al-Kabir road. Four others suffered critical injuries; seven people had moderate injuries, while 38 had light injuries. The Royal Hospital said it had activated the emergency plan to deal with the travellers injured in the bus accident in Qantab.

The hospital's emergency department received several patients with minor injuries who are currently receiving the necessary medical care and are in stable condition.

Speaking to the Observer, a cross-section of construction workers said they are generally



transported from the worksite to camps in buses.

“Some small companies give little priority to the maintenance of these buses, and at times drivers are also rushed to make multiple trips in a short time as there are few buses in the fleet. What

happened at Qantab road could be an exception as it is one of the most difficult roads due to steep slopes in both directions,” said J Singh who travels daily on that road to the work site.

But a transport in-charge of a leading contracting company said,

“Accidents can happen anytime without any specific reason and added that the loss of even a single worker would affect the company. Transport buses are always serviced from time to time, and such accidents are isolated and not something waiting to happen.”



■ INTERIOR MINISTER RECEIVES SECRETARY-GENERAL



Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, Chairman of the 39th session of Arab Interior Ministers Council, received Dr Mohammed Ali Koman, Secretary-General of Arab Interior Ministers Council, in Muscat on Monday. The meeting discussed various topics related to joint Arab security. It also touched on the agenda of the 40th session of the Arab Interior Ministers Council. The meeting was attended by Eng Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Interior and Maj Gen Abdullah bin Ali al Harthy, Assistant Inspector-General of Police and Customs for Operations. – ONA

Greetings conveyed to Indonesia



President Joko Widodo of the Republic of Indonesia, received at Merdeka Palace in Jakarta on Monday Shaikh Mohammed bin Ahmed al Shanfari, who presented his credentials as the Sultanate of Oman's Ambassador to the Republic of Indonesia. During the meeting, the ambassador conveyed greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to President Widodo. On his turn, the Indonesian President asked the ambassador to convey his greetings and best wishes to His Majesty the Sultan. – ONA

Stone to be laid for new central lab today

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health will lay the foundation stone for the Central Public Health Laboratory in the Wilayat of Al Seeb in the Governorate of Muscat on Tuesday.

MoH will establish a modern, integrated building for the laboratory with the latest technologies and equipment needed in the field of laboratory tests.

The main building of the Central Public Health Laboratory will house departments such as chemical laboratory, biochemistry, toxins, food samples or outbreak laboratory, bacteriological laboratory (a reference laboratory for antibiotic-resistant microbes)

and a reference molecular laboratory.

The building will include a department for quality and risk management (a laboratory that provides the regional quality programme), public health laboratory affairs, and a virological laboratory (regional polio reference laboratory, regional measles and rubella laboratory, national influenza laboratory, SARS-CoV-2 regional laboratory, and others).

The building will include a reference laboratory for tuberculosis, epidemiology and laboratory surveillance, a laboratory for parasites, malaria and fungi, genetic sequencing and a bioinformatics department.

MUSCAT: Unicef congratulated the Sultanate of Oman on its commitment to introducing a new national social protection system.

The comprehensive new system introduces a number of benefits that will address inequality and contribute to the well-being of children and vulnerable members of the population over the course of their lives.

The draft legislation was recently approved by the Council of Ministers and will enter into law after His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issues a Royal Decree. More details about the various cash and in-kind benefits programmes will be available at that time.

“Unicef commends the Government of Oman on this excellent initiative,” said Sumaira Chowdhury, Unicef

Mining sector should be sustainable, responsible

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
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The mining industry in the Sultanate of Oman has been facing resistance from the community. However, with clear-cut requirements and policies in place, the sector might see a change in mindset.

The Environment Authority is conducting a two-day workshop on environmental sustainability in the mining sector. The opening session began under the auspices of Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, on Monday morning at Sheraton Oman.

In his opening speech, Dr Abdullah al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, stressed the need to choose mining projects carefully and focus on projects with a significant economic return for the Sultanate of Oman.

Speaking to the Observer, the chairman said the mining sector is one of the main economic pillars nationally and globally. Previously, the investment in the mining industry was linear and conventional due to a lack of proper thought and planning on the closure of the projects. At the same time, they were susceptible to causing pollution and hazards.

“On the other hand, the focus has to be on the objectives of national strategy – the first is achieving diversification of the economy, and the other is reaching



environmental sustainability.

“To harmonise these two objectives and draw a roadmap, we have gathered here for the workshop to listen to several technical papers and learn from different experiences of experts from the international arena,” Al Amri said.

On Tuesday, the experts will be in discussion groups, and they are expected to come forward with recommendations for laws and regulations.

“The recommendations will be taken into three categories — law, regulations and procedures of protocols. This is to achieve the best-governing practices in the morning sector,” he said, adding that the sector is still conventional.

“We still need to manage to achieve sustainable development of the sector. There is a certain element of resistance from the environmental sector towards mining and society. And the oil and gas sector, there is environmental responsibility and

social responsibility practised. In the mining sector, these elements are absent. The money is made, but no steps are taken to tackle environmental damage or to handle commitment towards social responsibility.” One of the expected outcomes of the workshop is to remove the blocks and streamline who should be awarded the contract for mining.

To the question when will the mindset towards the mining industry change, the EA Oman chairman said, “The mindset will change soon as it is a matter of time. If we are able to come up with clear outcomes, they can be immediately formulated into regulations, which will govern the sector.” While there is a huge potential for the mining sector, licensing has been slow and the resistance from the community has been a challenge.

“Now we want a mining sector that will be welcomed environmentally and socially,” noted Al Amri.

Unicef welcomes Oman’s social protection system



Sumaira Chowdhury

Representative to Oman in a statement on Monday. “Social protection supports Oman Vision 2040’s aim of a strong and cohesive society in which everyone can enjoy a decent standard of living – especially children, young people, women, people with disabilities

New system, developed with support from Unicef and ILO, introduces benefits that will contribute to the well-being of children and other vulnerable members of the population over life course

and other vulnerable groups.” As well as providing individuals with access to financial support and other resources throughout their lives and especially in times of need, the new system aligns with international best standards and practices, ensuring that it meets global benchmarks for quality and

effectiveness.

Over the past 2 years, Unicef has worked closely with the government’s social protection project team to contribute to the design of this new system, in collaboration also with the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Around the world, Unicef is a leading global partner on social protection, working in more than 140 countries on a wide range of policies and programmes — from cash transfer programmes to social welfare services — that address child poverty in all its dimensions.

In Oman, Unicef is working with the government to enhance policies, programmes, services and systems in the social sector to improve the well-being of children.

Pact to buy wheat for RO 500 per tonne from farmers

MUSCAT: In a bid to strengthen the food security system in the Sultanate of Oman, and to encourage the local farmers to grow wheat, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources signed agreement of cooperation with Oman Flour Mills Company, to purchase locally produced wheat crop from farmers for RO 500 per tonne in the harvest season of 2022-23.

The agreement was signed by Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and

Water Resources for Agriculture, and Haitham bin Mohammad al Fannah, CEO of Oman Flour Mills Company.

Dr Al Bakri praised the efforts of Oman Flour Mills Company to purchase wheat crop from farmers annually, as part of the company’s efforts to strengthen the food security system in the Sultanate of Oman and develop the Omani Bur product, as a brand that is being marketed in the local and regional markets. “Signing the agreement to purchase wheat crop from the local farmers through Omani Flour



Mills, will motivate the farmers to increase their productivity.”

The CEO of Oman Flour Mills Company said that the ministry is exerting its maximum efforts to strengthen the food security system in the Sultanate of Oman through many legislative aspects that stimulate the investors and farmers. “The sector with all its subsidiaries highly appreciates this step and interacts positively with it. The signing of this agreement comes within the framework of the company’s keenness to enhance the efforts to maintain

food security requirements and to encourage farmers to continue growing wheat.”

It is worth noting that the area currently cultivated with wheat doubled from the previous season and exceeded 5,000 acres, and it is expected that the yield for the current season will exceed 5,000 tonnes. The ministry, with the support of the Agricultural and Fisheries Development Fund, has provided 6 new harvesters in addition to the previously existing harvesters in the governorates.



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TUESDAY | FEBRUARY 21 | 2023

7

In brief

■ LONDON



BRITISH POLICE FIND BODY AFTER SEARCH FOR MISSING WOMAN

A body has been found in the search for Nicola Bulley, a missing woman in Britain, a case which has gripped the country for weeks. Bulley, a mother of two, went missing in north-western England at the end of January under mysterious circumstances.

The body, which has not yet been identified, was discovered in the River Wyre near where the 45-year-old was last seen, local police said. "We are currently treating the death as unexplained," police said. After dropping off her nine- and six-year-old daughters at school, Bulley went to walk her dog on January 27. Using her phone, she joined a work call.

■ WARSAW



BELARUS EXPELS THREE POLISH DIPLOMATS

Belarus is expelling three Polish diplomats, a spokesman for the Polish Foreign Ministry said, amid increasing tensions between Warsaw and Minsk. Poland said earlier this month it was closing a key border crossing into Belarus at Bobrowniki, driving already hostile relations between the two countries to a new low.

The trio were two consuls from Grodno and the go-between of the Polish border guard in Minsk. "They have to leave Belarus by the end of the day on Wednesday," Lukasz Jasina said.

"We are thinking about a good and proper response to this."

■ MEXICO CITY



BUS CARRYING MIGRANTS IN MEXICO CRASHES, KILLING 17

A bus carrying migrants from Venezuela, Colombia and Central America crashed in central Mexico, killing 17 people, officials in Puebla state said on Monday.

The accident occurred on a highway on Sunday afternoon as a bus with 45 passengers headed north, Puebla's Interior Minister Julio Huerta told reporters.

"Fifteen people at the moment of the accident lost their lives," he told a news conference. Another 15 were hospitalised, two of whom later died, he said. Five others remain in critical condition.

Biden makes surprise visit to Kyiv

KYIV: US President Joe Biden walked around central Kyiv on an unannounced visit on Monday, promising to stand with Ukraine as long as it takes, on a trip clearly timed to upstage the Kremlin ahead of the one-year anniversary of Russia's attack.

Biden, in trademark aviator sunglasses, and President Volodymyr Zelensky, in green battle fatigues, walked side-by-side to a gold-domed cathedral on a bright winter morning pierced by the sound of air raid sirens.

"When (Russian President Vladimir) Putin launched his attack nearly one year ago, he thought Ukraine was weak and the West was divided. He thought he could outlast us. But he was dead wrong," Biden said.

"The cost that Ukraine has had to pay is extraordinarily high. Sacrifices have been far too great ... We know that there will be difficult days and weeks and years ahead."

Outside the cathedral, burnt-out Russian tanks stand as a symbol of Moscow's failed assault on the capital at the outset of its attack. Its forces swiftly reached Kyiv's ramparts only to be turned back by unexpectedly fierce resistance.

Since then, Russia's attack has killed tens of thousands of Ukrainian civilians and soldiers on both sides, cities have been reduced to rubble and millions of refugees have fled. Russia claims to have annexed nearly a fifth of Ukraine, while the West has pledged tens of billions of dollars



US President Joe Biden is greeted by Ukrainian President Zelensky during a visit in Kyiv. - AFP

in military aid to Kyiv.

The US president promised a further \$500 million worth of weaponry, including artillery ammunition, anti-armour systems and air defence radars, plus tighter sanctions on Russia.

"This visit of the US president to Ukraine, the first for 15 years, is the most important visit in the entire history of Ukraine-US relations," Zelensky said.

Foreign Minister Dmitry Kuleba called the visit a signal

to Russia that "no one is afraid of you!" It was clearly timed to upstage Putin, due to make a major address on Tuesday setting out aims for the second year of what he now calls a proxy war against the armed might of

War anniversary seen as motivation for Russian offensive as Zelensky says he and Biden discussed long-range weapons

Washington and the transatlantic military alliance Nato.

"Of course for the Kremlin this will be seen as further proof that the United States has bet on Russia's strategic defeat in the war and that the war itself has turned irrevocably into a war between Russia and the West," said Tatiana Stanovaya, a Russian political analyst.

The anniversary has taken on more than symbolic significance, becoming what the West views as the principal motivation for the war's deadliest phase, with Moscow hurling thousands of conscripts and mercenaries into a winter offensive.

Russia has secured only scant gains so far in assaults in frozen trenches up and down the eastern front in recent weeks. Kyiv and the West see it as a push to give Putin victories to tout a year after he launched Europe's biggest war since World War Two.

Moscow received its own apparent signal of diplomatic support on Monday, with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi expected in the Russian capital for talks. — Reuters

Blinken pledges long-term aid for Turkiye

ANTAKYA: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said during a trip to Turkiye that Washington will help Turkiye "for as long as it takes" after earthquakes rocked the country two weeks ago, as authorities carried out wide-scale demolitions of damaged buildings.

The United States has sent a search and rescue team to Turkey, along with medical supplies, concrete-breaking machinery and additional funding of \$85 million in humanitarian aid that also covers Syria.

The number of people who died in Turkiye in the February 6 earthquake has risen to 41,020, the Anadolu news agency reported on the basis of information from the country's AFAD disaster authority. Combined with the 5,900 reported in Syria, the toll now stands at almost 47,000.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said there was no need to wait for a disaster and difficult times to improve relations with the United States, speaking after talks with Blinken.

Cavusoglu, alongside Blinken, told a news conference that it was not possible for Turkiye to buy US F-16 warplanes with pre-conditions and that he believed the issue can be overcome if the US administration maintains a decisive stance.

"The United States and Turkiye do not agree on every issue but it is a partnership that has withstood against challenges," Blinken told



Collapsed buildings are seen along an alley in the aftermath of the February 6 deadly earthquake that hit Syria and Turkiye, in Jindayris, northwestern Syria. — AFP

New 6.4-magnitude quake hits southern Turkiye

HATAY: A 6.4-magnitude earthquake was recorded on Monday in Turkiye's southern province of Hatay, the hardest hit by a February 6 tremor which left more than 41,000 dead in the country, the disaster response agency AFAD said.

The quake hit the town of Defne at 8:04 pm (1704 GMT) and was strongly felt by AFP teams in Antakya and Adana, 200 kilometres to the north. — AFP

a joint news conference with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu in Ankara.

Total US humanitarian assistance to support the earthquake response in Turkey and Syria has reached \$185 million, the US State Department has said.

Relations between the Nato allies have been strained since 2019 when Ankara acquired Russian missile defence systems, among other sources of tension between them.

Cavusoglu told reporters he had discussed a planned \$20 billion deal for US F-16 warplanes with Blinken, and said that Turkiye would like the US administration to send the formal notification for the F-16s to Congress.

On Monday, rescue work wound down after the February 6 earthquakes killed more than 46,000 people in southern Turkiye and northwest Syria. — AFP

Lula visits disaster zone after Brazil floods kill 36

SAO PAULO: President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva flew on Monday to tour the resort region turned disaster zone where floods and landslides killed at least 36 people just as Brazil celebrated carnival, where dozens were still missing.

Rescue workers were rushing to find any survivors buried under the mud and rubble before it was too late, after hours of record rain devastated the area around the popular coastal city of Sao Sebastiao, around 200 kilometres southeast of Sao Paulo.

Lula's office released a video of him flying in a helicopter over the area, where landslides triggered by the torrential downpours swept away at least 50 homes. Brown flood waters could be seen engulfing houses just inland from the emerald waters of the region's pristine coastline.

The 75-year-old leftist leader, who took office for a third term last month, met Sao Paulo state Governor Tarcisio de Freitas.

Lula said on Twitter that government at all levels would work to "care for the injured, search for the missing and restore roads, energy and telecommunications."

The Sao Paulo state government said the death toll stood at 36. 35 people killed in Sao Sebastiao, and a girl killed in the city of Ubatuba, just up the coast. "Around 40 people



An aerial view of an area affected by heavy rains in Atlantic Forest, Sao Paulo. — Reuters

have still not been located," Sao Paulo rescue department official Michelle Cesar said.

Amid the loss and destruction, authorities said a boy aged two was rescued from a sea of mud, as was a woman who was giving birth.

The rescue department said a total of 14 injured people had been rescued. Nearly 1,000 people were evacuated, while 747 lost their homes, authorities said. The disaster struck just as Brazil celebrated carnival weekend, which draws huge numbers of tourists to Sao Sebastiao and the surrounding area. — AFP

The writer is Associate
Professor, Dept of
English Language
and Literature Sultan
Qaboos University

Luckily, the naysayers were proved wrong and book sales have only seen a sharp in every

Nor are books seen in isolation from the culture and context in which they are written or exhibited. International events like the Jaipur Literary Festival and the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature, two of the most popular in this region,

In fact, most literary festivals now promote local culture through poetry recitations, traditional

Another valuable contribution to a literary festival is the inclusion of a special children's corner. Having storytellers give voice and action to books and giving children opportunities to interact

Telling a story is an ancient art, and listening to one should continue in the future.

JORIS FIORITI

“He could come down but he stays out of loyalty to his owners,” said Efe Subasi, 27, a Haytap volunteer who came after a neighbour informed him of the situation. — **AFP**

The writer is the West
Africa bureau chief at
NYT

Nigeria, and particularly its young people, have had an extremely tough few years. Large groups of schoolchildren have been kidnapped by extremists or ransom-seekers. Youth unemployment nearly tripled during the Buhari years. Demonstrators in peaceful protests



Peter Obi, Labour Party presidential candidate, on his way to a rally in Lagos.

IN A COUNTRY WHERE VOTE-
BUYING AND VIOLENCE
OFTEN DISTORT ELECTIONS,
THE PRESIDENTIAL VOTE
SCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY
25 PRESENTS A RARE CHANCE
FOR MILLIONS OF YOUNG
NIGERIANS, MANY OF THEM
NEW VOTERS, TO MAKE THEIR
ELDERS LISTEN

"We're tired of these same old people coming in to tell us that they're going to change stuff for us and they're not doing anything," she said.

Minutes after he arrived in Alabama's electronics market, Obi's unexpected visit began to go viral. As the convoy left for yet another rally, social media-savvy Obi supporters — nicknamed Obidients — mobbed the vehicles, unsure which one their hero was in. Eventually, he popped out of a sunroof, blowing kisses to the crowd.

— New York Times

To comment & email: opinion@omanobserver.om

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Getting it right in life

“C hill, these are just school exams, we have to face much more bigger challenges in life,” said my friend.

I looked at my young best friend. I looked at all the youngsters in their uniforms and the ones enjoying their free time.

It was a weekend and the event was a gathering of people at a farm. There was a beautiful seating area away from the main function which also featured a play area. Soon the children began to arrive at first with their siblings or best friends and then they were all playing together and challenging each other. They were competing with the performers on stage with much higher decibel.

Some one not their age group happened to sit in the same area, but that did not bother them a bit. They continued to challenge each other in the game. The onlooker feared for their safety as well as the game. The metal see-saw creaked and complained and I silently yelled and screamed worried about a potential mishap that might occur.

Multiply this group and that’s how many groups teachers must be handling at school each day. Some of the children knew each other from school. Then there were the seniors who were ready for higher studies but had not completely shed off their school life and friends.

Now it is these children who would have to face the real world as they complete schooling and head for college and then on specialisations and a career on which they will have to make a decision soon. Life is not meant to be easy they say because then we would not learn much would we?

The toughest education in life is communication. This is one area people do not think much about until they have to give a presentation or a recitation. But most of that comes across as mechanical. It is so much easier to sound and look the same. Try being different in style and appearance and you will be whispered



Lakshmi Kothaneth @lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

THE TOUGHEST EDUCATION IN LIFE IS COMMUNICATION. THIS IS ONE AREA PEOPLE DO NOT THINK MUCH ABOUT UNTIL THEY HAVE TO GIVE A PRESENTATION OR A RECITATION

about. Continue and find your own individuality and soon you find your true voice but make sure you respect and accept others because that is when you find harmony and truly begin to grow. That is because when we accept others we get an opportunity to learn from them. Education is life long and they need not always be institutions where you learn from. Look back and we realise we all have at least someone who has been a role model, a mentor, a best friend who stood by us and allowed us to be who we are until we found ourselves. They nudged us, giggled with us and listened to us while we bragged. It is them who at times made us think and reasoned with us when we were being difficult.

Come back to today and look back and you realise some of the best tools you have adapted are the qualities such as empathy.

How we say, what we say makes all the difference. Understanding that no one is above anyone makes one able to respect. That need not mean we lose our identity or not have our say. Politeness is often taken as weakness and calmness as shyness. It is just that some people prefer to maintain their peace and preserve their energy.

Just as they say in art, layer the colours and put pressure on the same spot with colour pencil and you get opacity go lighter on the colour as in water colours and you get translucency. We can have the same effect on people. The more pressure we put people through sooner they close up. Let people be and they breathe easy. So are we responsible for how we make others feel?

When we are there for others there is a sense of satisfaction that no award might be able to fulfil. So if there is someone who would reach out to you it must be with full of trust.

But budding are the ones in schools, some of them high on achievements and others figuring out what are they missing out on. But the world will give everyone an opportunity and the ones who will survive are the ones who have the endurance, patience and have the ability to communicate right because they would have the right attitude.

BACK TO SEA



A young leatherback turtle makes its way to the sea after hatching on Bang Khwan beach in the coastal Thai province of Phang Nga on Monday. Leatherback turtles, which are found to nest along the Andaman Sea coast, are the most migratory of all sea turtles with populations distributed around the world in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans, and are listed as a vulnerable species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. – AFP

How to prevent humanitarian crises

The world is in the midst of the worst food crisis in modern history. As a confluence of geopolitical, economic, and climate crises fuels global shortages, a staggering 326 million people in dozens of countries need humanitarian aid, with 222 million facing acute food insecurity and up to 50 million at risk of starving to death.

The poorest countries have been hit the hardest by the rise in global food prices caused by the war in Ukraine. And with the looming climate catastrophe threatening to compound the effects of conflict and supply-chain disruptions, the humanitarian sector must adopt a more proactive, anticipatory approach to the growing hunger crisis.

Until relatively recently, humanitarian organisations did not pay much attention to climate change. But the proliferation of weather-related humanitarian emergencies has caused the sector to recognise the threat that the climate crisis poses to low-income countries and to the global food system.

While the deadly floods and heatwaves that have struck Europe over the last two years have shown that even countries considered to be relatively safe are not immune to extreme weather events, developing countries are much more vulnerable. In 2021, 94 per cent of internally displaced people became so as a result



Myriam Castaneda Solares

The writer is Advocacy Lead at Start Network, a global network of humanitarian NGOs

WITH THE LOOMING CLIMATE CATASTROPHE THREATENING TO COMPOUND THE EFFECTS OF CONFLICT AND SUPPLY-CHAIN DISRUPTIONS, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST BE MORE PROACTIVE IN ADDRESSING HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

of climate-related hazards. Last year’s floods in Pakistan, which shocked the world, submerged one-third of the country, claimed more than 1,730 lives, affected 33 million people, and caused economic losses estimated at \$16.3 billion.

With climate change causing humanitarian crises all over the world, the number of people in need of aid has increased by 40 per cent over the past year. In response to the growing need, funding for humanitarian causes has nearly doubled over the past decade, reaching \$31.3 billion in 2021. But while funding has increased, the challenge facing international agencies and NGOs today is to maximise the impact of these resources and empower local and national organisations.

As matters currently stand, two-thirds of all direct contributions to humanitarian causes go to United Nations agencies and prominent international organisations like the Red Cross and Red Crescent. While these large institutions play a crucial role, community-based initiatives often have a better grasp of local contexts. The world’s largest donors and NGOs seemed to acknowledge this when they launched the Grand Bargain initiative in 2016, committing to providing 25 per cent of humanitarian funding

to local organisations. But seven years after the agreement was announced, the figure is still less than 2 per cent.

So far, the sector’s modus-operandi has been reactive. Whether it is Haiti, Ethiopia, or Pakistan, the methods are the same: a crisis emerges, a humanitarian appeal is launched, funding is raised, and assistance is delivered many days (if not months) later. But by relying on climate science, we can anticipate risks and address humanitarian needs before they become emergencies.

Anticipatory action, defined as “acting ahead of predicted

hazardous events to prevent or reduce acute humanitarian impacts before they fully unfold,” involves forecasting mechanisms and pre-agreed triggers and thresholds for releasing funds in advance. By responding to needs in this way, we can deliver aid more effectively and in a more dignified way. In 2019, for example, the Senegalese government and Start Network each purchased insurance policies against drought, allowing them to receive funding for humanitarian action and coordinate measures to protect at-risk communities.

But anticipatory action also

has its limits. As a recent report by Start Network shows, not all crises can be forecast or modelled. Even so, adopting this approach would allow humanitarian actors and organisations to be proactive, improve efficiency, and prevent life-threatening events from developing into large-scale disasters.

The global aid system needs rapid reform. While some progress has been made in recent years, much of it has been transactional rather than transformative. To be sure, the problems we face are complicated and multidimensional, and we cannot disregard the political dimension of humanitarian action. Some may believe that necessity or desperation will force the sector to change for the better, but scaling up anticipatory and locally-led action represents a far more promising path.

The ongoing climate crisis offers a unique opportunity for evidence-based humanitarian reform. In our data-driven world, there is no reason to wait until disaster strikes. By anticipating risks and planning ahead, we can protect vulnerable communities and make the world a safer place.

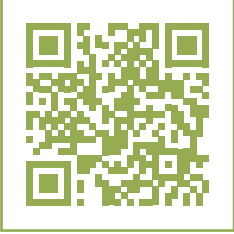
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Last year’s floods in Pakistan claimed more than 1,730 lives, affected 33 million people.

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AL FAISAL AL ZUBAIR, LUCA STOLZ AND MARTIN KONRAD SECURE WINS

OMAN TEAM POSTS BACK-TO-BACK VICTORIES IN THIRD AND FOURTH RACES



Al Manar Racing clinch GT class wins in Asian Le Mans

ABU DHABI: Oman's Al Faisal al Zubair, Germany's Luca Stolz and Austrian Martin Konrad claimed sensational back-to-back GT Class victories in the third and fourth races of the 2023 Asian Le Mans Series at the Yas Marina circuit in Abu Dhabi at the weekend.

At the wheel of the Al Manar Racing by Haupt Racing Team Mercedes AMG GT3 running under the Omani national flag in the GT class, the trio won the first race on Saturday evening by 17.875 seconds and followed that with a repeat win against a world class field on Sunday by even bigger margin of 27.70 seconds.

This was a superb result for the Sultanate of Oman and a major boost to the Al Manar Racing by Haupt Racing Team and Al Zubair himself as he continues his racing programme throughout the 2023 season.

The Walkenhorst Motorsport BMW M4, crewed by Chandler Hull, Nicky Catsburg and Thomas Merrill, had won both races in Dubai last weekend and second position in the second of the Abu Dhabi races enabled them to claim the GT Class title.

A delighted Al Zubair said: "The weekend couldn't have gone any better with a double win at Asian Le Mans with such a strong grid is definitely something to be very proud of. We were a little unfortunate to miss out on the championship after what happened in the second race in Dubai last weekend. Nonetheless, we did an amazing job to secure second in the championship and a double win in Abu Dhabi.

"We couldn't have asked for much more. We came and did our best here. We won two races. The car was mega and Martin and Luca performed amazingly. I am very happy with the all-round performance. Yesterday, at the

end we were managing the race and today we were pushing to open the gap."

"We passed the car to Luca for the final stint in a great position. The strategy worked well. The full course yellows helped us as well. Besides that, the performance from the bronze, silver and gold drivers was excellent. It's my first championship with the ACO, which manage the World Endurance Championship, and it's good to be on their radar and to show them that we are a team that is strong. Al Manar Racing is gaining a lot of traction and getting some results. The Omani national anthem and the flag flying on the top of the podium was icing on the cake."

The HRT team started the weekend where they hoped to end it with the quickest lap in the first free practice session on Friday morning. Stolz carded a best lap of 1min 53.429sec and that put the Al Manar Racing Mercedes 0.274 seconds faster than Leipert Motorsport's Lamborghini in the hands of Brendon Leitch. Getspeed's Raffaele Marciello came home in third.

The HRT car was eighth of the 21 starters in the second free practice session with the fastest lap falling to TF Sport's Jonathan Adam at the wheel of an Aston Martin Vantage.

The HRT Team managed to finish the session in third place with a best lap of 1min 53.001sec. Pole position for race one went to Hub Auto Racing's Ollie Millroy, Jules Gounon and Liam Talbot in a Mercedes AMG GT3. But Al Zubair, Stolz and Konrad came good when it mattered in the race and completed 94 laps to secure victory by 17.875 seconds from the Herberth Motorsport Porsche 911 GT3 trio of Alex Malykhin, Joel Sturm and Harry King. The Leipert Motorsport car rounded off the podium places.

Royal Cavalry's 'Mutaqadem', 'Muthabir' win top places in UAE

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, FEB 20

The Royal Court Affairs represented by Royal Cavalry won first place in two races in the United Arab Emirates.

'Mutaqadem' claimed the second round, which was devoted to purebred Arabian horses for a distance of 1,600 metres. The Royal Cavalry horse was led by jockey Ray Dawson and supervised by Ibrahim al Hadrami at the Abu Dhabi Equestrian Club track.

'Muthabir' came top in the third round, which was allocated to purebred Arabian horses for a distance of 2,000 metres. The Royal Cavalry horse was led by Ray Dawson and under the coaching of Ibrahim al Hadrami at Al Ain Equestrian Club track.

In the same race competition, Royal Cavalry's 'Al Thara'a' took the second place

in the 10th race of the second round of the Al Ain Marathon (Endurance) for a distance of 4,100 metres. Ray Dawson rode Al Thara'a, trained by Ibrahim al Hadrami.

10 horses qualify for Dhofar race

On the other hand, Oman Equestrian Federation in cooperation with the Dhofar Equestrian Committee concluded the endurance race for a distance of 40 km on the shore of Khor Al Dahariz, with participation of 14 horses from Dhofar Governorate. The race was part of the federation's schedule for the season 2022-23.

The round was given the red colour, where 10 horses were able to reach the end line and qualified with good health. The speed limit was 12 km/h, the maximum speed was 16 km/h and the maximum heart rate was 56 beats/min. The age of horses was stipulated at five years.



New Zealand stay alive as Pakistan, Sri Lanka lose



New Zealand's Amelia Kerr plays a shot during the Group A T20 Women's World Cup match against Sri Lanka at Boland Park in Paarl. – AFP

PAARL, South Africa: The battle to reach the Women's T20 World Cup semifinals will go down to the last group match after New Zealand kept their hopes alive with a 102-run rout of Sri Lanka at Boland Park in Paarl on Sunday.

"We've given ourselves a chance, even it's only a small, tiny chance," said New Zealand captain Sophie Devine.

Australia are assured of winning Group One but the other qualifiers from the group will only be known after South Africa play Bangladesh at Newlands in Cape Town on Tuesday.

New Zealand moved into second place, but will be overtaken if South Africa beat Bangladesh.

Sri Lanka, who won their first two matches, finished level on points with New Zealand but were eliminated on net run rate.

West Indies beat Pakistan in Group Two earlier on Sunday in a result that ensured that England would qualify.

India will join them if they beat bottom team Ireland in Gqeberha on Monday.

If Ireland pull off an improbable win, Pakistan will have a slight

chance of overtaking India if they beat England on Tuesday.

"It is a very important match for us," said Pakistan captain Bismah Maroof.

"We have played good cricket and we will try to continue that."

That New Zealand would still be in the reckoning seemed impossible when they lost heavily against Australia and South Africa.

But the White Ferns stormed back with an 81-run win against Bangladesh before turning on the power on Sunday, scoring 162 for three and then bowling out Sri Lanka for 60.

"We spoke about scoring 160 even though it was a tougher wicket than Newlands (in Cape Town)," said Devine.

That was achieved through half-centuries by Suzie Bates (56) and Amelia Kerr (66) after Bernadine Bezuidenhout set the tone with an aggressive 32 off 20 balls.

"We always knew 160 was going to be competitive and then the bowlers were fantastic," said Devine.

'TOUGH DAY'

"It was a tough day," said

WOMEN'S T20 WORLD CUP TABLES

(PLAYED, WON, LOST, TIED, NO RESULT, POINTS, NET RUN RATE)

Group 1
Australia 4 4 0 0 0 8 2.149 - Q
NZ 4 2 2 0 0 4 0.138
Sri Lanka 4 2 2 0 0 4 -1.460
South Africa 3 1 2 0 0 2 0.685
Bangladesh 3 0 3 0 0 0 -1.721

Group 2
England 3 3 0 0 0 6 1.776 - Q
India 3 2 1 0 0 4 0.205
West Indies 4 2 2 0 0 4 -0.601
Pakistan 3 1 2 0 0 2 0.98
Ireland 3 0 3 0 0 0 -1.989

NOTE: Q for qualified, top two teams in each group qualify for semifinals

Sri Lanka captain Chamari Athapaththu.

"I have only a few experienced players in the team. We learnt a lot of things today."

West Indian captain Hayley Matthews said a strong finish to their campaign gave her hope for the future of women's cricket in

the Caribbean.

The West Indies beat Pakistan by three runs to finish their group fixtures with two wins out of four.

They ended a 15-match T20 losing streak when they beat Ireland in their previous match and showed character in the win over Pakistan, defending a total of 116 for six, which Matthews believed was "20 runs short."

"We have a lot of young players in our squad and with our young players developing we are moving in the right direction," said Matthews.

It was a bitter-sweet day for Pakistan veteran Nida Dar, who took two for 13 in four overs of accurate off-spin to equal former West Indies player Anisa Mohammed's record of 125 wickets in women's T20 internationals.

Dar scored 27 runs in Pakistan's reply but couldn't take her team to victory.

The semifinals will be played on Thursday and Friday, with the final on Sunday. All the knock-out matches will be at Newlands.

— AFP

2,000 take part in Al Khabourah mountain walk

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, FEB 20

Under the auspices of Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, Al Khabour Club, represented by the Wadi Al Hawasneh team, organised a mountain walk (marathon) with the participation of 2,000 participants of different ages and women from various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

The walk was held in Wadi Al Hawasneh for a distance of 14 km, titled 'The Al Khabourah Path in the Footsteps of the Grandfathers'.

The goal of the walk was to introduce local tourism and the natural components that the mountainous areas of Wadi Al Hawasneh enjoy, to enhance the history and national

heritage, and to spread health and sports awareness among societies, in addition to strengthening partnership between private sector and various groups of society.

The event also included several heritage activities and the participation of folk art teams, hiking, paragliding and motorbike events, an exhibition for supplying cars, an exhibition for four-wheel-drive tools, and a special exhibition for people with special needs.

In addition, a caravan of a group of camels loaded with old supplies and goods was also part of the event.

During the concluding ceremony, the chief guest honoured the participants, the supporting agencies and the volunteer teams.



Fagor FCC beat Glam Homes to claim A Division title

MUSCAT: Fagor FCC dominated Glam Homes Properties to beat them by 72 runs in the last match of the Oman Cricket League A Division 2022-23 powered by Khimji Ramdas LLC to emerge champions.

Fagor registered five victories in seven games in the season to claim the top spot in the standings by net run-rate.

Opting to bat first, Fagor FCC's openers started well as Shazaf Ali (60 off 59b; 6x4,3x6) along with Nishanth M stitched a 96-run partnership. Losing couple of wickets in clusters, Fagor FCC successfully arched back with Vinukumar CG (55 off 52b; 6x4,1x6) and Sultan Ahmed ensuring they get to a respectable

total. Fagor FCC finished with 250-8 in 50 overs with Nalinda P (2-44) and Flourry MG (2-44) picking wickets for Glam Homes.

In reply, Glam Homes got off to a subtle start but kept losing wickets at regular intervals with only Dileepa Srilal (58 off 75; 4x4,1x6) being not-out to hold onto their innings. Glam Homes were bundled out for 178 in 37.5 overs failing to chase down the target and falling to third position in the standings.

Fagor FCC on the other hand clinched the vital two points assuring them the title for the season.

Nowfal Raymarakkar, Manager of Fagor FCC, said: "We love



getting past nail-biting games. It was a do-or-die match for us and I am delighted the way our captain Parameshwaran Shankar and the boys expressed themselves. It was an exemplary season for

us winning five out of seven games in the A Division by the barest of margins and the closest of competition. We had a clear mindset and executed our plans well. Credit to our players and the Fagor FCC Management for supporting us in the A Division to claim the title coming through the ranks."

"We are looking forward to the season ahead and the competition Premier Division will bring forward to us. I thank the Oman Cricket for providing us their extended support and enable us to showcase our cricketing frontier ahead. We envision to play our best quality of cricket in the Premier Division in the coming season!"

Al Suwaiq hold hosts Seeb in first leg



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, FEB 20

Defending champions Seeb and three-time winners Al Suwaiq ended their HM Cup 2022-23 semifinal first leg in a goalless draw on Monday. At Seeb Stadium, both teams could not penetrate the defending line to score a goal.

Al Rustaq will have the home advantage as both teams meet in the second leg match at the Al Rustaq Sports Complex on Sunday.

Seeb was the better side in the first half of the game as they missed more than five scoring attempts by their strikers including Abdulaziz al Maqbali and Mohsin

Seeb's movements were led in the centre by Salah al Yahyaei who created several attempts but lacked finishing by the teammates

al Ghassani. Seeb's movement were led in the centre by Salah al Yahyaei who created several attempts but lacked finishing by the teammates.

Al Suwaiq's defenders and national team goalkeeper Fayeze al Rushaidi broke all the chances of 2022 AFC Cup champions. On the other hand, coach Ibrahim Somar's men were focused in the back line

and they did not appear more in the attacking area.

In the second-half, the visitors returned back to the match after the substitutions made by coach Somar specially introduction of Abdullah al Saadi. However, the guests' movements were not converted to goals as defender Mohammed al Musallami and his teammates managed to prevent all the chances properly.

In the dying minutes, Oman international referee Omar al Yaqoobi showed a red card for Seeb's Jebola after his strong interaction against Al Suwaiq's midfielder Harib al Saadi in the 96th minute. With this card, Seeb will miss the

service of Jebola in the away game at Al Rustaq Sports Complex.

Seeb, coached by national coach Rasheed Jaber, began the match with a starting line-up featured of Ahmed al Rawahi as goalkeeper besides Mohammed Ramadhan, Abdulaziz al Maqbali, Mohammed al Habsi, Mohsin al Ghassani, Ali al Busaidy, Salah al Yahyaei, Hassan al Ajami, Eid al Farsi and Jebola.

Al Suwaiq played the game with Fayeze al Rushaidi as goalkeeper alongside to Ahmed al Khamisi, Khalid al Buraiki, Omar al Fazari, Issam al Subhi, Basil al Rawahi, Mohammed al Maashari, Omid Okari, Harib al Saadi and Mamadu Lamin.

Spurs back in form with win over Hammers

ANDY JALIL
LONDON, FEB 20

Tottenham Hotspurs' 2-0 win at home in the London derby against West Ham took them back into the top four of the Premier League, a sought-after position for Champions League qualification.

With Tottenham's manager, Antonio Conte recovering after an operation, the assistant coach, Cristian Stellini, who has had three wins from three games in-charge said: "I'm very glad to see this type of performance. It was an important game, important moment. With a win we could reach again fourth place. It is important now to be consistent."

After a lacklustre 45 minutes, Tottenham were a different proposition in the second half,

both with keeping possession and moving the ball around with accuracy and urgency. They had a strong appeal rejected for a penalty midway through the first half when Thilo Kehrer handled the ball as he fell on a pass which was heading towards striker Harry Kane.

The visitors, however, could have had an early lead when, in the first minute Jarrod Bowen took a powerful shot from the penalty box but it went inches wide. There were very few shots on target in the first half but the game sprang into life after the break.

Spurs got the breakthrough in the 56th minute. Ben Davies sent a long pass to the unmarked Emerson Royal whose right-footed shot from half-way inside the 18-yard box beat the diving Lukas Fabianski.

Earlier, Richarlson should have



Tottenham Hotspur's Harry Kane in action with West Ham United's Thilo Kehrer.
- Reuters

done better when his shot from the edge of the box lacked power and went straight to the Hammers goalkeeper. Kane too missed a fine chance when he shot wide from an angle after receiving a pass from Dejan Kulusevski who had done well to win the ball away from Declan Rice.

Richarlson was replaced in the 68th minute by Heung-Min Son with the Hammers also later bringing on substitutes Danny Ings and Said Benrahma but it did not help. For Spurs the change had worked well as the South Korean made an impact straightaway doubling the lead within four minutes of arrival.

It was the combination of Kane and Son that was so effective with Kane putting through a well-measured pass to the advancing

Son who, with a burst of pace, drove a firm low shot giving no chance to Fabianski. The goal extended the record of Kane and Son as pair, to have combined for most Premier League goals to 45.

West Ham manager, David Moyes said: "It's been a problem all season, we haven't been able to create. The players have been challenged now, let's see who's up for the fight. I'll be looking to see the colour of the player's eyes in the next week. I can imagine what the colour of mine will be."

Hammers captain, Rice seemed critical of their strategy: "When you play with five at the back and the three, like we set up today, maybe our strikers felt a bit isolated when we got the ball up to them - they didn't really have enough around them, not enough support."



New franchising initiative to unlock entrepreneurial avenues for Omanis

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, FEB 20

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), in cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, launched a franchise programme aimed at encouraging young Omani entrepreneurs and jobseekers to set up businesses under the franchise model.

The initiative, which runs until February 23, 2023, opened under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, in the presence of Eng Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, Chairman of OCCI and a number of business leaders.

Speaking at the opening of the event, Eng Hamoud bin Salem al Saadi, Chairman of the Chamber's South Al Batinah branch, said: "Franchising is one of the basic tools that serve both the franchisor and the franchisee in developing their businesses and achieving the required geographical footprint.

Through the programme, the Chamber seeks to prepare Omani companies to become franchisors, thereby strengthening their own



corporate profile and contributing to their business growth."

He further added: "Through this initiative, young Omanis will benefit as franchisees and support the expansion of franchises to new markets, potentially here and overseas, without the need for the franchisor to invest in investment or operating costs.

In turn, the franchisors will also earn financial benefits through this model." Over the course of the four-day programme, a number of seminars and workshops will be held in the branches of OCCI in various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

OCCI, as the official representative of the private sector

and responsible for regulating the commercial and industrial interests of its employees, is keen to spearhead new initiatives that contribute to the growth of the local economy and open up livelihoods for young Omanis, said Al Saadi. The official called on Omani companies to support this initiative by registering in the franchise programme.

The inauguration ceremony included the presentation of two working papers that touched on the importance of trademark registration, the usufruct system, and initiatives to support commercial franchise projects.

A work on the theme, "Excellence: From the Local to

the Global", was also held. Separately, Oman Development Bank in cooperation and coordination with the Small and Medium Enterprises Authority has pledged to support the initiative by financing industrial projects, manufacturing industries, service projects, trade concession projects, mining, logistics industries, tourism projects, and agriculture and fisheries, according to Shaikha al Mahrouqi, Financing Programme Specialist at the SME Authority.

Entrepreneurs and job seekers will receive financing support up to a ceiling of RO 250,000. The repayment period is 10 years or according to the nature of the project.

Abraj Energy Services holds session on IPO

MUSCAT: Abraj Energy Services, a subsidiary of OQ, organised an informative session on the Initial Public Offering (IPO) for 49 per cent of its shares, in collaboration with Oman Chamber for Commerce and Industry's (OCCI) branch in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate. This move comes as part of the efforts exerted by the company to educate investors about how to invest in its IPO that runs from February 20 to March 1, 2023.

Anwar al Sinani, Board Member of OCCI and Board Chairman of OCCI's branch in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate said, "The Abraj IPO is extremely vital as it is a means of investment for citizens and residents in profitable investment schemes.

The subscription of Abraj, a subsidiary of OQ, which is affiliated to Oman Investment Authority (OIA), is the first of its kind in the oil and gas sector in the Sultanate of Oman. It falls under the directives of the government to attract national and foreign investments and reuse its resources in other areas of investment. This company is highly trusted because of its affiliation to OIA."



Eng Saif al Hamhami, CEO of Abraj Energy Services, said, "Abraj's shares are offered for subscription in two parallel categories. The first category is allocated to major Omani and non-Omani investors including individuals and legal entities. It will account for a maximum of 85 per cent of the total public offering. The subscription price in the first category is set within the range of 242 baisas to 249 baisas per share."

"The second category of shares will be offered for small investors and will account for no less than 15 per cent of the total public offering. It is allocated for individual investors in the Sultanate of Oman. The shares of this second category will be offered at a maximum discounted price of 224 baisas per share, calculated at a maximum price of 249 baisas with a discount of 10 per cent," he added.

35,000 MT shipment of wheat bound for Oman



The wheat is being loaded at the Port of Geelong. (Supplied by Riordan Grain)

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, FEB 20

Oman Flour Mills (OFM), a major player in the country's food sector, expects to receive a 35,000 MT of wheat from Australia this month as a result of a contract signed in November last year by OMAUS Pty Australia and local Australian farmers.

OMAUS Pty Australia is a trading firm set up by Atyab Investments (the investment arm of OFM) to help secure grain supplies from Australia and with the aim to "contract (directly) with growers in Australia" thereby enabling better procurement terms for the buying of Australian grains.

To this end, two Australian farmers have joined forces to put together and export a 35,000-tonne bulk shipment of milling wheat to Oman in what could be a first for the Australia's wheat industry.

Farmers Andrew Weidemann and Barry Large have started the company LW Investments Australia to export grain, including their own, directly from farmers to end users.

The ship is being loaded at the Port of Geelong in Victoria,

Australia and will sail for Oman this week.

"Farmers don't usually export their own grain. Typically, they deliver to a bulk handler like Graincorp or Vitterra, which then manages export logistics. End users like Oman Flour Mills wanted to buy grain directly from growers.

Oman Flour Mills has been purchasing wheat from Australia for quite some time, but they have been talking about trying to connect directly with farmers," Weidemann said in a report by abc.net.

Meanwhile, Atyab Investments is exploring new projects in line with OFM's strategy to diversify which include (1) venturing into the production of foods based on organic flour; (2) looking at sustainable food projects based on alternative protein sources; (3) farming of Spirulina — cyanobacteria from blue-green algae species which can be processed into nutritive products consumed by humans and animals alike; and (4) cultivating water lentils — a plant with a roughly 45 – 48 per cent protein content that can be used as a soybean meal replacement in animal feed.

New briquetting project to boost Vale's operations in Oman

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, FEB 20

A new briquetting plant proposed by Brazilian mining conglomerate Vale SA at its iron ore pelletising complex in Sohar Port promises to further reinforce the Sultanate of Oman's importance as a major distribution hub for feedstock targeted at steel plans in the region.

Vale's wholly-owned Omani subsidiary Vale Oman Pelletising Company (Vale in Oman) announced last week that a Board decision approving the new investment is anticipated by around the middle of this year.

If indeed the initiative gets the greenlight, it will culminate in the addition of a briquetting plant that churns out relatively low-carbon hot briquetted iron (HBI) — a high density raw material for the steel industry containing 90-94 per cent iron in a nearly pure form.

Produced by reducing iron ore with natural gas, these briquettes are considered environmentally friendly relative to feedstock produced with the use of coal as the reducing agent. With many steel mills switching to Electric Arc Furnaces (EAF) for environmental reasons from conventional blast furnaces, the demand for briquettes as the primary feedstock has soared in recent years.

For Vale in Oman, the addition of a briquetting plant at its Sohar Port complex will lend further



VALE IN OMAN, WHICH RECENTLY CELEBRATED 10 YEARS OF SUCCESSFUL OPERATIONS, IS THE PRODUCT OF A \$1.25 BILLION INVESTMENT FEATURING AN IRON ORE PELLETISING PLANT WITH A CAPACITY OF 9 MILLION METRIC TONNES PER YEAR AND A DISTRIBUTION CENTRE WITH A THROUGHPUT CAPACITY OF 40 MILLION METRIC TONNES

flexibility to its operations to serve a wider choice of steel mills in the Middle East.

Vale in Oman, which recently celebrated 10 years of successful operations, is the product of a \$1.25 billion investment featuring an iron ore pelletising plant with a capacity of 9 million metric tonnes per year and a distribution centre with a throughput capacity of 40 million metric tonnes.

Much of this output is shipped

to DRI mills in the Middle East as feedstock in the production of steel products, including reinforcing bar (rebar).

Significantly, Oman represents an important investment destination for Vale SA as the mining giant embarks on a major growth strategy centring on the establishment of low-carbon mega hubs in key locations around the world.

Duqm, in Al Wusta Governorate, has been tipped to host one such mega hub.

To this end, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAL) last November.

Briquetting plants, which contribute to significant savings in CO2 emissions, will be at the heart of these proposed mega hubs.

Based initially on the use of natural gas for the production

of briquettes, these plants will eventually switch hydrogen and other renewable energy resources when the availability of these low carbon energy fuels becomes competitive and widespread.

Through these decarbonisation initiatives, Vale aims to reduce to reduce 15% of net scope 3 emissions by 2035.

The goal is to reduce its absolute scope 1 and 2 emissions by 33 per cent by 2030 and achieve net zero by 2050.

Last week, Vale in Oman acquired the Omani government's 30 per cent in the company (represented by wholly state-owned OQ Group) to become a fully-owned subsidiary of Rio de Janeiro-headquartered Vale SA.

It follows a call option exercised by OQ to sell its 30 per cent non-controlling interest held in the Sohar company. The closing of the transaction is expected to take place in Q2 2023.

Vodafone joins hands with Oman Food Bank contributing to national food security agenda

MUSCAT: Vodafone in Oman has signed an agreement to join forces with the Oman Food Bank (OFB), as it continues its mission to positively contribute to the lives of people in the Sultanate of Oman.

The deal will see Vodafone back the OFB's goals to provide food supplies to low-income families across Oman, support Oman's food security efforts and raise awareness on importance of food preservation.

Vodafone's contributions will impact low-income families across the Sultanate of Oman,



continuing to build the company's growing reputation as a socially responsible organisation in line with Oman's national agenda.

The OFB, a non-profit entity, specialises in distributing food to beneficiaries across the Sultanate of Oman, and supporting partnership and awareness throughout society, led by the concept of social solidarity.

The national initiative supports Oman Vision 2040 of a circular and green economy as one of the country's most important pillars of food security.

Eng Bader al Zidi, Vodafone Oman CEO, said: "We are proud to have completed this agreement with the Oman Food Bank, which for many years has been tireless in its work to support the less fortunate across the Sultanate of Oman.

This partnership will allow Vodafone to enhance OFB's commendable work thus far and to help improve the lives of families throughout Oman."

Eng Ibrahim al Hosni, Chairman of Oman Food Bank, said: "Vodafone has impacted many lives since entering the

Omani market in early 2022. Today, we look forward to be joining our hand together for the good of Oman and its people, helping many across Oman and boosting their quality of life."

The collaboration with the OFB is part of an ongoing, multi-faceted campaign of initiatives from Vodafone, based around positive social impact. Most recently, that included raising more than RO 100,000 for charity via a ground-breaking live auction of special gold and diamond phone numbers.

Ford Taurus: A new level of sophistication

MUSCAT: The Ford Taurus is the latest entrant from Ford stables that is quickly making a lasting impression with its sleek looks, sophisticated technology and advanced safety.

The Ford Taurus puts you ahead of expectations with a blend of seamless connectivity, high on-road performance and an entirely new sleek modern design. Boasting an attractive and stylish design, on an entirely different platform, the Taurus exudes refinement with numerous premium touches. Featuring 19-inch, 10-spoke polished alloy wheels, a new flatter streamlined hood and a power-deployable door handle, Taurus is sleeker in its stance.

A dynamic shield-like, clipped trapezoidal grille with active shutter, black mesh and chrome surrounds hint at the power contained within, with a dual exhaust adding a strong sense of style and substance. Auto high beams and a full LED two-piece headlamp design guarantee Taurus is always seen in the best light.

In the Taurus, the materials used throughout the cabin reinforce the feeling of comfort and exceptional, uncompromised quality. 10-way power driver, six-way power passenger seats and seven ambient colours – including a light interior colour palette.

In the Taurus, extensive use of sound-deadening materials, advanced technologies and precise engineering, as well as cooling dual zone auto AC, ensure that whether in the front or rear seats, all occupants are treated to an exceptionally quiet cabin



matched by a smooth and comfortable ride, and an incredible view from the expansive dual panel panoramic moon roof. A cavernous trunk boasting 520-litres capacity adds even greater practicality to the newly-designed flagship Ford sedan.

At the heart of Taurus' connective experience is the large, best-in-class, multi-function 13.2-inch centre touchscreen – complementing the big 8-inch digital instrument panel cluster – loaded with Ford's intuitive SYNC4 technology, which comes customer-ready with its voice-activated communications, entertainment and information systems.

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be'ah participates as strategic sponsor at Oman Sustainability Week 2023

MUSCAT: Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be'ah) has proudly announced its support for the upcoming Oman Sustainability Week 2023 as a strategic sponsor.

This event, hosted by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), will take place from March 12-16 and will showcase the nation's commitment to sustainability and the environment.

Oman Sustainability Week serves as a shining example of the Sultanate of Oman's focus on sustainable development goals and its efforts to promote a harmonious balance between economic, social, and environmental progress. The event aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and offers a platform to showcase innovative initiatives and programmes aimed at promoting sustainability. be'ah's support of this important



event underscores the company's commitment to supporting the Sultanate of Oman's goals for sustainability and advancing the nation's overall development.

It is expected that the week will witness wide participation from local and international entities and experts and those interested in sustainability issues. Co-located at the event, the International Sustainability, Resources, and Technology Conference (ISRTC) is organised by be'ah and programmed by Economist

Impact.

The conference, which will take place on March 13-14, is a crucial platform for experts and those interested in sustainability to exchange knowledge, discuss, and present the best practices and developments to increase awareness of the concept and goals of sustainability. The conference will feature the participation of over 50 local and international speakers and 450 representatives from various public and private organisations.

OTE Group dedicates new showroom to Haval automotive range

MUSCAT: Leading Omani automotive distributor OTE Group launched an exclusive showroom dedicated to Haval – an icon of China's automotive industry and the third largest selling SUV globally.

The launch marks a new chapter in the positioning and growth of Haval, among other fellow brands of Great Wall Motor (GWM) group, in the Omani market. Representing the cream of the crust of China's automotive offerings, Haval and its siblings from Great Wall Group are poised to enjoy a strong growth trajectory in the Sultanate of Oman, as they indeed have in other regional and international markets.

Speaking at the showroom launch at OTE's Al Wattayah headquarters on February 14, Shaikh Saad Suhail Bahwan, Chairman – OTE Group said: "We at OTE – exclusive distributors of Haval and other reputable brands from Great Wall Motor in the Sultanate of Oman – are immensely proud to showcase the Haval range of SUVs at our headquarters in Al Wattayah.



This showroom, which is modern in its design and state-of-the-art in its furnishing, is a testament to OTE's commitment to nurturing the growth of Haval in the Omani market."

Present at the opening was a distinguished gathering of guests from the Chinese Embassy in the Sultanate of Oman, led by Yao Mingshan, Director of the Ambassador's office. Great Wall Motor was represented by high level officials comprising of Tony Sun Guang, General Manager - GWM Middle East, and Hani

El Sayed Mahmoud El Sayed, Director Sales, GWM Middle East.

Acclaimed as a global SUV specialist, Haval is one of four brands owned by GWM Group, one of China's biggest manufacturers of SUVs and pick-up trucks. With over five million units sold worldwide, Haval is also an international bestseller.

Powering its impressive success is a combination of stylish design elements, cutting-edge technology, superior components and uncompromising safety

features. In addition to its cost-competitive market positioning, the brand also delivers value throughout the entire customer experience.

Holding pride of place in the imposing new showroom are four of Haval's latest offerings: the ultra-stylish Jolion best known for its bold architecture and modern engineering; the Haval H6 – medium size SUV inspired by Asian and European design features combined with its dazzling technology and outstanding safety features; the Haval H9 with its muscular design, superior off-roading capabilities and luxury features; and the Dargo – a mid-size SUV for those with a large appetite for adventure.

Complementing this collection is a selection of popular pick-up models from parent company GWM. The list includes the Wingle and POER series of pick-ups which have played an integral part in GWM's leading position among pick-ups in China, and increasingly around the world as well.



Oxy Oman purchases equipment for Omani Association for the Care of Disabled Children

MUSCAT: Oxy Oman announced that it has become a sponsor of the Omani Association for the Care of Disabled Children in the Wilayat of Yanqul, and will support the Association with various equipment, including medical devices, wheelchair and seating support, exercise equipment and electronic devices. The announcement was made a signing event held at Oxy Oman headquarters under the auspices of HH Sayyidah Hujaija bint Jaifer al Said, Chairwoman of the Association for the Welfare of Handicapped Children. Steven Lauver, President and General Manager of Oxy Oman,

and HH Sayyidah Hujaija bint Jaifer al Said signed the sponsorship agreement on behalf of their respective organisations. Omani Association for the Care of Disabled Children in Wilayat Yanqul is a charitable non-profit organisation which provides rehabilitation training to more than 75 children from Wilayat of Ibri, Wilayat of Dhank and Wilayat of Yanqul, which are located near Oxy Oman concession areas. The organisation provides programmes and activities to develop children's behavioural and cognitive abilities and basic life skills.

UNLEASHING YOUR ENTREPRENEURIAL POTENTIAL

Business model generation: The blueprint to creating a profitable business model in the modern era



KAMLA SAID AL RAHBIA
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The author is a renowned coach, trainer and consultant

Entrepreneurship is a key driver of innovation, job creation, and economic growth. However, starting and growing a successful business is a challenging task that requires a clear understanding of the market, customer needs, and competition. In this context, having a well-defined and robust business model is essential for any entrepreneur or small-to-medium-sized enterprise (SME) seeking to build a profitable and sustainable business. A business model is a blueprint for how a company creates, delivers, and captures value. It defines the products or services offered, the target customer segments, the distribution channels, the revenue streams, and the costs associated with running the business. In the modern era, where technology has disrupted traditional business models and new competitors emerge rapidly, having a flexible and adaptable business model is more important than ever. In this article, we will discuss the concept of business model generation, the key components of a successful business model, and

the steps that entrepreneurs and SME owners can follow to create a profitable business model in the modern era.

What is Business Model Generation?

Business model generation is a systematic approach to developing a business model that is both profitable and sustainable. It involves understanding the market, customer needs, and competition, and then designing a business model that leverages these insights to create value for customers and stakeholders.

The business model generation process starts with the identification of a business opportunity, which could be a gap in the market, a new product or service idea, or a way to solve a customer pain point. Then, the entrepreneur or SME owner defines the target customer segments, the value proposition, and the revenue streams.

Next, they determine the key activities, resources, and partners necessary to deliver the value proposition and create the revenue streams.

Finally, they assess the costs, risks, and profitability of the business model, and refine it as necessary.

Key Components of a Successful Business Model

A successful business model should have several key components that work together to create value for customers and stakeholders, while also generating revenue and profits. These components include:

1. Value Proposition: The value proposition defines what the company is offering to its customers and how it solves a specific problem or fulfils a need.
2. Customer Segments: The customer segments define



the target market for the business. They could be based on demographic, geographic, psychographic, or behavioural characteristics.

3. Revenue Streams: The revenue streams define how the company will make money. They could be based on sales, subscriptions, fees, or other revenue models.
4. Key Activities: The key activities define the processes and tasks required to deliver the value proposition and create the revenue streams.
5. Key Resources: The key resources define the assets and capabilities that the company needs to deliver its value proposition and create its revenue streams.
6. Key Partners: The key partners define the strategic alliances, suppliers, and other stakeholders that the company needs to deliver its value

proposition and create its revenue streams.

7. Cost Structure: The cost structure defines the expenses associated with running the business, including direct and indirect costs.

Steps to Creating a Profitable Business Model

To create a profitable business model, entrepreneurs and SME owners can follow these steps:

1. Identify a business opportunity: Start by identifying a business opportunity that is based on a gap in the market, a new product or service idea, or a way to solve a customer pain point.
2. Define the target customer segments: Identify the target customer segments that are most likely to benefit from the value proposition. This will help to refine the value proposition and create a more targeted marketing strategy.
3. Develop the revenue

streams: Determine the revenue streams that will generate the most revenue with the least amount of effort. This could be based on sales, subscriptions, fees, or other revenue models.

4. Determine key activities and resources: Identify the key activities and resources that are necessary to deliver the value proposition and create the revenue streams. This could include developing products or services, creating marketing and sales strategies, acquiring customers, and managing operations.
5. Identify key partners: Determine the key partners that can help to deliver the value proposition and create the revenue streams. This could include suppliers, distributors, and strategic allies.
6. Assess the cost structure: Determine the costs associated with running the business, including direct and indirect

costs. This will help to assess the profitability of the business model and identify areas where costs can be reduced.

7. Refine and test the business model: Refine the business model based on feedback from customers, partners, and stakeholders.

Then, test the business model by launching a small pilot or conducting market research to validate the assumptions.

8. Continuously refine and adapt: As the business grows and evolves, continuously refine and adapt the business model to meet changing market conditions and customer needs.

In conclusion, business model generation is a systematic approach to creating a profitable and sustainable business model in the modern era.

By understanding the market, customer needs, and competition, and then designing a business model that leverages these insights to create value for customers and stakeholders, entrepreneurs and SME owners can build a successful business that is poised for growth and success.

By following the steps outlined in this article, entrepreneurs and SME owners can create a business model that is both profitable and sustainable, and that is equipped to navigate the challenges of the modern era.

We hope you have enjoyed this article on business model generation. As a closing enthusiasm question, are you ready to take your business to the next level by mastering your finances?

Stay tuned for our next article on Financial Management: Mastering Your Finances: The Key to Sustainable Business Growth in the Digital Age.

Ukraine yet to make defence a safe investor haven



LIISA JUCCA

The author is Breakingviews' European Business Editor. Based in Italy, she focuses on key corporate trends across the European Union.

The West's rush to supply weapons to war-torn Ukraine looks like a golden opportunity for defence companies to exit the ESG doghouse. Russia's invasion and rising defence budgets are pushing some market players to engage with companies in the \$485 billion military equipment industry that previously failed to pass muster on environmental, social and governance grounds. Despite pressing calls from President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for more tanks and missiles at last week's Munich Security

Conference, however, the sector will largely remain a no-go investment zone. As with air-polluting coal, socially-minded investors including pension funds and insurers — particularly European ones — have long excluded or heavily restricted investment in defence companies on ethical grounds. These actors would generally not touch anyone making chemical weapons or cluster bombs, which are prohibited under international conventions. But they often also exclude from sustainable-labelled funds firms deriving more than 10% of annual revenue, and sometimes just 5%, from military equipment and services. A year after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the mood is now shifting, the head of a European surveillance technology maker said on the sideline of the Munich forum. The event saw Vice President Kamala Harris, French President Emmanuel Macron and Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg gather at the city's historic Bayerischer Hof hotel. Risk committees, particularly at domestic banks, are now more frequently assessing the merits of



Ukrainian soldiers practise at a shooting range, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Siversk, Donetsk region, Ukraine. — Reuters

RUSSIA'S INVASION AND RISING DEFENCE BUDGETS ARE PUSHING SOME MARKET PLAYERS TO ENGAGE WITH COMPANIES IN THE \$485 BILLION MILITARY EQUIPMENT INDUSTRY THAT PREVIOUSLY FAILED TO PASS MUSTER ON ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND GOVERNANCE GROUNDS

financing defence companies, two senior bankers among the 850 or so conference participants said. Lorenz Meier, chief executive of US-based drones software firm Auterion, said he had been approached by venture capitalists and family offices in the past year, as his company's revenue shot up. For hedge funds and other actors willing to bet on the sector, the main pull factor is clearly

Nato governments' willingness to spend more. Reversing years of underinvestment, the 214 billion euros combined military budget of the 26-nation European Defence Agency is expected to grow by 70 billion euros by 2025 if member states fulfil their commitment to spend 2% of their GDP on defence. That's chiefly what has driven shares in Germany's \$12 billion

Rheinmetall, which makes Leopard 2 tanks now being offered to Ukraine, up 160% since the war erupted. Sweden's Saab, which won big government contracts for anti-tank weapons and other equipment, saw a similar rally and is now worth \$7 billion. Softening ESG restrictions would woo a broader investment pool. Proponents of the approach argue military companies that help Ukraine perform a globally valuable social function by upholding democracy. Others suggest making a distinction between weapons used for defence and those amassed for attacks. Finally, exceptions could occur if national parliaments direct companies to meet certain military commissions, as was the case with Rheinmetall's tank order. Spotting an opportunity, asset manager SEB Investment Management last March lifted restrictions for some of its funds to buy into companies that make non-banned weapons. Such growing geopolitical tensions may support the case for a softening of current ESG criteria, particularly in Europe. Asset managers may consider

raising the cap for the proportion of annual revenue derived from defence. Or they may lift restrictions for a limited number of companies. Still, a broad relaxation of investment criteria would be a slippery slope. Distinguishing between weapons on the basis of their supposed offensive or defensive function would be very tricky. It would also put investors at odds with a UN sustainability target to uphold peace and justice and to significantly "reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere". Weapons or equipment that can result in the killings of human beings are a clear violation of the "do no significant harm" principle that is at the basis of all sustainable investment. Widespread popular support for defending Kyiv may also weaken if the war becomes too long or too costly. For long-term investors and large international banks looking for growth, the war on Ukraine offers a veneer of respectability to charge into defence. But it may ultimately prove too thin for significant numbers to actually do so. — Reuters

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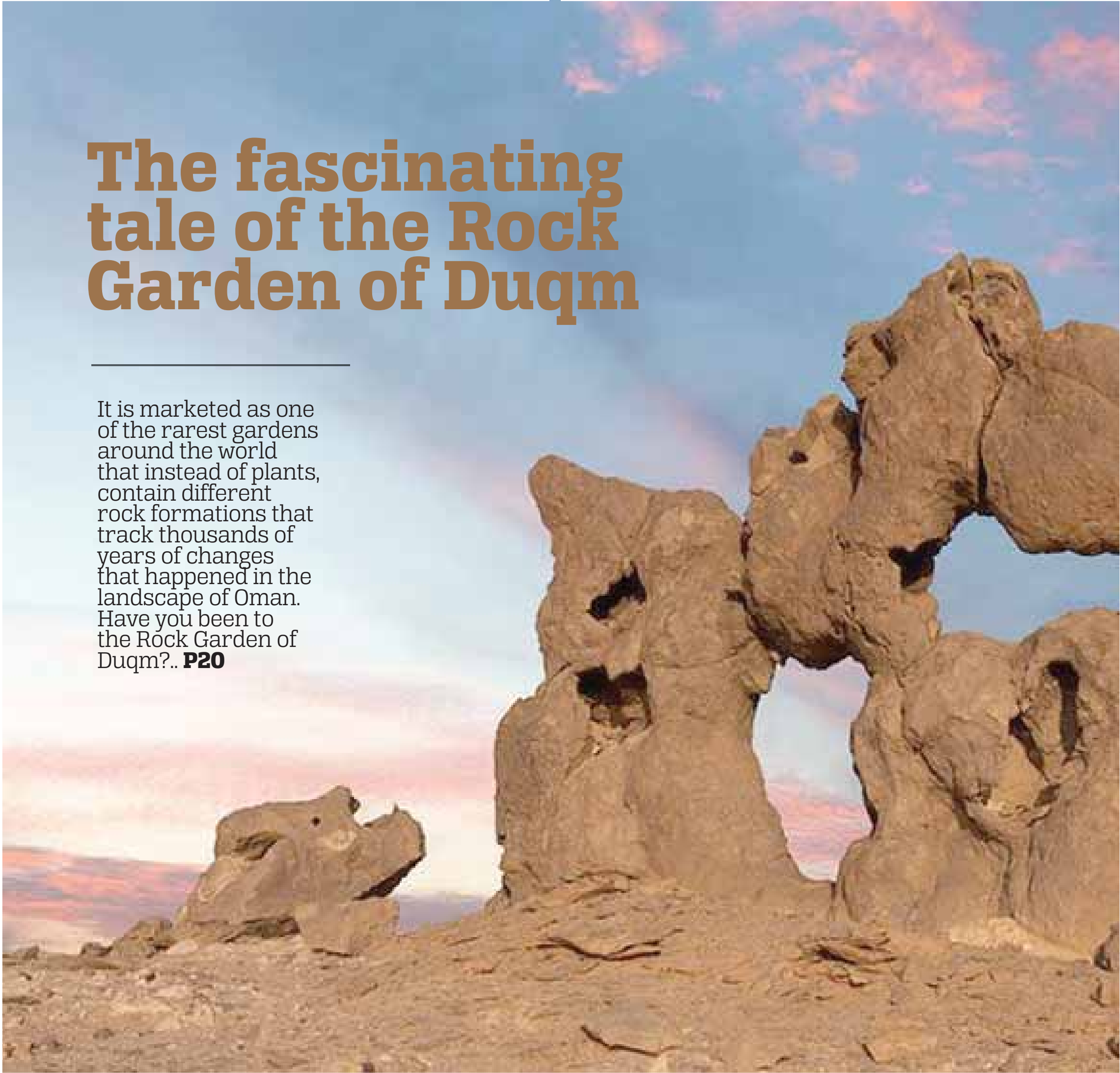
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The fascinating tale of the Rock Garden of Duqm

It is marketed as one of the rarest gardens around the world that instead of plants, contain different rock formations that track thousands of years of changes that happened in the landscape of Oman. Have you been to the Rock Garden of Duqm?.. **P20**



Fashion brand 'Unhidden' brings clothes made for all bodies to London Fashion Week

FASHION DESIGNER Victoria Jenkins unveiled stylish and practical clothes made for people with disabilities on the runway at London Fashion Week on Friday, in a collection intended to address a gap in the market. The "Unhidden: A New Era in Fashion" event saw around 30 models who all live with a disability, chronic condition or visible difference model floaty dresses with easy access around the waist as well as colourful chiffon tie shirts with adjustable sleeves at footwear brand Kurt Geiger's showroom.

"Unhidden is an adaptive fashion brand... primarily targeted at inclusion within fashion of people with disabilities," Jenkins said. Jenkins, who has reduced mobility, first discovered a gap in the market for clothes designed with all bodies in mind in 2016 during a hospital stay when another patient raised it. Surprised that only a few brands, including Tommy Hilfiger, offer such fashion for all, she decided to use her previous experience as a garment technologist to set up her own brand.



"When I had this idea, it was like a light bulb and just everything changed," she said. "It helps me personally... but also I see the impact around me of people being able to dress how they need

to." Jenkins demonstrated a royal blue shirt with pop snaps that open and close easily, as people who have had strokes can struggle with buttons.

"It also has openings all down the arm," she said, so that anyone going through treatment "can access their arm without taking any clothes off. It's about dignity." Model and content creator Jessica Ping-Wild, who uses a prosthetic leg and struggles to find suitable trousers, said a brand like Unhidden makes all the difference. "A designer taking into consideration the fact that bodies are different... it's almost breaking that mould of beauty that has been so ingrained in society for centuries," she said. Jenkins' collection also includes shirts with longer backs for wheelchair users as well as tailor made suits. She hopes her clothes become even more readily available in the future. "Diversity without disability isn't diversity ... it feels like it's the last taboo. People are still scared of the D word. You know, disabled is not a bad word," she said.

— Reuters

READ

THESE INFINITE THREADS

BY TAHEREH MAFI

In this sequel to "This Woven Kingdom," Alizeh and Kamran's love is at stake when Cyrus abducts Alizeh and attempts to wed her.



TRAVEL TALE

In the Eastern Pyrenees, every year in February, three villages celebrate the "Fete de l'Ours" or the "Bear Festival". This folk festival is similar to street theatre mixing traditional dances and music and has been awarded Unesco status of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

— AFP



LIFESTYLE

Float of Estacao Primeira de Mangueira samba school perform during the first night of Rio's Carnival parade at the Sambadrome Marques de Sapucaí in Rio de Janeiro.

— AFP





Saudi blind man Abdul Rahman al Otaibi practises a jump during a training session at Medhal equestrian centre in eastern Riyadh. – AFP



Saudi blind jockey Badr al Sharari leads a horse during a training session at Medhal equestrian centre in eastern Riyadh. – AFP



Saudi blind men, jockey Badr al Sharari and Abdul Rahman al Otaibi ride horses during a training session at Medhal equestrian centre in eastern Riyadh. – AFP

Blind Saudi horseman clears jumps to gain recognition

Disability failed to curb his passion

HAITHAM EL Tabei

BADR AL SHARARI refused to let his disability curb his passion, and despite being blind, the Saudi rider has now trailblazed his way to official recognition in Saudi Arabia.

The 35-year-old had to train at least three times a week for nearly two years before finally being admitted this month into the Saudi Arabian Equestrian Federation as its first blind member.

But the data sector worker said that just as important as his journey into the official ranks was the parallel one to self-empowerment.

Clutching the reins and speaking from the saddle of his horse Star, after completing an obstacle course of wooden fences, he described his life before being bitten by the horse riding bug.

"I was an introvert, and didn't leave the house much," Al Sharari said from a sandy track flanked by palm trees.

"My relationship with horses broke the barrier of introversion. If I can tame a horse, then I can do anything."

Like his mother and younger brother, Al Sharari was born blind.

He travels 140 km every day from his home in western Riyadh to the Medhal equestrian centre east of the city, where he is helped in his training by his Afghan assistant, Nasim.

He is coached by Abu Mahmoud, an Egyptian, who looked on during an early-morning session as Al Sharari flawlessly navigated a showjumping course, barely brushing against any of the fences.

"You see how he jumps without touching it? It's as if he can see," Abu Mahmoud nodded approvingly.

Equestrianism is popular in Saudi Arabia, the world's leading producer of purebred Arabian horses and home to several clubs.

Official data shows that disabled people make up seven per cent of the kingdom's population of 34 million, and of these some



Saudi blind man Abdul Rahman al Otaibi leads a horse during a training session at Medhal equestrian centre in eastern Riyadh. – AFP

811,000 have visual impairments.

Until recently, such people were often unable to join their sighted counterparts in the joys of horse riding.

However, some riding schools now offer programmes tailored specifically to blind and autistic students, as a way of helping to improve their motor and sensory skills.

Abdul Rahman al Otaibi joined the Medhal equestrian school three months ago.

"I have come to regard horses as my brothers," said the 31-year-old, who suffers from severe visual impairment.

Just like Al Sharari, Al Otaibi said horseback riding made him "more social" and allowed him to "integrate" with society.

"I have made more friends and developed new relationships," he said.

Al Otaibi is not completely blind, but does struggle to see the fences on the course. Initially this made him fear he might take a tumble. "I was afraid of the jumps... but with time I broke this fear," he said.

Medhal director Mashari al Dhiyabi said that those who suffer from visual impairments "have the ability, determination and insistence to learn, but society makes them feel as though they are incapable" of doing so.

Horseback riding is a great way to "enhance mental and physical capabilities of all riders, regardless of their condition", Al Dhiyabi said.

At the end of the month, Saudi Arabia will stage this year's Saudi Cup, an annual competition held at the King Abdulaziz Racetrack in the capital.

With prize money of more than \$35 million, it is touted by organisers as the world's "most valuable horse race".

"My goal is to one day take part in the Saudi Cup," Al Sharari said as he dismounted unaided from his horse.

"And why not?" he asked, wiping away the sweat from his face.

– AFP



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AROUND THE WORLD

ENTERTAINMENT

BAFTA red carpet rolls out for 'All Quiet' and 'Banshees'



A GUT-WRENCHING WAR movie from Germany and pitch-black Irish comedy were the big winners as British cinema handed out its annual BAFTA awards on Sunday, with less than a month to go to the Oscars.

With 14 nods, German director Edward Berger's "All Quiet on the Western Front" started the night as the joint most-nominated foreign-language film in the BAFTA academy's 76-year history.

The Netflix drama triumphed with seven awards, including best film and best director for Berger, as well as original score and cinematography, in the buildup to the Academy Awards on March 12.

Berger credited his daughter Matilda for turning his "doubts into trust", after she told him he had to make a movie of Erich Maria Remarque's powerful 1929 novel, which she was reading in school.

Producer Malte Grunert said the British plaudits for a German-language film were "just incredible", and it has also amassed nine Oscar nominations.

With a nod to modern-day conflicts including Russia's invasion of Ukraine, he said that the film and novel showed that "war is anything but an adventure".

The German movie had tied with Ang Lee's martial arts drama "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon", co-starring Michelle Yeoh, which also earned 14 BAFTA nominations in 2001.

Yeoh was nominated for best actress this year as a worn-down laundromat owner who transforms into a high-kicking heroine, in the wildly inventive "Everything Everywhere All At Once".

Yeoh's kung-fu science-fiction film received 10 BAFTA nominations, but only won one, for editing. She lost out to Cate Blanchett for her portrayal of a troubled classical music conductor in "Tár".

"This is extraordinary. I didn't prepare anything (to say) because it's been such an extraordinary year for women," the Australian actress said, convinced that the award would go to one of her fellow nominees.

MAKING SADNESS FUN

Also on 10 nominations, but faring far better in London, was the Irish tragicomedy "The Banshees of Inisherin" co-starring Colin Farrell and Brendan Gleeson.

Its four wins included best supporting actor for Barry Keoghan and best supporting actress for Kerry Condon — who at first was not given the prize after a miscommunication on stage.

"Banshees" director Martin McDonagh, one of the rare UK nominees for this year's top gongs, did win "best British film" despite the heavily Irish profile of "Banshees", and best original screenplay.

"Making a sad film shouldn't be so much fun," he said. Beating out the favourite Farrell, US actor Austin Butler won the leading actor prize for his all-out portrayal of the king of rock and roll in "Elvis".

"This means the world to me," Butler told the ceremony, still using the Presley drawl that he learned for Baz Luhrmann's movie.

BLUE RIBBONS

BAFTA also faced criticism for overlooking women. Only one, Gina Prince-Bythewood, was nominated for best director, for "The Woman King". That was one more than the Oscars managed in that category this year.

Berger, Farrell, Blanchett and Jamie Lee Curtis were among many attendees who wore blue ribbons on their suits and gowns in support of refugees.

The gesture came after many more people were displaced by earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, and just ahead of the one-year anniversary of Russia's war in Ukraine. — AFP

CULTURE

A museum dedicated to the lives lost on the Himalayas



BY KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

A MUSEUM THAT pays homage to those who lost their lives on the tallest summit in the world, including Omani mountaineers, is offering a mountaineer all that he wants to know while putting on record and chronicle those brave climbers who planted their national flag atop the snowcapped heights in Nepal.

The International Mountain Museum (IMM) located in Pokhara, some 200 kilometres away from the capital Katmandu is a rare treat to those who love heights as it has preserved the saga of the momentous feats in the history of mountaineering in the Himalayan peaks in particular by the Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA) in 2004.

Since then, the museum has been welcoming tourists from across the world who spare a thought for those daredevils who made it to the top of the world and those who lost in between.

Hundreds of visitors, mostly students and climbers from across the world, are making it to the museum that built upon the purpose of maintaining systematic records of the successful eight thousands, geographic flora and fauna and human activities in the range.

The history of human urge to conquer the 8,848 metres high Himalayas begins with mountaineers M Herzog and Louis Lachenal who scaled up Annapurna on 3 June, 1950 and since then thousands of different nationalities have scaled the heights and all their details are on display at the gallery of this vast museum.

"Mountains and mountaineering have a history of their own. Without preserving it, it will not be long before all the records and evidences will be lost forever. The basic objective for its establishment was made to record,

document and chronicle the past and present development of mountaineering activities in the world in general and to highlight the achievements while encouraging those stopped it before reaching the peak," commented an official from the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB).

MOUNTAIN PEOPLE GALLERY:

This is the first gallery that welcomes the visitors to this mammoth edifice and showcases indigenous habitants of the mountain regions of Nepal and the world including the Khumbu inhabitants.

Their life style and culture are exposed impressively below this first basement hall, influencing the subconscious of the visitors that they are at the height to understand and know the information displayed just below them.

HALL OF WORLD MOUNTAINS:

The second hall is the Hall of World Mountains where visitors are introduced to the national and international mountains, historical background, highest peaks.

Information of all 14 peaks spread over 8 thousand metres of height and their photographs are

available in this section. Geological section in this hall displays collection of important rock samples that formed geological formation of the Mountain range.

MOUNTAINEERING GEARS SECTION:

This section has in display all the equipment, gears necessary for climbing mountains and rocks, their varieties and uses make the visitors familiar on how hard the scaling these mountains can be. A view of the gadgets used in the past and present is certainly a passage down the memory line.

LEGENDARY TALES OF YETI:

The final section is dedicated to the famous legendary tales of Yeti, the stories surrounding this character, its myths, and publications of the illusive giant brown bear in one corner of the first floor.

Although nobody has seen the creature, many have claimed of witnessing Yeti. Some have claimed to have photographed its foot prints on icy blanket, and some have seen it with their eyes closed. This section is dedicated to the Yeti whom nobody has seen but many like to believe in.

ART

NY Met to let French make 3D copies of two 16th-century sculptures



TWO 16TH-CENTURY sculptures, jewels of French Renaissance art, have been on display since 1908 at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.

But thanks to modern technology and an unusual agreement, precise 3D copies will be made and installed in the French castle where the originals long resided.

The facsimiles plan is the fruit of a rare partnership between the Met, as the New York museum is known, and the Dordogne department in southwestern France.

The statues, both from the early 1500s and by an anonymous sculptor, represent Biblical scenes entitled "Entombment of Christ" and "Pieta With Donors."

A tourism promotion agency in the Dordogne, Semitour, will be working with the Atelier of Fac-Similes Perigord (AFSP) to make the replicas over the coming months.

For nearly 400 years, the originals graced the chapel of the Biron chateau in the Dordogne.

Built on a strategic promontory, the sprawling fortress comprises buildings from different eras, including a dungeon dating to the 12th century.

Damaged and rebuilt repeatedly through the centuries, the chateau has belonged since 1978 to the Dordogne department, which declared it a historic monument, Dordogne president Germain Peiro said during a visit to the Met.

DIGITAL COPY

The technology to be employed in copying the sculptures was described to AFP by Francis Rigenbach, who heads the Perigord atelier, and C. Griffith Mann, the Met's medieval art curator.

Using 3D scanners to make digital images of the sculptures, artisans will be able to create replicas without having to move or disturb the monumental originals.

"By making a digital 'cast,'" said Rigenbach, "we can employ non-invasive techniques" to produce identical copies.

He added that "90 per cent of the artistic work" will involve reproducing signs of wear, such as the patina on the ageing marble originals — though both statues are considered exceptionally well-preserved.

The replicas, to be returned to their original spots in the Biron chapel, will cost around 350,000 euros (\$375,000), Rigenbach added.

His atelier is famed for having copied the celebrated Lascaux cave — including its prehistoric wall art — for a museum in Montignac, in northern Perigord.

That allows visitors to feel as if they were visiting the cave itself, which was closed 60 years ago to avoid damage to the fragile site, said Sebastien Cailler, who manages the Biron chateau.

"And when you see these facsimile sculptures in Biron, you'll surely feel the same emotion as if you were standing before the originals," he said in New York.

The two statues, whose value was recognised by historians and collectors in the late 18th century, were sold in 1907 by the last marquis of Biron to wealthy American banker John Pierpont Morgan, who was then president of the Met board.

In the 1950s, Dordogne and the Biron castle negotiated with the Met for four years in a vain effort to recover the statues.

In 2018, Perigord officials revived talks with the Met; four years later, technological tests were undertaken, and then on February 15, the agreement was signed in New York.

This type of unusual deal ensures that art works can exist in two places, Mann said, while adding that his museum, with its millions of annual visitors, "seems like the safest place to have the sculptures for their long-term preservation." — AFP

The fascinating tale of the rock garden of Duqm

By Baraah al Mujaini

Most probably you have visited different types of gardens. The word garden evokes immediately images of flowers in our minds, however, have you ever imagined a Rock Garden? Or have you ever visited such types of gardens? The Rocks Garden in Oman, located in a geological mesmerising area, Al Duqm of Al Wusta Governorate, is ranked among one of the most

important industrial cities in the region.

The rocks in the garden have been sculptured and carved by different natural phenomena throughout thousands of years. The garden portrays the varied Omani landscape as it contains numerous kinds of rocks and their magical shapes.

The Rock Garden was discovered in 2009 by an investigative delegation, since then, the Omani government has been seeking to shed the light on this garden and market it as one of the rarest gardens around the world by introducing this Garden

through different media platforms and making facilities for visitors. The Garden covers an area of about 3 kilometres.

The different natural phenomena like erosion shaped the rocks in a very attractive way, some of which are like animals, others like humans. Recently, the Rock Garden is considered one of the most popular destinations visited by tourists from around the world. According to visitors, what makes this garden a must-visit destination is its uniqueness, its rare-geographical nature, and the ideal weather.

According to Moosa al Ruzaiqi, a photographer and physics teacher, who has visited the Rocks Garden, the special about this Garden is the fact that it is not made by humans, but by nature and its different phenomena. "The rarity of the rocks' shapes is the most significant feature in this garden", Al Ruzaiqi said.

"Once you arrive at the garden, and start observing the shapes of the rocks, you will notice that some of them look like dead animals, others like human faces, and other like birds. It is magical how these rocks are shaped by nature",



Al Ruzaiqi added.

However, the Garden needs more facilities for tourists, for instance, a lounge to welcome the tourist and introduce them to the informative and historical background of the Garden. In addition, there should be informative panels in front of each rock, which address all the details about the rock, its name, age, and type.

The Rocks Garden is a must-visit destination for those who are interested in geology, nature, art and photography.

"I think photographers and artists, as well as those who are interested in geology, are most likely to enjoy the Garden compared to others. You can sit there watching the sunset with the cool weather and amazing shapes of rocks surrounding you,

don't forget to document your trip by taking photos!", Al Ruzaiqi said.

Scientists and research indicate that the stone golems in the Garden going back to millions of years, and it is believed that they are 46 million years old, which makes this Garden a unique destination locally and internationally and a hub for many scientists to conduct their research. Oman's rich nature is full of

mesmerising and outstanding sceneries. Locals and tourists around the world enjoy discovering its natural landscapes. As Oman embraces different elements of nature in all its cities from Musandam to Dhofar, it became one of the most recommended countries in the natural tourism category.

Moosa al Ruzaiqi Twitter: moosa_alruzaqi

