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AHLI SIDAB TAKE HOME VICTORY AGAINST SALALAH

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GEOLOGICAL STORAGE, SEAWEED FARMING PROPOSED FOR CARBON CAPTURE IN OMAN

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T-REX SKELETON ON SHOW IN ZURICH BEFORE AUCTION

■ ASTANA

HM MESSAGE TO KAZAKH PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a written message to President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The message was handed over by Mohammed bin Abdullah al Bahrani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Kazakhstan, when he met Kanat Tumysh, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, in Astana, on Wednesday. **PHOTO ON P2**

■ SUR

FOUNDATION STONE FOR DIALYSIS UNIT

The foundation stone for a dialysis unit at Sur Hospital, funded by the Al Jisr Foundation, was laid during a ceremony held on Wednesday under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health. The operations of the unit are expected to start in 2025, and the actual operations will be in three different phases. **DETAILS ON P3**



Oman channels financial surplus to reduce public debt by RO 1.1 billion

PUBLIC DEBT IS DOWN TO ABOUT RO 16.6 BILLION BY END OF MARCH 2023

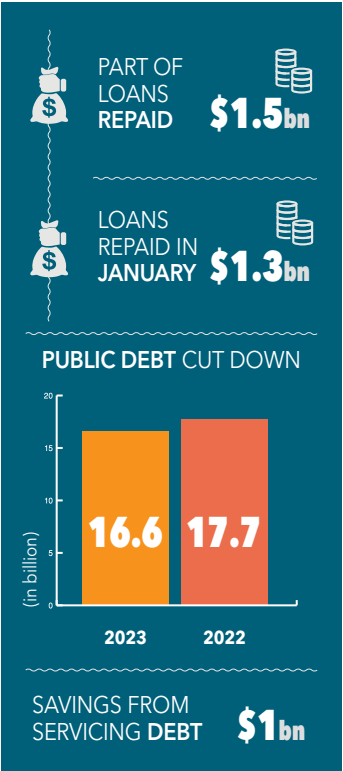
MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday prepaid part of the government loans, about \$1.5 billion, before their maturity date.

In total, the government managed to reduce by the end of the first quarter of 2023 an estimated of about RO 1.1 billion or \$2.8 billion, without resorting to re-financing.

This includes \$1.3 billion bond repaid by the government in January 2023.

The public debt is down to about RO 16.6 billion by the end of March 2023, compared to RO 17.7 billion reported at the end of 2022.

At the same time, Oman also reduced significantly the interest rate for the same loan through negotiation with lenders. This



resulted in obtaining a lower financing cost than the currently market prevailing financing rates while maintaining same lenders group of international and regional banks. The successful repricing confirms Oman's robust financial position.

The Ministry of Finance stated that the effective debt management activities taken led to achieving savings in the costs of servicing public debt about \$1 billion or about RO 385 million over the average life of debt portfolio.

The debt management activities fit within the framework of continuous revision of the debt portfolio and related financing costs.

TURN TO P2



RAMADHAN MOOD GRIPS NIZWA

People in Nizwa celebrate Ramadhan in style, so are the decorations on roads and villages with lanterns, lamps, and other attractive and traditional items. The old Al Aqr neighbourhood is lit up with bright and striking colours that radiate life and joy. **DETAILS ON P2**

PHOTO BY SAMI AL HINAI

Private Collection of Elegant Villas Launched on Al Mouj Muscat's Last Island

Announcing a unique opportunity to own a stylish villa on a serene island within a new family orientated neighbourhood at Oman's word-class lifestyle destination

Muscat, 30 March 2023: Al Mouj Muscat has launched Jinan Island, a private collection of 43 five and six-bedroom luxury villas which surrounded by a lake and centred around lush parkland offer a serene lifestyle at the heart of Oman's premier oceanfront lifestyle destination.

Jinan Island villas are exceptional homes that inspire the senses and offer a new dimension in exclusivity. These elegant lake and park-side retreats presents families with a chance to escape the ordinary and feel connected to nature yet with the freedom to embrace an abundance of leisure amenities close by.

Linked by a single road to the vibrant Ghadeer District, the island is in a central location between Al Mouj Marina with its neighbouring waterside cafes and restaurants, and Al Mouj Golf, the region's leading championship course and the 5-star St Regis Kempinski Hotel.

Jinan Island residents will also benefit from being only a short stroll from Al Mouj's pristine golden sands beach and can enjoy an active lifestyle given they will be surrounded by interconnecting landscaped pedestrian walkways and cycleways.

Grand havens of style, peace and serenity

The residents-only neighbourhood is an oasis of calm with three different styles of villa each a balance of contemporary luxury, style and comfort and a splendid union of indoor and outdoor living. All are superbly appointed with grand entrances, floor to ceiling windows, walk-in wardrobes, guest suites, offices, spa-style

ensuite bathrooms, swimming pools and garages, two kitchens and staff accommodation.

Inspired by their natural surroundings, they provide the perfect environment for a supremely peaceful lifestyle, bathed in natural light and seamlessly connected to beautiful gardens and terraces. All have open plan living areas enhancing the possibilities of modern family life while providing options for formal and special occasions.

A choice of three Jinan Island homes

Jinan Island comprises of 18 six-bedroom **Alaya Villas**, all grand in scale at around 906 sqm and with a mesmerizing outlook across the lake. Set over three floors, there is an elevator and a stunning top floor penthouse suite plus covered parking for up to four cars. Unique to Alaya is a separate Zen Garden Suite which set overlooking the pool, can be used as an entertainment, exercise or work space.

There are eight **Ayana** style homes, also with six-bedrooms and set over two floors with sublime lake views. Comprising over 606 sqm of space, exclusive elements include a gym, parking for up to three cars plus driver's accommodation.

Overlooking the island's verdantly landscaped central park, are 17 five-bedroom **Amara Villas** each offering over 455 sqm of space plus parking for up to three cars and driver's accommodation.

Commenting on the launch of Jinan Island, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, Nasser bin Masoud Al Sheibani, said: "More people than ever, across Oman and internationally, recognise Al Mouj as an exceptional

environment in which to live, work, play and stay. We are excited by the launch of Jinan Island which exemplifies life at its very best in our community, exquisite homes in a serene setting with easy access to world-class amenities.

"With over 8,000 residents currently calling Al Mouj their home, we know from our Customer Insights how to deliver the best homes within exceptional neighbourhoods.

With Jinan, we took inspiration from their delightful island setting to create fabulous villas in which to embrace every blissful moment of modern life. We are anticipating strong demand and expect them to appeal to families with an appreciation of nature and who value luxury, privacy and exclusivity."

A year-round oceanfront lifestyle

Established in 2006, Al Mouj Muscat was Oman's first integrated tourism complex, a joint venture partnership between OMRAN, Tanmia and Majid Al Futtaim which is redefining urban living in the region.

From chic one-bedroom marina-side apartments to contemporary beachfront family villas, around 2,500 homes have been delivered to date and properties are highly sought after. Home to 8,000 people from 85 nationalities who enjoy a year-round oceanfront lifestyle, Al Mouj also attracts around 4 million visitors and tourists every year to its premium sporting, entertainment and tourism amenities. These include luxury hotels, 85 shops and restaurants, a championship World 100 golf course, Gold Anchor marina and 2km stretch of sandy beach.





Oman and Germany explore JVs

BERLIN: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, met Annalena Baerbock, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The meeting came within the framework of Sayyid's Badr visit to take part in Berlin Energy Transition Dialogue 2023. The meeting touched on the existing relations of friendship and constructive cooperation between Oman and Germany.

The meeting also reviewed the major joint projects that the two sides aspire to achieve particularly in areas of renewable energy, green hydrogen, their



lucrative derivatives and modern technologies in a manner that realises mutual benefits and enhances the two sides' strategic partnerships.

In this regard, the two sides affirmed their keenness to continue backing these fields. They

also underscored the importance of encouraging and developing trade, economic and investment partnership.

Sayyid Badr expressed thanks and appreciation to the German minister for the invitation to take part in Berlin Energy Transition

Dialogue 2023. He highlighted Oman's efforts and plans in relation to energy transition, from oil and gas-based economy to a prosperous economy relying on clean and renewable energy.

He also underlined Oman's policies aimed at mitigating impacts of climate change and achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

The meeting was attended by Maithaa bint Saif al Mahrouqiyah, Oman's Ambassador to Germany, Khalid bin Hashil al Muselhi, Head of the Minister's Office Department, and officials from both sides. — ONA

HM SENDS WRITTEN MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT OF KAZAKHSTAN



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a written message to President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The message was handed over by Mohammed Abdullah al Bahrani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Kazakhstan when he met in Astana Kanat Tumysh, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. — ONA

'Pioneer Evenings' looks at boosting entrepreneurship

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@Afrahalbalushia

The first session of the 'Pioneer Evenings', organised by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority in association with the Youth Centre, was launched on Tuesday at Grand Mall, Muscat.

The sessions target officials and decision-makers, owners of small and medium enterprises, startups, and owners of student companies, in addition to those who want to establish commercial projects, become traders, investors, economists, and those interested in the entrepreneurship sector.

To be held every week on Tuesdays, the sessions will continue until April 18. This is to encourage young people, entrepreneurs and owners of small and medium enterprises and encourage them to continue and sustain their projects and initiatives by achieving realistic approaches to cases of success and failure and expanding to benefit from these experiences. The sessions would address the challenges of the SMEs through an open dialogue platform for young people, owners of inspiring ideas, owners of small and medium enterprises, startups, and experts in various fields.



One of the participants Tasneem al Daoudi, owner of a project to invent clay oil extraction from date kernels, said, "After graduation, I had an urgent desire for a job which I shared with my friend Salma al Sudairi. Both of us landed for training in a company. After four months the company asked for an alternative project of mud oil. When the training period ended, we suspected that we might lose the bet. After seven months, however, the idea took proper

shape and we were able to prepare the product, which is an innovative and environmental alternative to the clay oil pumped into wells and extracted from the date kernel."

The Pioneer Evenings is a platform for sharing enriching lessons from life, consultations and valuable tips that raise the motivation of ambitious young people. Participants in the sessions discuss their own experiences and impact on all aspects of their lives and their entrepreneurial career to address the

social incentives that contributed to refining their experiences.

Another participant, Mazin al Julandani, Chairman of the Board of Directors and General Manager of the Mazin al Julandani Group, said: "My story began when I was 12 years old when I asked my father for 10 riyals to buy foodstuffs to sell in my neighbourhood. Then I moved to a small grocery project, after which I decided to travel alone to Europe to buy a car to explore myself more, and I learned many lessons from it. When I returned to the Sultanate of Oman I decided to open a steam car wash that revolutionised this field. I established an Omani factory for the manufacture of ink and a fleet of luxury and classic cars."

He added: "There is a project in vertical farming as a pioneering experiment in the Sultanate of Oman."

The Pioneering Evening witnessed a wide interaction from the attendees, who expressed their admiration for the idea and the experiments that were proposed, wishing them to continue and provide inspiring youth models for the community to sharpen their determination and continue overcoming difficulties and challenges.

Oman channels financial surplus to reduce public debt by RO 1.1 billion



FROM PAGE 1

It affirms the government's determination to reduce the public debt rate, taking advantage of the additional revenues and the rise in global oil prices.

This would enable the government to utilise these savings in priority areas.

Through early repayment of some loans, the government seeks to alleviate the burden of

public indebtedness, manage the risks of the lending portfolio and reduce potential pressures towards financing obligations in the coming years, the Ministry of Finance explained.

These measures to cut down public debt assume significance in light of the high interest rates approved by the US Federal Bank. The move also aims at improving Oman's credit ratings. — ONA

Ramadhan mood grips Nizwa with sparkling lights

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, MARCH 29

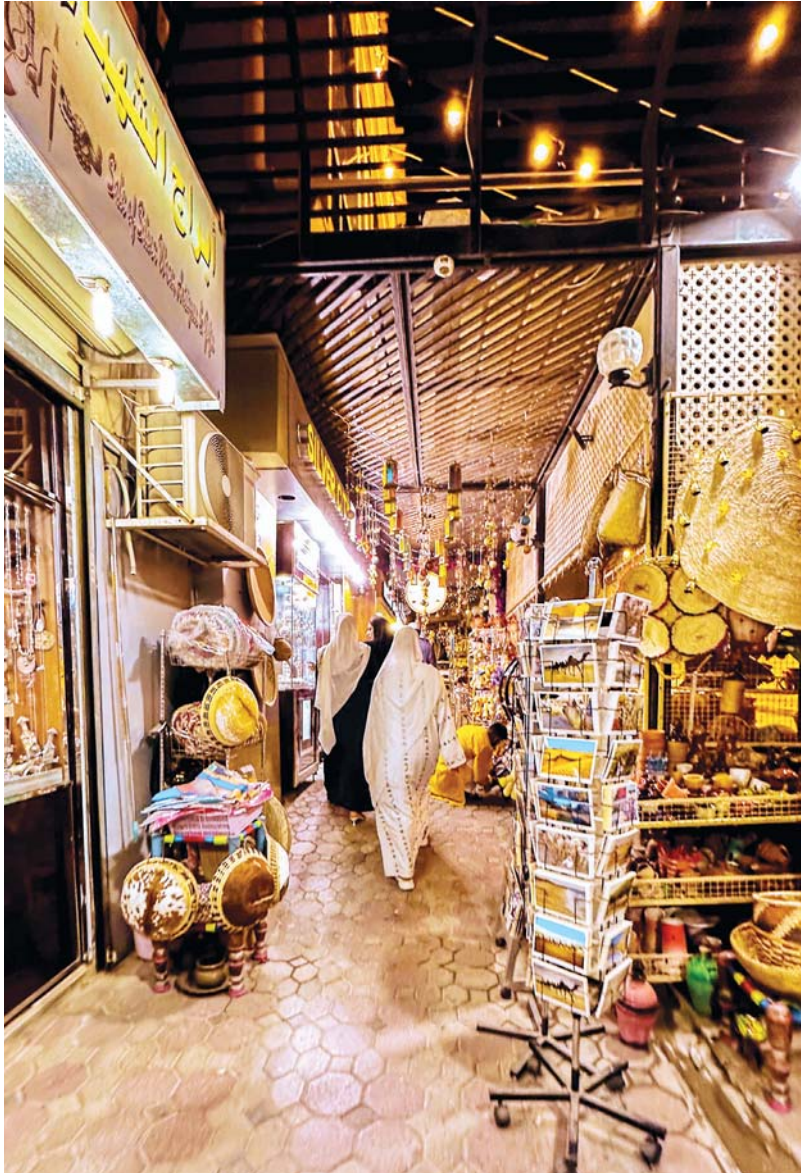
People in Nizwa celebrate Ramadhan in style so are the decorations on the roads and villages with lanterns, lamps, and other attractive and traditional things.

As soon as the month approached, residents raced to decorate their homes and shops with lights and unique Ramadhan decorations. Shops have come up with various forms of Ramadhan decorations as a way of expressing joy at the start of this month.

The old Al Aqr neighbourhood is lit up with bright and striking colours that radiate life and joy.

The place has become popular for visitors from all over the world to see and enjoy the picturesque scenery. In the evening, many pedestrians flock here after Iftar to walk and refresh.

Suleiman al Sulaimani, responsible for running Al Aqr Lane, said that he seeks to create a Ramadhan atmosphere that reflects what our parents experienced in their childhood, as everything around recalls the spiritual atmosphere of the holy



month. He is also keen to celebrate ancient Omani traditions such as Tahlulah and Qaranqasho in the middle of the month.

Al Aqr neighbourhood in Nizwa, in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, is suitable for creating a Ramadhan atmosphere. It is one of the ancient lanes, where

the mud houses lined up along the stretch and are interconnected between its rails and passages in north, south, east, and west.

It has historical mosques, the oldest being Al Shawathna Mosque, built in the eighth year of Hijra. Next to it are Al Fard Mosque and Al Mazra'a Mosque.

Al Aqr neighbourhood history dates back 4,000 years.

Some four years ago, the Al Aqr neighbourhood was completely deserted. However, some enthusiastic youths took up the task of reviving the place. Due to their efforts, life is back. A group of young people has set up various projects including heritage inns and cafes by renovating dilapidated houses into hotel rooms with traditional touch. The cafes and restaurants give a traditional feeling.

In response to the active movement of people across the lanes, lane entry for vehicles has been diverted to a single lane from the start point of Nizwa Castle roundabout till the exit of the southern side after Al Mazra'a Mosque. The new traffic arrangement has eased vehicle movement. Similarly, it is easy for visitors and tourists to move freely in the lanes, which have become a model of ancient lanes full of life and activity. It has all the details of the ancient past and the bright present.

PHOTOS BY SAMI AL HINAI & AMAL AL RIYAMI



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Local firms shall be given priority in digital transformation projects

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology issued a ministerial circular to all units of the State's Administrative Apparatus stating that all companies shall be given an opportunity when these units issue tenders for government digital transformation projects. The circular stressed that priority shall be granted to local technology companies.

The ministry explained that local technology companies may compete towards the implementation of government digital transformation projects if the firms meet the technical requirements.

The circular affirms the ministry's keenness to include evaluation criteria that support local technical products and services. It focuses on local firms



that are committed to applying higher rates of Omanisation and offer opportunities for professionals in technical fields. The aim is to empower and support the local economy.

The ministry urged units of the State's Administrative Apparatus to shortlist opportunities in projects and initiatives within a unit's digital transformation plan.

The projects can be implemented through the assistance of emerging technology companies, small and medium technology companies and self-employed entrepreneurs in Oman, according to the regulations followed in this regard.

The second batch of 'Jadrah' (Efficiency) initiative was launched in the first quarter of 2023 by the

ministry in cooperation with the Secretariat-General of the Tender Board.

Through the initiative, locally-developed technical products are given access to government institutions and companies.

The initiative lends support to nascent technology companies, providing them with an opportunity to test their products and apply them in the target institutions. It also seeks to undertake necessary measures and coordinate with target institutions to test the local technology firms' products.

This is in addition to promoting and marketing locally developed products. It targets emerging local technology companies that have standard-quality technical products of use to government departments. — ONA

Oman produces 2.3 million tonnes of plastic waste a year



KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The volume of recyclable waste including plastic waste produced in the Sultanate of Oman is about 2.3 million tonnes per year, and could make a revenue of RO 530 million annually if plastic is recycled locally, according to a study published by Oman Environmental Services Holding Company SAOC (be'ah), the sole entity overseeing the management of solid waste in the country.

The study, published as part of be'ah's Sustainability Report for 2022, indicates that the volume of circular economy investments in the Sultanate of Oman is estimated at about RO 577 million.

"Out of the most prominent initiatives which help decrease the impact of plastic is by recycling it or using environmentally friendly alternatives and increasing community awareness about it," the report stated.

In the Sultanate of Oman, plastic dominates the opening list of most harmful wastes to the environment; as it stays in the environment for a long time and contains non-degradable chemicals, thus affecting the ecosystem as it ends up in landfills around the country.

Plastic waste has been considered to be 'the biggest threat to our environment and makes up 21 per cent by weight and 50 per cent by volume of the engineered landfills set up across the length and breadth of the country.

According to the environmentalists, the massive quantities of plastic waste generated around the Sultanate of Oman is threatening to overwhelm these dumpsites, and segregating and diverting the recyclable types of plastic, mainly polyethylene terephthalate (PET) based waste, is the only way to reduce the quantities of waste

Community members need to be educated in their role towards the environment as they are a part and a vital system on the planet

KHALID AL KHANBASHI
Media Coordinator at the Muscat Municipality

being disposed of in landfills.

The impact of plastics goes beyond damaging the soil, and goes beyond groundwater or surface water, due to its potentiality to impact living organisms in the marine environment such as plants or fish that feed on or affected by these plastics.

According to Muscat Municipality, some good practices may make a difference in solving the problem of plastic waste accumulation and reduce it. This relies on the awareness of community members.

"They need to be educated in their role towards the environment as they are a part and a vital system on the planet by adopting optimal and effective waste management to minimise the use of unnecessary plastics in everyday life," Khalid al Khanbashi, Media Coordinator at the Muscat Municipality, said.

Accordingly, an intentional choice not to buy or use plastic materials that harm our environment and to think seriously before buying plastics is what is the need of the hour. Also, avoiding single use plastic goods and replacing it with other biodegradable and reusable materials or disposing plastic in a way without causing harm to the environment is another way to reduce the mounting plastic waste in the country.

Dialysis unit in Sur will reduce burden on other similar centres: Minister

SUR: The foundation stone for the project of a Dialysis Unit in Sur Hospital, funded by the Al Jisr Foundation, was laid during a ceremony held on Wednesday under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health.

The operation of the unit is expected to start in 2025, and the actual operation will be in three different phases. The third and final phase will have a capacity of 30 beds in the dialysis unit. In addition, a fully equipped intensive care department with basic medical supplies, including 22 beds for adults and 8 beds for the paediatric intensive care unit, will be established.

On the occasion, Dr Al Sabti said that establishing the unit supports the efforts of the



Ministry of Health to provide the best accessible treatment services all over Oman. He added that providing this service contributes to developing the treatment services provided to dialysis patients.

He stressed the role played

by the ministry in operating all services for diagnosing and treating kidney diseases and dialysis by equipping them with qualified medical staff according to the latest treatment methods. He said that the unit would serve dialysis patients of South

Al Sharqiyah Governorate and will reduce the burden on other similar centres providing the service.

Dr Al Sabti underscored the importance of strengthening the partnership between the government and private sectors.

Saud bin Amer al Nadhiri, Director-General of Health Services of South Al Sharqiyah Governorate, said that the Ministry of Health is actively seeking to improve health services to respond to the people's needs and provide health services through developing sustainable and decentralised institutional structures and providing healthy and supportive work environment. — ONA

STATE COUNCIL ECONOMIC PANEL DEBATES DRAFT LABOUR LAW



The State Council's Economic Committee on Wednesday discussed the draft Labour Law referred to it by the Council of Ministers, at its fourth regular meeting held under the chairmanship of Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdullah al Harthi, committee head.

Renovation of Omar bin Khattab mosque example of PPP

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The huge, towering minarets of the Omar bin Khattab mosque in Tarmad, some 50 kilometres off the industrial city, would easily catch people's attention on the way to Suhar. But very few know the story the mosque holds for its worshippers.

The iconic, 70-year-old mosque has undergone several renovations and the present 'masjid' which can accommodate nearly 1,300 believers to its capacity, is the result of the efforts of the local people, under the able and effective leadership of an expat businessman, Mohammed

Kutty. He generously and single-handedly funded the 'masjid' to attain its shape of today and made a mark in the public-private partnership initiative in the country.

As the story goes, decades ago, some local people started praying under a small shed with a thatched roof. The place proved to be a boon for those fishermen who would go to the sea and stay for days. On return with some catch, the 'prayer place' also served as a shelter for them.

Over the years, it was slowly transformed into a full-fledged mosque.

A high-level ministerial delegation was in attendance

along with members of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs during the opening ceremony followed by Friday prayers.

"The renovated Omar bin Khattab mosque is a perfect example of public-private partnership (PPP) and this can be a trendsetter to inspire other expatriate community members," a representative of Awqaf told the Observer.

"When we talk about the ICV (in-country value), this kind of project is a model," he added.

Saeed bin Moosa bin Amir al Balushi, the muaddhin (caller of the prayer) of the mosque for the past 49 years, says Omar bin



Khattab mosque was originally built in the early 1950s and had

space to accommodate some 30 people only at a time. But it

was gradually developed from time to time and the capacity was increased every time it underwent renovation.

"I'm glad that I have been given an opportunity to rebuild this mosque by the local authorities. It took nearly two years, RO 250,000 and some 15 workers working during the day," Mohammed Kutty, MD of Makkah Group told the Observer.

The single-storey edifice with a half-elevated portion that can accommodate around 300 people has unique interior architecture done by a Moroccan architectural firm. The exquisite, huge columns give the mosque a colossal look that is quite distinctive.



THURSDAY | MARCH 30 | 2023



MIND YOUR

sleep



DURING RAMADHAN,
MANY PEOPLE TEND TO
INDULGE IN FRIED FOODS
WHICH THE LIVER CANNOT
PROCESS EASILY. SO KEEP A
WATCH ON WHAT YOU EAT

room temperature while avoiding exposure to blue screens of all the electronics,” he added.

Usually, most people get seven to eight hours of uninterrupted sleep a night, but during Ramadhan, this is not possible.

Besides maintaining the number of hours of sleep, it is equally important, if not more, to ensure that your sleep is of good quality. Always ensure your sleep environment is quiet.

A GOOD DIET HAS A ROLE IN THE QUALITY OF SLEEP

Health experts say that diet also has a role in the quality of sleep. During Ramadhan, people tend to consume heavy, calorie-and sugar-rich foods at iftar which significantly disrupts the quality of sleep as our body tries to digest these foods when it needs to be sleeping and resting instead.

DR MATLOOBA AL ZADJALI, Senior Consultant of Public Health (cardiovascular diseases) and Founder and Managing Director of Heart Vascular Centre (HVC), said sleep, even during normal times regardless of Ramadhan is essential to maintain health and well-being, both physically and mentally.

“Sleep deprivation can lead to serious consequences, such as weakened immune system, inability to focus, mood swings, and increased risk of heart diseases, high blood pressure, and even depression,” she said.

“Because good quality sleep regulates the hormones that control our appetite and during Ramadhan, bedtime and wake-up time get delayed, there is a significant reduction in total sleep time for Muslims. Therefore during Ramadhan, it is even more essential that one maintains a good healthy sleep. If you sleep better, you tend to eat and snack less which makes you less fatigued,” she said.

Dr Matlooba said sleep deprivation causes changes to the hormones. “Lack of sleep can affect your decision-making when it comes to what to eat, often leading to giving in to cravings for fatty, sugary junk food, and making weight gain more likely,” she said.

“Sleeping during the fast would make you sluggish. When energy levels are low, the urge for coffee or tea is sure to rise. But you should avoid caffeine during fast days as it shall percolate calcium from the system and make you feel hungry all the time,” she added.

As is the case with many families during Ramadhan, many people tend to indulge in fried foods such as samosas, cutlets and spring rolls. These foods are loaded with fats which the liver cannot process easily. So keep a watch on what you eat.

SHADDAD AL MUSALMY

@shadadm

Health experts have reiterated the importance of getting enough sleep during Ramadhan or face an increased risk of developing health problems such as high blood pressure and diabetes.

Ramadhan is one of the most common times for sleep disruption. When routines go awry, social activities keep people awake well into the night leaving them at risk of health problems.

DR SULAIMAN AL SHEREIQI, Senior Specialist in Public Health at the Ministry of Health, said: “To maintain good health, the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends seven hours or more of sleep per night for adults up to the age of 60 and slightly more thereafter. Many of us struggle to get this amount of sleep all year round but especially in Ramadhan due to late night social gathering and wakefulness to watch favoured TV programmes.”

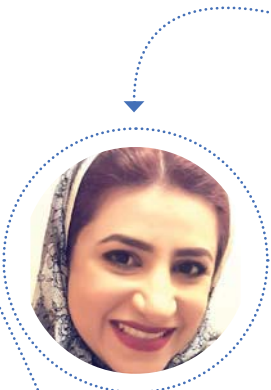
“This manifests in a person’s health on the following days with increased likelihood of suffering sleep deprivation symptoms such as headache, mood instability, emotional irritability and even poorer cognitive functions,” he added.

Dr Al Shereiqli said long hours of wakefulness are also associated with bad eating habits; craving meals being fattier, sugary and in large amounts, and this eventually results in weight gain.

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP

As much as possible get 5 continuous hours of sleep between iftar and Fajr by sleeping a little earlier and keeping suhoor as close as possible to Fajr and then adding on 1-2 hours of sleep before going to work,” Dr Al Shereiqli said.

“To fall into sleep quicker and easier try to practice some breathing methods and avoid caffeine, and avoid or at least minimise fatty, sugary and spicy food. Moreover, you need to maintain a good sleeping environment that is dark and lower



On the move...



Sultanate of Oman
Consumer Protection Authority



OMAN TRADING ESTABLISHMENT LLC

RECALL CAMPAIGN FOR 2015 CHEVROLET TRAVERSE AND GMC ACADIA MODEL VEHICLES



Date of Recall: 30/03/2023

Campaign Type: Safety Recall

Recall Segment: Airbags

Product Description: Chevrolet Traverse 2015/ GMC Acadia 2015

Model Year	Division	Vehicle Model	Affected Vehicle Vin Range	No. of Affected Vehicles in Oman
2015	Chevrolet	Traverse	1GNKR8ED1FJ228785 to 1GNKV8KDXFJ225366	8
2015	GMC	Acadia	1GKKR9ED0FJ238775 to 1GKKV9KDXFJ225323	23

DESCRIPTION:

In these vehicles, the front-driver airbag inflator may contain a supplier manufacturing defect that may result in inflator rupture during deployment.

PROCEDURE:

Dealers will replace the front driver airbag module.

ATTENTION:

The necessary parts required for this safety recall are not available yet and are expected to be available at the dealer in the second quarter of Year 2023.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Customers of the above mentioned vehicles may please call Oman Trading Establishment LLC for Chevrolet & Cadillac and Moosa Abdul Rahman Hassan & Co LLC for GMC.

CONTACT DETAILS:

For OTE, Call Toll free no. 80050002 on all working days between 8.00am to 1.00pm and 2.00pm to 5.30pm.

For MARH, Call Toll free no. 80076200 on all working days between 8.30am to 1.00pm and 4.00pm to 6.30pm.



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THURSDAY | MARCH 30 | 2023

5

Oman world's No 1 in express mail service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman was rated as the topmost country in the world in the field of express mail service during 2022. The ranking stems from Oman's standing among member states of the Universal Postal Union, which includes 190 countries.

Oman Post, the national postal services operator affiliated to Asyad Group, succeeded in regularly enhancing its competitiveness and upgrading its services over the past few years. It provides various packages of "express mail delivery solutions to the final destination" within a range of 3 to 10 days, according to the best international standards.

The achievement reflects the postal services' transition from conventional to competitive commercial services that keep pace with global requirements and developments. It builds upon a gradual upward movement that started from 74th position during the past two years, progressed a notch higher in 2020 (75th position) and culminated in 2022, when Oman topped the world's courier service index.

Ahmed bin Ali al Balushi, Head of Assets Unit at Asyad Group, said that Oman Post's accession to the prime position affirms the soundness of Asyad's development methodology and its influential role locally and globally. He stressed that Oman Post will continue to realise its vision of making Oman a global logistics centre and a destination



Ahmed bin Ali al Balushi said that Oman Post's accession to the prime position affirms the soundness of Asyad's development methodology and its influential role locally and globally.

for all investors.

On his turn, Shaikh Ibrahim bin Sultan al Hosni, Acting CEO of Oman Post and Asyad Express, pointed out that Oman Post achieved significant growth in its commercial operations and logistical solutions in recent years. This, he added, led to upgrading the company's operational efficiency and service

levels, consummating in "the last-mile delivery service", which was activated last year to provide mail delivery service to a client's doorstep.

Meanwhile, Sayyid Nasr bin Badr al Busaidy, Vice-President of Postal Services, Retail and Customer Experience at Oman Post and Asyad Express, said that Oman Post met with success in providing clients with record delivery times, thanks to the timely support of the world-class integrated logistics system of the Asyad Group. This, he added, placed Oman on top of the courier service classification. Al Busaidy reaffirmed that Oman Post is determined to keep the momentum and maintain Oman's distinguished rate of performance in express courier service. — ONA

Campaign highlights water conservation

STAFF REPORTER

SUR, MARCH 28

Public relations students at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) Sur launched an awareness campaign on water conservation entitled "Nemah" on Wednesday. Dr Rashid bin Nasser al Mataani, Dean of the UTAS-Sur campus, unveiled the logo in the inaugural function held at the campus. Sultan al Saraai, Head of the Department of Mass Communication, joined him.

The campaign aims to raise awareness about water conservation. The awareness campaign, which will last until the first week of May, will include awareness lectures and competitions for school



students in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate and making public service ads on social media.

Aisha al Aرامي, student and a member of the organiang committee of the campaign, said, "This campaign is considered one of the most important campaigns that we must reflect on its important message, as the name Nemah carries a deep meaning that sums up the importance of water, and it is a great honour for us to contribute to educating the

campaign's target audience."

Explaining the meaning of the logo, the student campaign coordinator Mazoon al Alawi, said, "The idea of the logo expresses the goal of the campaign, as it consists of the letter (N) in the Arabic language, and we formed a point of the letter (N) as a drop of water." And the letter (N) is a container holding a water drop. As for the colours, we focused on the shades of blue that express water and life.

Drive to tackle dubas bugs launched



BIDBID: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water resources has launched an aerial spraying campaign for fight spring dubas bug in the Wilayat of Bidbid in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, on Wednesday.

The rest of the governorates will follow, the ministry said.

The campaign is as part of the ministry's efforts to aimed at combating the insect pests and protect date palm trees from pest infestation, It comes as continuation

of the annual programme carried out by the ministry to reduce the economic damage caused by palm dubas bug which attacks this economic crop and causes damage not only to date palm tress but also to various plants. — ONA

In brief

■ MUSCAT

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS AND YOUTH MARKS ARAB MUSIC DAY

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth organised an artistic forum marking the Arab Music Day, which falls on March 28 each year, with the participation of 17 musicians at the Omani Society of Arts. Observing the day comes with the aim of maintaining high quality of music and reviving such arts in the memory of critics, intellectuals and young generations. Marking this occasion also aims at paying attention to music culturally, educationally and socially, and encouraging the organisation of various activities in the field of Arab music, which is the identity of the Arab citizen.

BOARD OF NATIONAL MUSEUM HOLDS MEETING TO REVIEW FUTURE PLANS

The Board of Trustees of the National Museum on Wednesday held its 10th meeting under the chairmanship of Salim Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Museum. During the meeting, the Board's members approved the 2022 annual report of departments of administrative and financial affairs, the Museum Learning and Community Outreach, the Collections Department and the Media and Communication Department. The Board also approved the schedule of external exhibitions for 2023 and for 2024 as well as the adoption of work plans and programmes related to cultural diplomatic relations or international cooperation.

■ FLORIDA

OMAN TAKES PART IN SEATRADE CRUISE EXHIBITION IN US

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, is participating in the Seatrade Cruise Global exhibition, which specialises in the cruise ship sector, in Lauderdale, Florida, USA.

The participation aims to promote and meet with the operating companies of international cruise ships and decision-makers, as the exhibition witnesses the participation of CEOs, service providers of the cruise ships and yachts sector, representatives of governments, tourism companies and many media outlets.



Sahara Hospitality Co. (S.A.O.G.)
P.O. Box 311, Muscat, Postal Code 100, Sultanate of Oman.

DIRECTORS' REPORT THE FIRST QUARTER ENDED ON FEBRUARY 28, 2023

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to submit the unaudited financial statements of the company for the first quarter that ended on February 28, 2023, along with its related reports.

The company has reported revenue of RO. 2,960,663 for the period under review as against RO 3,008,712 in the corresponding period of the previous year. Net profit after tax for the same period was RO. 594,047 as against RO. 594,090 recorded in the same period last year.

The total shareholders' fund after payment of shareholders' dividends is RO. 25,764,166 as against RO. 25,181,107 for the same period of the last year. As a result of this growth, the net assets per share have recorded R.O 3.252.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I express our most sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq Bin Taimour Al Said for his wise leadership and generous support to the private sector. Also, I would extend our gratitude to the Muscat Securities Market, Capital Market Authority, and other government organizations involved in private sector business development.

I conclude this report by expressing our appreciation to our shareholders, Petroleum Development Oman, our bankers, and customers for their valued support and cooperation.

For and on behalf of the Board of Directors,

TALAL BIN QAIS AL ZAWAWI
CHAIRMAN

Unaudited consolidated Statement of Financial Position		
as at 28 th February, 2023		
	2023	2022
	RO. '000	RO. '000
Fixed Assets	14,422	15,464
Current Assets		
Inventories	23	29
Trade & Other Receivables	5,885	5,398
Receivable from related party	31	10
Bank and Cash	7,909	8,379
	13,848	13,816
Total Assets	28,270	29,280
Current liabilities		
Trade and other Payables	781	611
Payables to related parties	954	1,647
Lease liability	22	21
Tax liability	540	478
	2,297	2,757
Long-term liabilities		
Lease liability	39	61
Deferred Tax liability	153	135
Employees' end of service benefits	17	14
	209	210
Total Liabilities	2,506	2,967
Net Assets	25,764	26,313
Shareholder's Fund		
Share Capital	7,923	7,923
Legal Reserve	2,641	2,518
Retained Earnings	15,200	15,872
Total Shareholders' Equity	25,764	26,313

Unaudited consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income		
For 3 months ended 28 th February, 2023		
	2023	2022
	RO. '000	RO. '000
Turnover/Revenue	2,961	3,009
Gross Profit	796	798
Other Income	48	54
Administration & General Expenses	(143)	(151)
Operating Profit	701	701
Finance Charges	(2)	(2)
Profit before taxation	699	699
Taxation	(105)	(105)
Net Profit attributable to ordinary shareholders	594	594
Net profit margin	20%	20%

The complete accounts in either Arabic or English will be delivered to any shareholder within 7 days of receipt of the request. Such request may be sent to the Board Secretary, Sahara Hospitality Co. (S.A.O.G.), P.O.Box: 311, Postal Code -100, Muscat.

ONLS CS No. 1/0231/7

Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)
88/2023	Implementation of the governance of social responsibility programs	Companies specialized in the field of management consulting services and human resources and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first degree	Tuesday 18-4-2023 02:00 PM	Monday 8-5-2023 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

- ❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) , On Thursday 30/3/2023.
- ❖ Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.
- ❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

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

www.mosd.gov.om

Looking for job, car, flat and furniture? Check out the *Observer* classified page. It's where buyers meet sellers.



Saudi agrees to partner with China-led security bloc

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has agreed to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a “dialogue partner”, state media reported on Wednesday, the latest indication of closer political ties with China.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization was established in 2001 as a political, economic and security organisation to rival Western institutions. Besides China, its eight members include India, Pakistan and Russia, as well as four central Asian countries — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

The cabinet approved the decision at a meeting on Tuesday chaired by King Salman, the official Saudi Press Agency reported. The move would grant Riyadh “the status of a dialogue partner in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization”, it said.

Other countries with either observer or dialogue partner status include Egypt, Iran and Qatar.

Riyadh’s move to partner with the bloc comes less than three weeks after the unveiling of a landmark China-brokered reconciliation deal with Iran to restore full diplomatic relations that were severed seven years ago.



File photo of Chinese President Xi Jinping with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman during the G20 Summit in Hangzhou. — Reuters

Riyadh has said that while it had engaged in previous rounds of bilateral talks with Tehran, the reconciliation process was jump-started by President Xi Jinping’s offer last year to serve as a “bridge” between the two Middle East

heavyweights.

Xi’s role in the rapprochement raised eyebrows given Saudi Arabia’s traditionally close partnership with Washington.

Xi, in a phone call on Tuesday with Saudi Crown Prince

Mohammed bin Salman lauded what he called the easing of tensions in the Middle East.

The two leaders stressed the importance of strategic ties between Saudi Arabia, the world’s top oil exporter, and economic

The Saudi cabinet approved the decision at a meeting on Tuesday, which grants Riyadh “the status of a dialogue partner in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

powerhouse China, a main trade partner of Gulf states, it added.

Xi said the two countries will firmly support each other on issues involving their respective core interests, and make more contributions to promote peace, stability and development in the Middle East, state media reported.

Earlier this week, oil giant Saudi Aramco raised its multi-billion dollar investment in China with two deals that are the biggest to be announced since Xi visited the kingdom in December, where he attended a summit with Gulf Arab leaders.

The foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia and Iran are expected to meet during the ongoing month of Ramadhan after Riyadh and Tehran agreed, following talks in Beijing. — Agencies



Japan, Australia concerned over Myanmar disbanding Suu Kyi party

TOKYO: Japan and Australia on Wednesday expressed their concern over the dissolution of Myanmar’s former ruling party and urged the military government to pursue a more inclusive process to return the country to democracy.

Myanmar’s ruling junta on Tuesday disbanded Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy (NLD) and 39 other parties over their failure to meet a deadline to register for an election that is set to extend the army’s grip on power.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since a military coup in early 2021 that upended a decade of tentative democracy, with a bloody crackdown on protests giving rise to an armed struggle against the junta.

Myanmar’s ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi, 77, is serving 33 years in prison for various offences and dozens of her NLD allies are also in jail or have fled. The NLD had repeatedly ruled out running in the election, for which no date has been set, calling it illegitimate.

“We are seriously concerned that the exclusion of the NLD from the political process will make it even more difficult to improve the situation,” Japan’s foreign ministry said in a statement.

“Japan strongly urges Myanmar to immediately release NLD officials, including Suu Kyi, and to show a path towards a peaceful resolution of the issue in a manner that includes all parties concerned.”

A spokesperson for Myanmar’s military could not immediately be reached for comment. Its leader Min Aung Hlaing on Monday urged international critics to get behind his efforts to restore democracy. — Reuters

India pitches ‘affordable’ military hardware to Africa

PUNE: India showed off domestically made helicopters, drones and artillery at a gathering of army chiefs and officials from 31 African nations on Wednesday, as the world’s largest arms importer seeks to become a major exporter too.

India has pumped billions into its defence sector in an effort to become less reliant on imports.

At the same time it has been trying to sell more of its domestically produced hardware to other countries, particularly poorer nations unable to afford more expensive Western-made kit.

“We are making equipment which is affordable and reliable,” retired Indian army general VG Patankar said at the event.

On Wednesday, the Indian military showed off the goods on offer with a simulated operation featuring commandos abseiling from helicopters,



armoured vehicles and bomb disposal robots.

Also on display in Pune in western India — the country’s key

defence manufacturing hub — were assault rifles, artillery shells and models of missiles.

The gathering, which followed

nine days of joint military drills with soldiers from 23 African countries, included delegates from Ethiopia, Egypt, Kenya,

Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda and South Africa.

India opened its largest helicopter manufacturing plant in February, months after it unveiled its first locally made aircraft carrier and test-fired a ballistic missile from its maiden domestic nuclear-powered submarine.

The country aims to more than double its annual arms exports to \$5 billion in the coming years, from about \$1.7 billion currently.

Less than 20 per cent of its arms exports currently go to Africa, with customers including Egypt, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Mauritius and the Seychelles, officials said on condition of anonymity.

S P Shukla, head of the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers, said that the focus of the Africa sales pitch was “defensive” in nature, including armoured vehicles, radars, telecommunication equipment. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

DHAKA

Journalist charged over food article

Bangladesh police on Wednesday charged a reporter from a leading newspaper for producing “false news” after an article on high food prices went viral.

The Digital Security Act under which Shamsuzzaman Shams was charged has been widely used by the government to muzzle journalists and critics, rights groups say.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan confirmed that the reporter was questioned by police for a “false story” published at the



weekend. The reporter was charged with “smeared the image of the government with a false news” and for raising questions on the achievements of Bangladesh.

— AFP

DAMASCUS

Syrian port authority shuts all ports

Syria’s port authority has shut down all the country’s sea ports including Tartous due to poor weather and high winds, state media reported on Wednesday.

The port of Tartous had initially been exempt from the closure but the country’s ports authority later said it was shutting down as conditions worsened.

“There are winds and high waves in bursts and we cannot risk opening the ports at this time,” Brigadier General Samer Kobrosli, director-general of



the authority, said. Kobrosli said the authority’s decision did not include oil terminals. The winds also caused a power blackout across the southern province of Sweida after a number of electrical towers collapsed.

ISLAMABAD

Islamabad praises EU financial risk delists

Officials in Islamabad on Wednesday praised a move by the European Union to remove Pakistan from the list of the countries posing financial threats to its members, vowing to seize the opportunity to enhance trade with the bloc.

The 27-nation bloc put Pakistan on the list of high-risk third countries in 2018, the same year the South Asian nation was slapped with sanctions for failing to control money laundering.

The EU decision, which was



first announced in December, came after the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an inter-governmental global body on terrorism financing, also removed Pakistan from its grey list.



In brief

■ WARSAW



POLAND TO BOOST AMMUNITION OUTPUT

Poland's government has adopted a resolution to increase ammunition production and wants to allocate 2 billion zlotys (\$463.32 million) for such investments, the prime minister said on Wednesday, as Ukraine's allies seek to increase supplies.

"I encourage private companies, state companies, foreign entities ... to quickly take up the challenge to create new ammunition production plants on Polish territory," Mateusz Morawiecki told a news conference. "We want to allocate 2 billion zlotys for investments from the budget," he said, adding the government is also spending about 12 billion zlotys to order 800,000 rounds of ammunition.

■ NEW YORK



RARE PINK DIAMOND SET FOR AUCTION

A rare, vividly rosy-purple diamond, called the Eternal Pink and valued at \$35 million, is set to be auctioned off by Sotheby's as part of its Magnificent Jewels sale in New York in June.

The 10.57-carat stone is being marketed as the most valuable purplish-pink diamond ever brought to auction, with the highest ever pre-auction price per carat estimate, according to Sotheby's. "Its refined lines combined with the intensity of its color earn it a place as one of the world's most extraordinary gems," Tom Moses, executive vice president and chief laboratory and research officer at the Gemological Institute of America said of the cushion-cut diamond.

■ KYIV



UN N-CHIEF VISITS UKRAINE N-PLANT

The head of the UN nuclear watchdog visited the Russian-held Zaporizhzhia nuclear power station in southeastern Ukraine on Wednesday as part of efforts to avert the risk of an atomic accident.

Rafael Grossi, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, arrived by car at Europe's largest nuclear power plant to review the situation there, a spokesperson said. Grossi wants to assess first-hand the "nuclear safety and security situation" and press on with efforts to broker a deal to protect the plant. "I am not giving up in any way. I think on the contrary we need to multiply our efforts, we need to continue," he said.

Charles III in Germany for his first foreign trip



German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, his wife Elke Buedenbender and Britain's King Charles and Camilla, the Queen Consort attend a welcome ceremony with military honours at Pariser Platz square in front of Brandenburg Gate in Berlin on Wednesday. – Reuters

BERLIN: Britain's Charles III began his first state visit as king on Wednesday, arriving in Germany for a trip billed as "an important European gesture" to maintain strong ties after Brexit.

"Today, on the day six years ago when Britain began its exit from the European Union, we are opening a new chapter in our relations," said German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier in a speech welcoming Charles and Queen Consort Camilla.

That Charles had picked Germany for his inaugural foreign trip as monarch was a "great gesture, and an important sign for German-British relations", added Steinmeier.

Earlier, Charles and Camilla had, via a message on Twitter, underlined their "great joy to be able to continue the deepening of the longstanding friendship between our two nations".

Germany rolled out the pomp in their welcome of the royal visitors, greeting them at Berlin-Brandenburg airport with a 21-gun salute while two military jets made a flypast as they watched from the top of the plane stairs.

The British Union Jack was flapping alongside the German and European Union flags along Berlin's central Unter den Linden avenue, which leads to the Brandenburg Gate, where crowds of well-wishers waited for hours to catch a glimpse of the

Germany rolled out the pomp in their welcome of the royal visitors, greeting them at Berlin-Brandenburg airport with a 21-gun salute while two military jets made a flypast as they watched from the top of the plane stairs

dignitaries.

Steinmeier and German first lady Elke Buedenbender met the royal couple with military honours at the landmark, the first time it has provided a backdrop for receiving a state guest.

During his three-day visit, Charles will also become the first monarch to address the German parliament, with a speech on Thursday, before travelling to the port city of Hamburg on Friday.

The choice of Germany for Charles's first visit, after a planned trip to Paris was postponed, showed Berlin was a "key partner" for Britain as it seeks to reset relations with the EU, daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung wrote. Anja Wieting, 50, who works at a clothing store, took days off to drive five hours to Berlin with her daughter Lili, 18, for the spectacle.

"It's the visit of the king in Germany. We want to celebrate it, regardless of how long the queue is," she said, adding that she finds "big ceremonies and state visits by royals great".

Teacher Sylke Freundentahl, 56, had been waiting in the queue since 9:15 am (0715 GMT) before being let into the secure zone. "I am a royal fan," she said, adding that she will try to travel on Friday to Hamburg as well.

"The British royal family garners a lot of interest" in Germany, said Michael Hartmann, a sociology professor at Darmstadt Technical University, noting the bestseller status of the tell-all memoir by Charles's son Prince Harry.

The fascination with the House of Windsor has not dimmed since the death last year of Elizabeth II, Hartmann said.

The late queen first visited Berlin in 1965 when the city was divided between a capitalist West and communist East, a trip that was seen as a key step in post-war reconciliation.

Charles himself has been a regular visitor to Germany, with the British embassy in Berlin saying that he has been to the country 40 times. "We will always be friends, partners and associates," the then-Prince of Wales told the Bundestag in 2020 switching between English and German. — Reuters

Astronomers discover one of biggest black holes ever recorded

PARIS: One of the largest black holes ever recorded has been discovered using a new technique that could spot thousands more of the insatiable celestial monsters in the coming years, according to astronomers.

The ultramassive black hole, one of just four ever observed, is more than 30 billion times the mass of the Sun, a new study said. It is the first black hole ever observed using a phenomenon called gravitational lensing, in which light travelling towards us from a distant galaxy appears to magnify and bend inwards, giving away the presence of a dark giant. James Nightingale, an astronomer at the UK's Durham University and the study's lead author, said the process was "similar to shining light through the base of a wine glass".

He said it was "very fortuitous" that the light of a galaxy in the distant universe travelled extremely close to this black hole, which is roughly two billion light years from Earth.

It could even be the biggest black hole ever recorded, but it was difficult to say for sure given the varying techniques and uncertainties involved, he added.

Supermassive black holes sit at the centre of galaxies using their vast gravitational pull to gobble up stars like specks of dust, not even allowing light to escape.

Previous black holes of this size have been observed when their voracious devouring gives off huge amounts light at the margins — or by measuring the orbit of stars that speed up as they pass by.

But these techniques only work for galaxies relatively close to Earth. Gravitational lensing allows astronomers to "discover black holes in the other 99 per cent of galaxies that are currently inaccessible," Nightingale said.

There are currently around 500 known gravitational lenses — at least one of which we now know is a supermassive black hole. But "the landscape is about to dramatically change," Nightingale said.

The European Space Agency's Euclid mission, planned to launch into space in July, will open a "big data era" for black hole hunters by creating a huge high resolution map of the universe, he said.

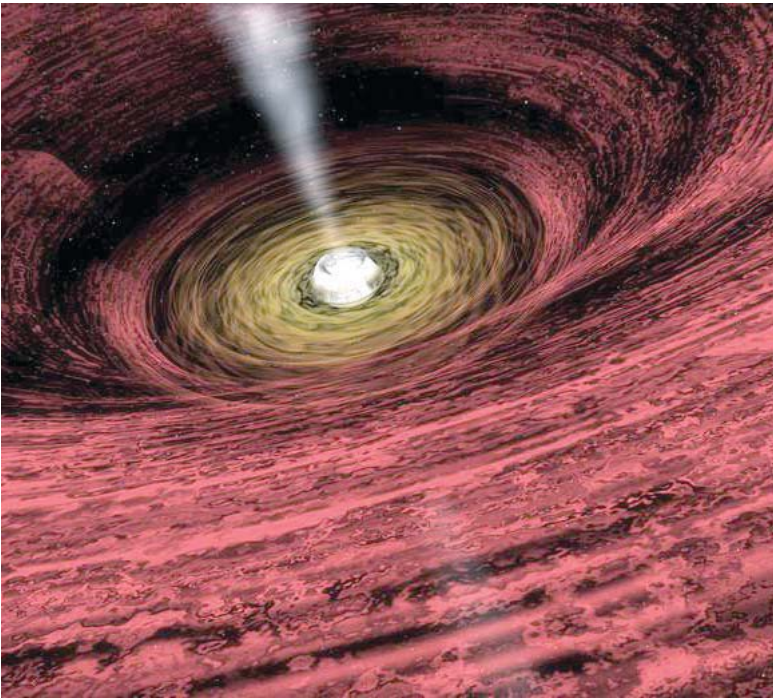
In the next six years Euclid could find 100,000 new gravitational lenses, which would potentially point towards thousands of previously hidden black holes, Nightingale added.

For the latest discovery, the researchers used computer simulations and images from the Hubble Space Telescope to confirm their findings, as well as eliminating other possibilities such as an overconcentration of dark matter.

The huge size is also consistent with what would be expected for a black hole at the centre of its giant host galaxy, Nightingale said.

The mass of all the stars in the galaxy, dubbed Abell 1201, is more than a trillion times that of our Sun, meaning it would be expected to have a particularly large black hole at its centre.

— AFP



Humza Yousaf sworn in as Scotland's leader



Newly elected leader of the Scottish National Party, Humza Yousaf poses with his daughter Amal after signing the nomination form to become First Minister for Scotland, at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh. — AFP

LONDON: Humza Yousaf was sworn in as Scotland's new leader on Wednesday in a ceremony that blended formal tradition with his Pakistani heritage before he announces appointments to his cabinet that risk worsening the deep divisions in his governing party.

Yousaf, the first Muslim to lead a democratic western European nation, was dressed in a black shalwar kameez at Scotland's highest court, the Court of Session in Edinburgh, as his family watched on.

The 37-year-old pledged an oath of allegiance to King Charles. He has previously said he wants to replace the monarchy with an elected head of state if he achieves his dream of ending Scotland's three-centuries-long political union with England.

Yousaf narrowly won a leadership race on Monday after a bruising contest that followed the surprise resignation last month of Nicola Sturgeon, who had dominated Scottish politics for almost a decade.

The internal disagreements over the future of the pro-independence Scottish National Party and the country re-emerged after Yousaf's main rival, Kate Forbes, quit the government.

Forbes turned down an offer to become the minister for rural affairs and islands, a step down from her previous role as finance minister, according to the BBC and Scottish newspapers.

Former health secretary Alex Neil, who backed Forbes, said the proposed post was "an insult and

not a real effort to unite" the party.

Yousaf had been expected to offer his leadership rival, whom he only defeated by only about 2,000 votes, a more senior role. During his leadership campaign, Yousaf had said he would depart from Sturgeon's "inner circle" style of leadership in favour of a "big tent" approach.

Forbes, who had questioned Yousaf's record in government during the leadership campaign, posted on Twitter a reminder of the closeness of the contest, while saying Yousaf had her "full support".

Yousaf said on Tuesday that Shona Robison — a close friend of Sturgeon — will serve as his deputy first minister. More appointments to cabinet roles are expected soon.

— Reuters

OMAN عُضَائِدَائِي DAILY Observer ESTABLISHED ON 15 NOVEMBER 1981	EDITORIAL					ADVERTISING Tel: 24649444, 24649430, 24649437, 24649401 Fax: 24649434	PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY:	
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Strategic importance of wheat...

Everyone is aware of the importance of wheat as a strategic commodity in our daily life. It is the most important food item in the entire world. Therefore, it is always on our tables in one form or the other. Wheat is always present in our food either as a whole or in some shape.

All the governments and countries everywhere in the world try to ensure that they are never devoid of it. It is essential part of the food security strategy everywhere in the world. There are always efforts to ensure that sufficient wheat is stored in facilities to be used for six months. It shows the importance of the commodity. The efforts made by Oman Flour Mills to guarantee that multiple sources of purchasing of wheat remain available always, are commendable. At the same time, the company is also focussed on buying huge quantities of wheat from local farmers in Oman. This encourages farmers to take up wheat farming.

Oman Flour Mills has also purchased wheat directly from Australian farmers and has made an Oman-Australian joint venture for this purpose. This has reduced the hassle of imports of wheat and its price. These efforts are giving results. It is an out of the box idea which has made things easy for all.

Wheat which is always available on our dinning table is easy to get and that too at reasonable price. But we do not know the efforts made to ensure that our dinning tables are never devoid of this important commodity.

Oman Flour Mills company is working since 1977 to ensure that all wheat requirements of the local market is met without any hindrance. It has developed and evolved ways to procure this commodity through various means. It has used the most modern technology as well as highly developed business models to ensure that there is no scarcity in the country.

Perhaps the import of 34,000 tonnes of wheat from Australia shows that how dexterity Oman Flour Mills is playing the role in the country and



Ali Al Matani
alimatani2@gmail.com

THE EFFORTS
MADE BY OMAN
FLOUR MILLS
TO GUARANTEE
THAT MULTIPLE
SOURCES OF
WHEAT REMAIN
AVAILABLE
ALWAYS ARE
COMMENDABLE

directly procuring wheat from abroad. It saves time, money and efforts. At the time when the world is reeling under the circumstances caused by the war on Ukraine, the planning of the Oman Flour Mills shows its wise thinking and planning.

Undoubtedly, wheat may be seen by some as easy to get at affordable prices, but there are also those who do not know the secrets of the complex processes that take place behind the efforts to get the commodity, and there are more than 17 supply chains until it reaches the last consumer.

All these chains add cost to the commodity as a matter of course, which is what Omani mills sought to reduce in the least possible manner to the extent that they now import it from overseas farms to Omani silos via large ships that transport thousands of tonnes in a move that is the first of its kind in the Middle East. The company’s management takes it as part of its efforts to secure wheat for local markets. In fact, the Omani mills have been working since 1977 to secure the needs of the Omani markets for wheat of all kinds, and developed ways of working in this field in quantity and quality through different methods and purely scientific techniques that contribute in selecting the best types, while at the same time strictly adhering to quality through advanced food laboratories, and applying international standards in this matter, which does not accept half-solutions, considering it a concern for human health in this dear country.

These are just a few efforts out of many such moves made by Oman Flour Mills to ensure that our food basket is never empty of such an important commodity. From purchasing from the local farmers to procuring from abroad is required as part of the multi-layered strategy which is formulated by this company. It purchased wheat at RO 500 per ton from local farmers so that these farmers are encouraged to cultivate more of wheat. It brought Omani wheat products also to encourage them.

SITTING ‘PRETTY’



A great white egret sits on a boat at Dal Lake in Srinagar, India, on Wednesday. – AFP

UK warned to fix ‘lost decade’ of climate readiness

After a “lost decade” of minimal planning, Britain must do a lot more towards mitigating the worst effects of climate change, a panel of government advisers said on Wednesday. Record-breaking heat and wildfires last year, and recurrent flooding, are a portent of worse to come even if the UK meets its goal of “net zero” carbon emissions by 2050, the experts said in a 340-page report.

The two-yearly report by the adaptation committee was focussed on England but drew UK-wide conclusions, as the Conservative government prepares to outline new steps to guarantee “energy security”.

Amid rocketing prices caused by Russia’s war in Ukraine, it will update plans for more renewable power and energy conservation with a view to the 2050 target.

Senior opposition Labour lawmaker Ed Miliband said the government needed to stop criticising sweeping new legislation introduced by US President Joe Biden, offering green subsidies, “and start matching its ambition”.

But the new UK report said whatever countries do, rising temperatures are here to stay, requiring new efforts to adapt energy



Jitendra Joshi

The writer works
for AFP

THE REPORT
IDENTIFIED
FOOD SECURITY
AS ONE AREA
OF CONCERN,
URGING THE
GOVERNMENT
TO MANDATE
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BY LARGE
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RISKS TO THEIR
SUPPLY CHAINS

and water supplies, buildings, transport networks and other critical infrastructure.

“The government’s lack of urgency around climate resilience is increasingly in contrast to the experience of the population in the UK, and the impacts are only going to get worse,” adaptation committee chairwoman Julia King told reporters.

“The last decade has been a lost decade in terms of preparing for and adapting to the risks, the risks we already have, and those that we know are coming,” she said.

“Adaptation can no longer be left as the Cinderella of climate change,” added King, an engineer and climate expert who sits in the House of Lords as Baroness Brown.

The report identified food security as one area of concern, urging the government to mandate reporting by large companies on risks to their supply chains after vegetables recently ran short across the UK.

It also called for a new requirement to record temperatures in care homes and doctors’ surgeries, after the mercury topped 40 degrees Celsius for the first time in Britain

last summer.

Government statisticians recorded 638 excess deaths at the peak of the heatwave on July 19, and a further 496 on July 20, with hospitals coming under severe strain.

The report further warned that there was “no visible plan or process” to protect UK telecommunications and IT systems from future heatwaves.

King warned of “cascading failures” through the economy if a critical sector is affected.

The report comes after UN experts warned last week that the world is on course to cross the key 1.5C global warming limit in

about a decade.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change urged dramatic reductions in planet-heating emissions.

But Chris Stark, chief executive of the UK’s climate change committee, said that years of warming temperatures are in store whatever happens.

“There is no option but to adapt to the change in the climate,” he said at the report’s launch.

“The question is only whether we do that well, by doing it early, or wait till later when it will cost more and increase the disruption.”

Caroline Lucas, Britain’s only

Green Party MP, said the report showed that the country was “nowhere near ready for what could happen in the future”.

“In the past year we’ve seen flooding, drought, chronic food shortages and the hottest temperatures on record — the climate emergency has well and truly arrived,” she said.

Meanwhile, the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday will vote whether to ask the world’s top court to define the obligations of states to combat climate change, a legal opinion that could drive countries to take stronger measures and clarify international law.

The resolution seeking an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice has made it to the UN General Assembly after a four-year campaign led by the Republic of Vanuatu. It was inspired by Pacific island law students that want the international legal system to deliver climate justice.

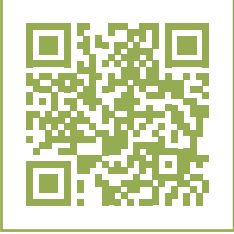
An advisory opinion by the court would not be binding in any jurisdiction, but could underpin future climate negotiations by clarifying financial obligations on countries. — AFP



Statisticians recorded 638 excess deaths at the peak of the heatwave on July 19.

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IRAQ EDGE OMAN TO FINISH FIFTH IN INTERNATIONAL U23 FRIENDLY TOURNEY



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MARCH 29

The Oman Olympic (under-23) team concluded their participation at the International U23 Friendly Championship in Doha city with a 1-0 defeat against Iraq late on Tuesday at the Grand Hamad Stadium.

The only goal in the match was scored by Iraq's Hussain Abdulla in the 76th minute.

With the victory, Iraq team ended its campaign in fifth place while Oman team was positioned in sixth place.

South Korea were crowned as champions of the tournament after blanking UAE 3-0 in the final game while UAE finished as runners-up. Kuwait claimed third place as they beat Thailand 1-0. The Oman boys suffered a 3-0 loss against eventual champions South Korea in the opening match while they

edged Kyrgyzstan team 2-0 in the second round match. Both goals of the 'Red Warriors' were netted by substitute Nibras al Maashari in the dying minutes.

Taking part in the six-day international friendly tournament was a vital station of Oman Olympic team's preparation for the West Asian Championship which will be held in Iraq in coming June and besides attending in the U23 Asian Cup qualifiers which will

take place in September. The U23 Asian Cup finals, which will be held in Doha, will act as qualifiers for the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Moreover, the national Olympic team boys will take part in the Asian Games in China from September 23 to October 8.

Oman Olympic head coach, Akram Habreesh, said in previous comments to the media that the team's presence

in the International U23 Friendly Championship in Doha served the team to play against different footballing styles. "The tournament was a good event for the players to attend several matches and enhance their technical skills and performance ahead of the forthcoming assignments."

He affirmed that this event was crucial as some top players in the Olympic team will join the national

senior team. "According to Oman Football Association (OFA), these events were a good opportunity to evaluate the players' performance and enter the players to the actual technical competitions ahead of advancing the top players to the national senior team. The event acted as a significant step to shape the players' readiness by providing them an opportunity to play against tough teams," he concluded.

Ahli Sidab take home victory against Salalah

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MARCH 29

Ahli Sidab Club secured a resounding victory against Salalah Club with a score of 75-31, in the 13th edition of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth Basketball Shield 2022-23. The first group match was held at the indoor courts of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher on Monday night.

The technical staff and players of Ahli Sidab executed an impressive performance, leading the match from the start and securing victory in all four periods. The team showcased exceptional talent with standout performances from Ariel, Hameer al Hasani, Khalid al Hashmi and Abdulreza al Battashi.

The first quarter saw Ahli Sadab start the game by scoring 5 points through Himyar al Hasani, while Salalah were able to bring the result closer with a basket of two points through Faisal Nayef. Then Ahli Sidab responded by scoring 6 points through professional Ariel.



The attempts of the two teams continued with several attacks, during which each team added a number of points, to end the first quarter with Ahli Sidab's progress over Salalah with a score of 19-8.

In the second quarter, Ahli

Sidab players continued their superiority by executing a number of attacks through which they succeeded in scoring and adding 18 points, while Salalah managed to add 9 points. The first-half ended with Ahli Sidab ahead of Salalah with

a score of 37-17.

In the third quarter, Salalah struggled to improve their defensive and offensive level, as a result of pressure from Ahli Sidab, who added 14 points, while Salalah scored 11 points. The third quarter ended with



Ahli Sidab leading Salalah 51-28. The final quarter saw Ahli Sidab dominate with an impressive score of 24 points, while Salalah scored only 9 points. The match ended with the victory of Ahli Sidab over Salalah by 75-31.

The match was moderated by Rashid al Mashaifri as the first referee, Mazin al Hilali as the second referee, and Wafaa al Samriya as the third referee. The table officials were Maryam al Zadjali, Mahmoud al Ajmi, and Sharifa al Zadjali.



Alcaraz blasts Paul to set up Fritz clash, Medvedev cruises in Miami

MIAMI GARDENS, UNITED STATES: World number one Carlos Alcaraz charged into the quarter-finals of the ATP Miami Open with a convincing 6-4, 6-4 victory over Tommy Paul on Tuesday but second seed Stefanos Tsitsipas was knocked out by Russian Karen Khachanov.

Alcaraz, the defending Miami champion and also the winner at Indian Wells earlier this month, will face another American in the last eight when he comes up against Taylor Fritz.

Paul came into the match having won his last 12 encounters with Spanish players, including wins over Alcaraz and Rafael Nadal last year, but he was unable to get a foothold in the contest.

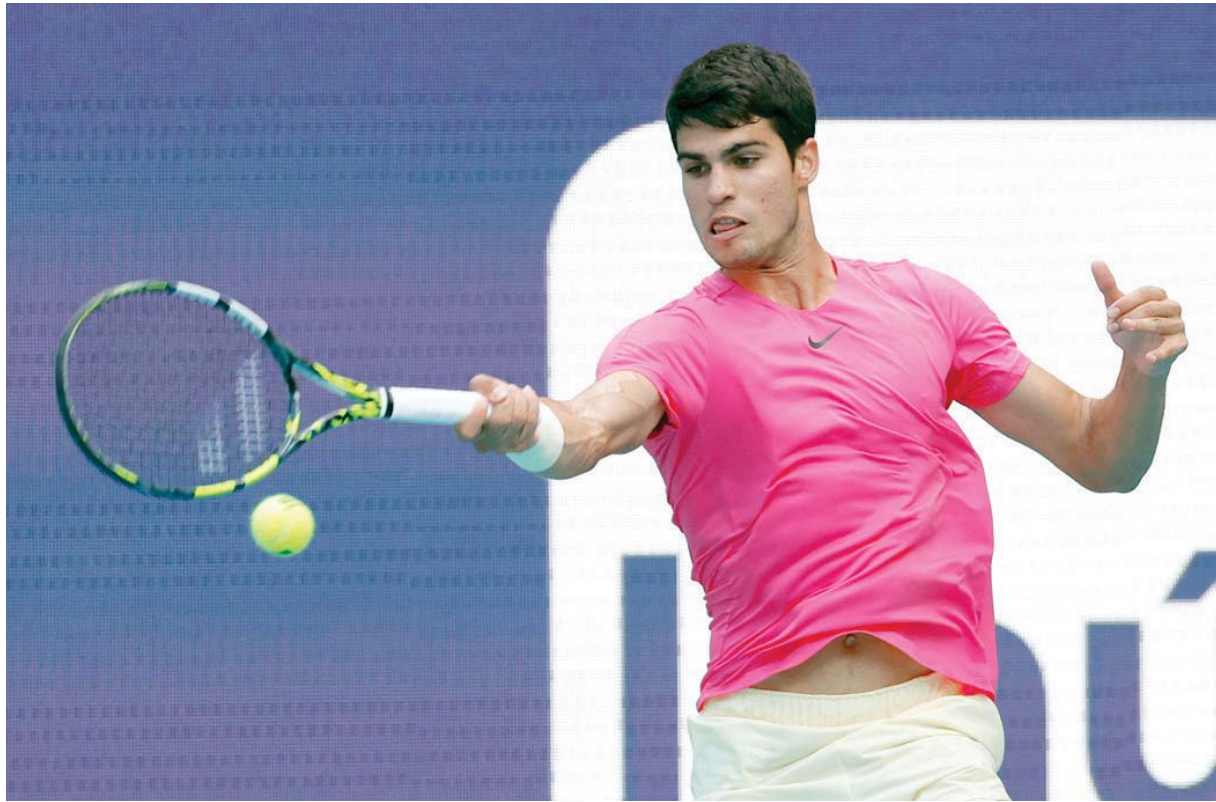
It was the ninth straight victory for the 19-year-old Spaniard, who delighted a supportive South Florida crowd with his powerful strokes from the baseline and readiness to move forward, once again making use of his increasingly effective drop shot.

"I moved well and defended well and I counter-attacked and I think if I play at that same level I will have a lot of chances to get through," said Alcaraz.

"I feel at home here. It is easy to play here in Miami with all the energy I receive every day."

Tsitsipas had to wait a week for his first contest in Miami, beating Chilean Cristian Garin on Monday, but he came unstuck against Khachanov, losing 7-6 (7/4), 6-4.

The Greek has been troubled by a shoulder injury in recent weeks but Khachanov ended his six match losing streak against Tsitsipas and 23 match barren spell against top



ten opponents.

His serve was reliable throughout and broke Tsitsipas' serve to love in the fifth game of the second set and kept his cool to see out the win.

"Both of us were serving pretty well in the first set... Then I took it to the tie-break, and in the second set as soon as the opportunity came, I had to take it," he said.

In a clash of top-10 players, American Fritz defeated Denmark's Holger Rune 6-3, 6-4 to reach to the last eight in Miami for the first time in his career.

Fritz, who won at Delray Beach last month, beat Emilio Nava and Denis Shapovalov in straight sets before Tuesday's encounter and he was pleased with the way he was able to go on the attack.

"I couldn't play aggressively in my first two matches because my opponents were hitting every ball

as hard as they could. (Rune) still crushes the ball but it was nice to feel I had some more time," Fritz said.

"The first two rounds, it was impossible to play my game, I just had to make balls. Today when I got the chance to be aggressive I was and I just wanted to serve well and try not to give him many free points."

EUBANKS OUSTS MANNARINO

Fritz will be joined in the quarter-finals by compatriot Christopher Eubanks who claimed another scalp by beating France's Adrian Mannarino 7-6 (7/2), 7-6 (7/5).

The game was delayed by rain for around four hours with Eubanks, ranked 119th in the world, 4-2 up in the first set and

after play resumed Mannarino was able to force a tie-break before losing out to the big-serving American.

There was nothing to separate the pair in the second set but once again Eubanks triumphed in the tie-breaker to reach a Masters 1000 quarter-finals for the first time in his career.

Having come through the qualifiers in Miami, the 26-year-old Eubanks has won six straight game and will enter the top 100 in the world rankings for the first time.

Eubanks now faces world number five Daniil Medvedev after the Russian comfortably dealt with French qualifier Quentin Halys 6-4, 6-2 in a match which started after midnight following a four-hour rain delay.

— AFP

OHA honours national beach handball team

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MARCH 29

The Oman Handball Association (OHA) held a ceremony to honour the champions of the national beach handball team at the City Seasons Hotel in Al Khuwair.

The ceremony, held under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Firas bin Fatik al Said, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al Suwaiq Club, also recognised the association's board of directors, referees, observers, and partners at the end of the 2022/2023 sports season.

The national beach handball team was recognised for their outstanding performance in the ninth Asian Beach Handball Championship.

The team secured second place, qualifying them for the World Cup in Spain in 2024 for the eighth time in history. The team also qualified for the third Continental Championship of the World Beach Games in Bali, Indonesia in 2023. The Oman Handball Association's board of directors expressed their appreciation for the team's hard work and commitment to excellence.

Dr Saeed bin Ahmed al Shehri, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Oman Handball Association, delivered a speech at the beginning of the ceremony, praising the team's success and their management.

Al Shehri also thanked the referees, including Omar bin Saeed al Shehhi and Khamis bin Suhaim al Wahaibi, for their



efforts in successfully managing the OHA's competitions. He also expressed his gratitude to the departments of sports complexes, press, and media for their cooperation with the association.

The ceremony began with Al Shehri presenting a souvenir to HH Sayyid Firas bin Fatik al Said, who then honoured the members of the Board of Directors of the OHA, the national beach handball team, referees, observers, media, and collaborating parties for their contributions to the 2022/2023 sports season.

"Excellence requires responsibility, hard work, commitment, and sacrifice. This achievement did not come out of nowhere," noted Al Shehri adding "The OHA congratulates the national beach handball team and all those who contributed to the success of the 2022/2023 sports season."



OMAN HANDBALL CLUB WILL TAKE PART AT ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIP



The Oman Handball Club team represents Omani handball in the Asian Handball Club Championship, which will be held on June in Iran. While the draw will be held in Kuwait via visual communication between the heads of the Asian Handball Federation and club representatives on March 30.

Factors that make IPL stand out from other leagues



With just one day to go for the Indian Premier League, there are certain mixed emotions between all the parties concerned. The new players would be having cold feet and nervousness, the experienced players would be pumped to have an opportunity at redemption, the support staff of teams would be in immense stress trying to get the right combination, and the fans would be busy backing their team and players on social media. Between all of this, let us hear what you feel and we will include the best comments in future editions, you could also ask questions to our expert. #OOIPL2023

A few years ago, cricket was just a sport, where people participated to back their passion and for the love of the game. After the entry of IPL, cricket has become a full-fledged business and one wouldn't be wrong in saying that it has completely changed the game for this entire world. Not only does it provide an opportunity to thousands of people to make a living, but it also aids in accumulating huge valuations of funds, which is used in building infrastructures that allows millions of people to have an opportunity and facilities to become a professional cricketer one day. These infrastructure expansions obviously don't run on their own and hence they provide ample related opportunities to others



as well. Not just within India, but the world has learnt a lesson or two from IPL and hence the set up of so many franchise-based leagues around the world have grown over the years.

What makes IPL a stand out event, even when there are so many competitive events?

INDIAN INTERNATIONAL PLAYERS - IPL is the only short format league, where you will be able to see any professional current Indian cricketer participating. Players like Virat Kohli, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Rohit Sharma, Hardik Pandya are extremely popular and have a huge fan base. BCCI restricts any international or domestic contracted player from playing any other franchise cricket.

CRICKET/INDIA/SPONSORS - Hockey might be the national sport of India, but cricket is a religion. With a population of 1.4 billion people, brands in India have understood that it's easier to connect with the Indian audience through cricket. Even the biggest of ICC world events would see sponsorship from the majority of

the Indian brands.

HOSTING WINDOW - There are three parts to this, first, the ICC recognises the role that IPL plays on the development and growth of popularising cricket in the world. Secondly, because the majority of funds are generated from the Indian market, which is later distributed for the development of facilities to other cricketing nations. Thirdly, India has great relations with most of the cricketing board and hence in return they have their support and backing during these two months.

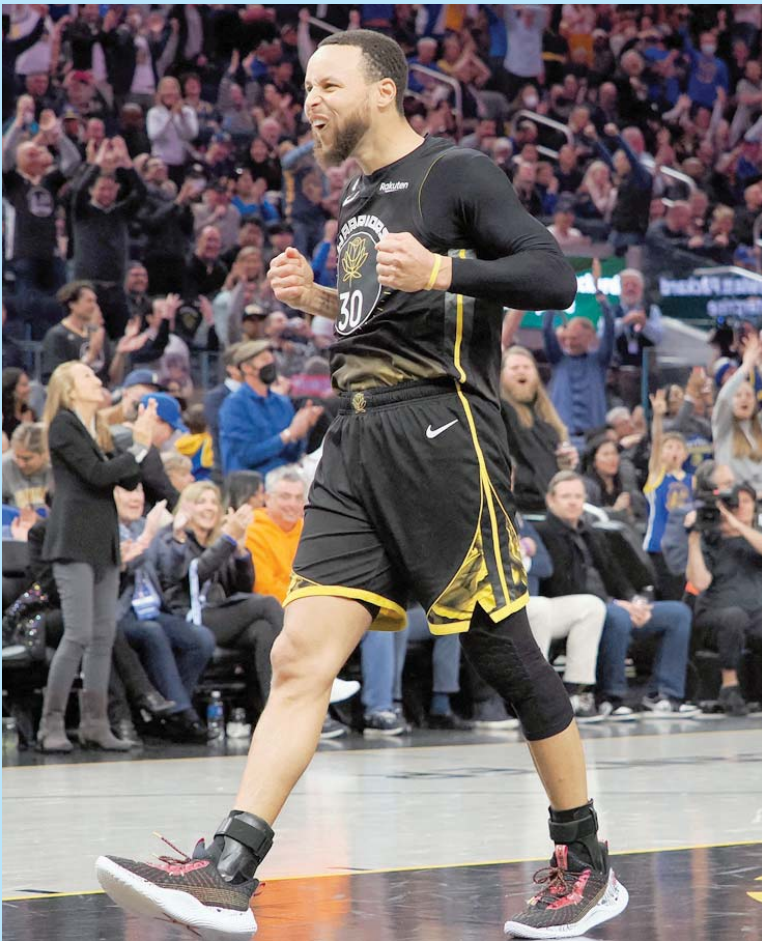
BEST CRICKETERS IN THE WORLD - IPL is known for picking the best of resources available. Players like Sandeep Lamichhane (Nepal), Rashid Khan (Afghanistan) and Mohammad Nabi (Afghanistan) found their stardom and huge world fan following from this very event. Since all the franchises are focused on having the best team on field, the quality of gameplay is also very high, which is a delight for the viewer. The exposure that a participating player receives could be a life-changing affair.

FINANCIALS - It goes without saying that the valuation which IPL offers, makes it a dream for every cricketer to be associated with this event. Many professional cricketers have retired from international cricket, so they could play more franchise cricket. This puts extra pressure on the cricketing boards to make sure that they work in line with players requirements and make them available for this mega event.

GENIUS MARKETING / HUGE FAN FOLLOWING - Since its initial days, IPL focused very strongly on helping the franchises obtain a huge fan base. This led to a series of advertisements which were based on bragging rights for fans. Now this has brought a time, when a father-son or husband-wife or two best friends arguing on which is the better franchise and why the other franchise is not good. This concept not only helps in increasing the popularity of the event, but also plays a big role in filling up huge cricket stadiums and the sale of unlimited franchise supporting goods.

It's not that IPL has only pros and there are no cons to it. But as it's often said, one needs to give people what they want, if he wants to run the business for long, and this is exactly what every Indian would be doing, irrespective of whether he likes the game of cricket or not.

You could post your views and question on our social media handles and we will pick the best question in our future articles, TWITTER - @OmanObserver @PranavMehtaOman OR INSTAGRAM - @OmanObserver @pranav_mehta_18. DON'T FORGET TO USE THE #OOIPL2023 FOR BETTER REACH.



Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry (30) celebrates after a three point basket against the New Orleans Pelicans during the fourth quarter at Chase Center. – USA TODAY Sports

Curry scores 39 to lead Warriors rally over Pelicans

LOS ANGELES: Golden State erased a 20-point deficit to beat the New Orleans Pelicans 120-109 on Tuesday, with Stephen Curry scoring 39 points as the Warriors edged ahead of Minnesota into sixth place in the Western Conference.

Curry drained five of his eight three-pointers in the second half as the reigning NBA champion Warriors came alive, surging past the Pelicans to win a sometimes sloppy, often scrappy contest and boost their chances of avoiding the play-in tournament for teams placed seventh through 10th in each conference.

Golden State star Draymond Green and New Orleans’ Brandon Ingram received double technical fouls with 3:45 left in the second quarter after they exchanged words in the wake of Green’s foul on the Pelicans player — which was upgraded to a flagrant.

Green’s collision with Herbert Jones sparked some more shoving, and with 14 turnovers in the testy first half, the Warriors were down 17 at the break.

They opened the third quarter on an 8-0 scoring run and had cut the deficit to four points going into the fourth.

“We started playing with some heart and intensity,”

Green said of the difference in the second half.

Jordan Poole’s reverse layup early in the fourth gave the Warriors their first lead since the first quarter, 95-94, and they didn’t trail again.

Poole scored 13 of his 21 points in the fourth quarter, and Klay Thompson added 17 for the Warriors.

Ingram led the Pelicans with 26 points and Trey Murphy added 21, but New Orleans coach Willie Green said his team’s lackluster start to the third quarter was fatal.

“We started, I believe it was eight-zip,” he said. “Two turnovers. You can’t give this team any life. Once they get going, once this building gets going, it’s tough to stop them.”

WIZARDS SHOCK CELTICS

Elsewhere, the Boston Celtics’ chances of overtaking the Milwaukee Bucks for the top seed in the East took a hit with an ugly 130-111 loss to the lowly Washington Wizards.

Perhaps caught looking ahead to a Thursday clash with the Bucks, the Celtics were lackadaisical on defence, unable to stop a Wizards team missing two key players in Bradley Beal and Kyle Kuzma.

— AFP



New Orleans Pelicans small forward Brandon Ingram (14) controls the ball against Golden State Warriors centre Draymond Green (23) during the fourth quarter at Chase Center. – USA TODAY Sports

SHEPHERD, JOSEPH TAKE WEST INDIES TO SOUTH AFRICA SERIES WIN



West Indies’ players celebrate with the official trophy during a ceremony at the end of the third T20 international cricket match between South Africa and West Indies at Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg on Tuesday. – AFP

JOHANNESBURG: Romario Shepherd’s late batting assault and a five-wicket haul by Alzarri Joseph took the West Indies to a series-clinching seven-run win against South Africa in the third Twenty20 international at the Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg on Tuesday.

Shepherd slammed 44 not out off 22 balls to lift the West Indies from 161 for eight to 220 for eight, sharing an unbeaten ninth wicket stand of 59 off 26 balls with Joseph, who made 14 not out.

Fast bowler Joseph then took five for 40 as South Africa were restricted to 213 for six.

New West Indies T20 captain Rovman Powell said the players had responded to his call “to be fearless, to be natural - but you have to be smart too. The guys were excellent in this series.”

Joseph, who missed the second match in Centurion when South Africa achieved a world record run chase of 259, struck crucial blows when he took the wickets of T20 stars Quinton de Kock (21) and David Miller (11).

Joseph effectively wrapped up the match in the penultimate over when he dismissed top-scorer Reeza Hendricks for 83 and followed up with the wickets of Heinrich Klaasen and Wayne Parnell.

“We made a total and it was up to the bowlers to defend it,” said Joseph, who was named player of the match.

“I thrive on the opportunity to make an impact.”

The last two overs of the West Indian innings were match-changing as Shepherd and Joseph scored 17 off Wayne Parnell and 26 in the final over bowled by Kagiso Rabada.

“We would have liked to wrap up the last two wickets but bar the last two or three overs we were really good with the ball,” said South Africa captain Aiden Markram.

— AFP

BRIEF SCORES
West Indies 220-8 in 20 overs (B. King 36, N. Pooran 41, R. Shepherd 44 not out; L. Ngidi 2-45, K. Rabada 2-50, A. Nortje 2-36).
South Africa 213-6 in 20 overs (R. Hendricks 83, R. Rossouw 42, A. Markram 35 not out; A. Joseph 5-40).
Result: West Indies won by 7 runs.
Series: West Indies won the three-match series 2-1.
Toss: South Africa.



West Indies’ Romario Shepherd watches the ball after playing a shot during the third T20 international cricket match between South Africa and West Indies at Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg. – AFP

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Brent Crude \$ 78.81
Light Crude \$ 74.03



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Space tourism arrives in Mideast unlocking opportunities for Oman

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, MARCH 29

US-based international space tourism agency SpaceVIP is launching operations in the Middle East – a move that will also have beneficial implications for the Sultanate of Oman in light of the Omani government’s plans to kickstart the development of a domestic space industry.

Earlier this year, the Ministry of Transport Communications and Information Technology unveiled an ambitious executive space policy and industry programme with a heavy emphasis on space tourism in Oman. The Observer spoke to Roman Chiporukha, co-founder of SpaceVIP, about his plans for the region.

When Axiom Space, a Houston-based company operating missions to the International Space Station (ISS), approached Roman Chiporukha (pictured), co-owner of SpaceVIP, with a proposal to promote its trips to the ISS in 2018, Roman didn’t know much about space.

However, following the success



of the mission in 2022 which marked the first fully private crew trip to the station, SpaceVIP emerged.

“SpaceVIP was founded to inspire the next generation of private astronauts... It seems that a lot of us don’t really know that most of the technology and innovation that we take for granted actually comes from space technology. So we’ve taken it upon ourselves to first educate the public, and then give them the opportunity to experience all of these truly unique and enriching opportunities that are related to space,” shared Chiporukha.

The space tourism agency,

which launched its operations in the Middle East this month, offers various space and space adjacent experiences. Space enthusiasts can opt for various experiences at different price points.

The lowest of which are “earth” based experiences which include analog lunar or Martian research missions, where individuals get to experience the environment of that planet, zero-gravity trips where you can float in a cabin and experience zero-gravity felt by astronauts in space, and various astronaut training simulations.

Space enthusiasts can also opt for sub-orbital and orbital experiences, such as a trip on a stratospheric space balloon onboard Space Perspective’s Neptune Capsule that will travel over the world in a luxury cabin with Wi-Fi and refreshments , an orbital trip around earth or the moon , or even a trip to the International Space Station!

So why would anyone go for any of these experiences? Like the majority of us, Chiporukha believes that it’s due to the novelty of the experience, however he also

believes it’s partly in search of a greater meaning.

“I think some people are like, oh, this balloon looks really cool. Can I have a famous chef cook dinner on it? And then other people are like, oh, this is really cool. My sister-in-law died of cancer five years ago, what sort of cancer research are they doing in space? I would like to pair my experience up there with doing something meaningful and altruistic.”

“So I would say it’s probably 40 per cent cool factor and then 60 per cent thinking about something meaningful and worthwhile,” added Chiporukha. So what do these experiences have in common? Chiporukha believes that it is the overview effect.

“The overview effect is the feeling that you get when you as a resident of this planet see the Earth from space, it’s been catalogued by every single astronaut that has been in space,” he explained.

“And all of them talk about it in separate but very similar veins that when you see the Earth from space, you have this incredible sense of interconnectedness.

TURN TO PAGE 14

Geological storage, seaweed farming proposed for carbon capture in Oman



CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MARCH 29

A white paper published recently by Gulf Intelligence, a leading strategic consulting firm for the energy and natural resources industry, has underscored the potential for the Sultanate of Oman to explore opportunities for investment in carbon capture and storage (CCS) in parallel with its Net-Zero strategy.

The white paper, titled ‘How to Power Sustainable Economic Diversification in Oman’, highlights in particular opportunities linked to large-scale seaweed farming, as well as the use of geological formations for the storage of planet-warming carbon dioxide (CO2).

The report summarises the thoughts of top energy sector executives from Oman and

abroad, who were invited to participate in a recent forum on ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) hosted by Gulf Intelligence.

Carbon Capture and Storage relates to processes and technologies in which CO2 from industrial and other sources is separated, treated and stored typically in underground geological formations, such as depleted hydrocarbon reservoirs, salt caverns, and so on. The goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and thereby mitigate climate change.

According to the white paper, Oman hosts unique rock formations that can be evaluated for their potential to serve as carbon sinks – a move that will also help “maximise the country’s competitive and environmental advantage”.

TURN TO PAGE 14

IBE Name: Alizz Islamic Bank S.A.O.C Minimum Disclosure Requirements in the year-end Financial statements

Income Statement for the period ended 31 December, 2022		FORM NO CBO/MDR/3	
Details	Note	RO 000'	
		Current Year	Previous Year
1 - Net Income from Islamic Financing (a-b)			
(a) Profit from Islamic Financing		48,258	44,410
Less: (b) Expenses of Islamic financing		-	-
2 - Net Income from Sukuk and Interbank (a-b)			
(a) Profit from Sukuk & Interbank		3,287	3,090
Less: (b) Expenses of Sukuk & Interbank		(267)	(7)
3 - Return on unrestricted investment accounts (a-b)			
(a) Gross Return on Unrestricted Investment Accounts		(6,013)	(4,676)
Less: (b) Bank Share as Mudarib		-	187
4 - Return on wakala deposits		(19,596)	(21,788)
5 - Dividend income		-	-
6 - Net Fee & commissions income (a-b)			
a) Fee & commissions income		4,308	3,881
Less: b) Fee & commissions expenses		(9)	(18)
7 - Net Foreign Exchange income (a-b)			
a) Income		582	403
Less : b) expense		-	-
8 - Unrealized gain (loss) on equity type instrument carried at fair value through statement of income		-	-
9 - Gain (loss) on equity type instrument carried at fair value through equity		-	-
10 - Net income from other investment			
a) Income from other Investments		-	-
Less: b) Expense		-	-
11 - Income From Subsidiaries	7		
a)		-	-
b)		-	-
12 - Income From Associate companies	7		
a)		-	-
b)		-	-
13 - Income from other licensed activities			
a)		-	-
b)		-	-
14 - Other Income			
a)		-	-
b)		-	-
c)		-	-
Total Operating Income		30,550	25,483
Staff Expenses		(12,340)	(11,617)
General & Administrative expenses	12	(6,640)	(5,571)
Depreciation and Amortization expenses		(962)	(990)
Other expenses			
a)		-	-
b)		-	-
c)		-	-
d)		-	-
e)		-	-
f)		-	-
Total Operating Expense		(19,943)	(18,179)
Net operating Income/Loss (Income/Loss on ordinary activities before ECL)		10,607	7,304
ECL written off		-	-
ECL written back		-	-
Cash Recoveries		-	-
Expected Credit Losses charged			
a) ECL against Financing		(3,532)	(3,092)
b) ECL against Placements		(3)	-
c) ECL against Investments		4	404
d) ECL against Other Assets		-	-
e) Others		59	(297)
Net Expected Credit Losses charged during the period		(3,473)	(2,985)
Profit/(Loss) for the period before tax		7,134	4,319
Income tax		(883)	63
Net profit/(Loss) for the period		6,251	4,382
Other Comprehensive Income for the year			
- Movement in fair value of available for sale/FVOCI investment for the year		14	(333)
- Effect of currency translation for the year		-	-
- Any other comprehensive income for the year (please specify)		-	-
Total Comprehensive Income for the year		6,265	4,049

بنك العز الإسلامي
alizz islamic bank



Assets as of 31 December, 2022		FORM NO CBO/MDR/5	
Assets		RO 000'	
		Current Year	Previous Year
1 - Cash		6,058	6,835
2 - Balances with Central Bank of Oman		62,320	75,615
3 - Capital Deposit with Central Bank		500	500
4 - Cash and Balances with Other Banks & Financial Institutions		2,511	2,267
5 - Due from H.O, Branches, Principal shareholders & Affiliates abroad		-	-
6 - Due from Financial Institutions (Placements)		3,000	-
7 - Total Islamic Financing		910,034	803,831
Receivables under Murabaha, Salam & Istisna		123,977	105,211
Ijarah Financing		192,128	226,561
Musharaka & Diminishing Musharaka		411,937	322,494
Wakala Bill Istithmar		179,479	147,509
Other Financing		2,513	2,056
8 - Investments		63,231	62,466
9 - Investment in Properties		-	-
10 - Fixed Assets and Intangibles		2,625	2,891
11 - Other Assets		21,981	19,740
Total Assets		1,072,261	974,146
*Applicable to domestic licenses			

Liabilities as of 31 December, 2022		FORM NO CBO/MDR/5	
Liabilities		RO 000'	
		Current Year	Previous Year
1 - Current and margin accounts		120,259	118,034
2 - Due to H.O , Branches, Principal shareholders & affiliates abroad		-	-
3 - Due to Financial Institutions		-	-
4 - Other liabilities		23,381	18,477
Wakala Based Deposits		-	-
Unrestricted investment accounts			
1 - Investment accounts		817,677	732,956
2 - Profit Equalization Reserve		-	-
3 - Investment Risk Reserve		-	-
Shareholders' Equity			
1 - Share Capital * / Assigned Capital #		139,500	139,500
2 - Legal Reserve * / Deposit with CBO #		1,554	929
3 - Share premium		-	-
4 - Investment Fair Value Reserve		(364)	(378)
5 - Other Reserves		-	-
6 - Retained Earnings		(29,747)	(35,373)
Total Liabilities, Unrestricted investment account & shareholders equity		1,072,261	974,146
#Applicable to Islamic Windows/Foreign licensees			

Aloft Muscat prepares for bold debut in Oman

MUSCAT: Aloft Hotels, the innovative brand for music enthusiasts and tech-savvy travellers, part of Marriott International's extraordinary portfolio of 30 hotel brands, announces plans to open Aloft Muscat in Spring 2023. The highly anticipated opening is expected to mark the brand's debut in Oman.

Designed for the next generation of traveller the hotel will be a new vibrant destination and will feature eclectic spaces, distinctive design, live music programming and 199 modern loft-style guestrooms complete with the brand's signature amenities.

The hotel is expected to feature three dining outlets, places for guests to come together, including a Californian style eatery, an international restaurant with a



Mediterranean twist, and the brand's signature bar W XYZ. Other facilities will include a rooftop pool and gym.

Danny al Chayeb (pictured) will take the helm of the new hotel as General Manager. With more than two decades in hospitality across the MENA region, Al Chayeb brings a wealth of experience to Aloft Muscat, including a proven track record of creating new food and beverage concepts and providing the highest guest service standards.

A hands-on GM, he aims to turn moments into memorable stays for guests, with a desire to lead by example while driving business.

"We are thrilled to debut Aloft Hotels in Oman. A brand known for its design-driven and tech-savvy ethos, Aloft Muscat will bring a modern, friendly, and comfortable option for global travellers and a new hotspot for residents in the Sultanate of Oman," said Danny al Chayeb, General Manager.

Aloft Muscat is located 10 minutes from Muscat International Airport and is nearby to the city's attractions including the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, Royal Opera House Muscat, Mall of Oman, Oman Avenues Mall, Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex, Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre and three major golf courses.

Space tourism arrives in ME, unlocking opportunities for Oman

FROM PAGE 13

Because you don't see the world like you and I see the world on a Google map right with borders and dogmas and conflict and nonsense. You just see like this beautiful blue planet and you want to [protect it], it's almost like seeing, you know, a child or a baby of some sort. And so I think the overview effect is a really interesting phenomenon that might actually be a catalyst for greater human change," he added.

SpaceVIP's operations are not limited to space experiences only. In 2021, the agency launched Space Prize, a non-profit organisation to empower young women in the space industry. According to non-profit, less than 12 per cent of 600 people who have travelled to space were women.

According to Chiporukha, the

non-profit holds space related writing competitions where winners get to experience zero-gravity flights and get paired with successful mentors in the STEM community.

In addition to donating space observation equipment to schools, and providing a free online space literacy curriculum which Chiporukha believes is suitable for all ages.

"[The curriculum] is meant to be interactive, and really educational. And you know, my wife read it the other day. And she goes, "This isn't just for junior high school and high school kids, this is for adults who have no idea but are interested to learn about space." "

So space prize is really, really meaningful, and has been a really big focus of our work while

we wait for all of these other experiences to come online, so people can actually start going."

Unfortunately, none of the experiences take place in the Middle East currently. However, Chiporukha is a firm believer in the region's potential. This January, National Aerospace Services Company (Nascom) announced plans of building a rocket launch centre in Duqm, a first of its kind in the Middle East.

And last year, the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) signed an agreement to establish a space settlement centre in Duqm on Oman's southeast. Chiporukha believes that increased interest in the space industry and space technology might make space tourism in the Middle East a reality.

NBO offers car loans at special rates during Ramadhan

MUSCAT: National Bank of Oman (NBO) recently announced car loans at special rates during the Holy Month of Ramadhan. Whether customers are looking to buy a new or pre-owned car, both NBO customers and non-NBO customers residing in Oman can currently benefit from lower annual interest rates starting from 3.49 per cent per annum on car loan. Additionally, customers can take advantage of a 10 per cent reduced rate on car insurance provided they combine a car loan with an insurance through NBO.

Maha al Raisi, Assistant General Manager — Head of Retail Products at National Bank of Oman, said, "We realise that Ramadhan is a popular time for customers to look for a new car, while we always aim to proactively connect with them to identify



their most important goals and support them in meeting their financial needs.

Our bank has therefore been offering simplified ways to finance the car-buying journey, especially during this special time of the year. Plus, our solutions apply to not only our customers but also to those who are not receiving a salary into an account with us and who can repay their loan using

direct-debt instead."

She added, "We aim to engage with customers at multiple stages of their decision journey, which is why we also offer a special rate on car insurance so they can worry less about any extra costs to consider after they have bought their new car."

During Ramadhan, both Omani nationals and residents, can apply for NBO's car loan offer and benefit from the promotional interest rates.

Non-NBO customers who do not receive their salaries through NBO can obtain a car loan from the bank using Direct Debit to repay their loan, which is a unique and hassle-free service offered only by NBO. Meanwhile, the maximum tenor for new-car loans is ten years, and nine years for pre-owned cars.

Own a luxury Lincoln and get exclusive wish list benefits

MUSCAT: This is the best time to own a luxury Lincoln vehicle and get exclusive wish list benefits. Service 5 years / 100,000 kms and 1 year registration. The campaign will end on May 10, 2023. (Conditions apply. For details visit a Lincoln showroom Wattayah.)

Owning a Lincoln vehicle is one of the most amazing experiences. From design to distinctive luxury to overall ownership experiences, Lincoln luxury vehicles have always stood out.

Lincoln's range of luxury vehicles include Nautilus, Aviator and Navigator.

The Lincoln **Nautilus** offers a luxurious environment besides delivering amazing SUV flexibility. The Nautilus offers a stunning exterior design with a new Lincoln signature grille, new tail lamps, and appliqué light bar, spoiler and upper rear fascia.

Complementing the new design features and affording the Nautilus a more luxurious stance, is an all new wheel line up featuring 20" bright machined aluminium with premium painted pockets available for the Reserve trim. The Lincoln Nautilus is equipped with



a turbocharged engine line-up.

The stylish and luxury **Aviator** makes a bold presence with its inspiring design and sleek profile. The Aviator offers the kind of capability premium clients require in a three-row SUV, with available all-wheel drive. The standard twin-turbocharged 3.0-litre V6 engine, paired with a 10-speed SelectShift automatic transmission, it delivers an impressive 400 horsepower and 562 Nm of torque for effortless acceleration.

The luxury family SUV – the Lincoln **Navigator** is an ideal choice for large families looking forward to luxury on-road experiences together. The Navigator combines modern luxury with advanced technology. A twin-turbo V6 engine that can produce 440 horsepower provides smooth power whenever you need it, delivered through a 10-speed transmission. Navigator's lighter, high-strength aluminium-alloy body helps create a more refined

ride.

Customers wishing to own their dream Lincoln with exclusive benefits are encouraged to visit their nearest Lincoln showroom.

In Oman, Lincoln vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co LLC. Please log on to www.lincolnoman.com, or www.facebook.com/lincolnoman or www.instagram.com/lincoln_oman for the latest news, test drive requests and the latest press releases.

Geological storage, seaweed farming proposed for carbon capture in Oman

FROM PAGE 13

Equally promising is the potential for large-scale farming of seaweed, which captures and stores huge quantities of CO2 in its biomass.

Deep water along parts of Oman's lengthy coastline is conducive for seaweed cultivation because of the occurrence of upwellings that bring nutrients to the surface, thereby supporting seaweed growth.

In addition to its carbon sequestration characteristics, seaweed farming can also open up other valuable commercial opportunities, the report pointed out.

"Everything from biofuels to yogurt uses seaweed, so we really should be exploring that for carbon capture as well," a participant was quoted as saying.

However, one key constraint holding back CCS development in Oman is the steep cost involved, according to the white paper.

Participates, while cautioning that the cost of inaction on CCS is even worse, nevertheless were

unanimous in their view that the answer lies in "collective action".

"Everyone must pay some degree of the cost for building a commercially viable CCS supply chain, which means more open forums to allocate responsibilities and obligations are needed. Importantly, timing to build a CCS ecosystem more vigorously is in Oman's favour," they stressed.

Attendees also called for more incentives from the government to support CCS efforts in the short-term.

"A more holistic approach – one that includes supporting methods to reduce CO2 emissions in the hydrocarbon market, like CCS – are much-needed.

A cushion in the short to medium term would help spur investors' appetite, both within Oman and internationally," they added.

Significantly, a number of oil and gas producers in Oman, notably Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and Oxy Oman, are weighing opportunities for CCS development as part of their Net-Zero commitments.

Wasting food is inconsistent with the spirit of Ramadhan



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

The author is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for the CBO and OCCIL.

Scores of families around the world complain about high prices of commodities and products due to geopolitical, logistical and supply chain challenges that have contributed to inflationary trends. In this content, reducing food waste and saving money assume significance amid the ongoing economic difficulties. Given that Muslim families are now well into the blessed month of Ramadhan, they must be careful not to indulge in wasteful expenditure or extravagance that will result in surplus foodstuff ending up in the trash bin.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) indicates that the average person in the Arab region wastes about 250 kilogrammes of food annually, and that such waste increases in the holy month of Ramadhan to reach 350 kilogrammes. This happens when some people are used to seeing multiple dishes at the Ramadhan table, at a time when some families suffer from a lack of food due to poverty. In this holy month, we see the terrible amount of food waste that occurs among some families, at a time when food industry companies are preparing to carry out

marketing campaigns to promote their products in various ways to encourage those who are fasting to purchase their merchandise. In the Gulf region, some socially responsible companies, in cooperation with civil societies, continue their efforts to educate people and caution them against food waste. This awareness is conducted through audiovisual messages, media campaigns, plays and storytelling, with the underlying message that food conservation is a blessing. Everyone agrees that wasting food in this great month and during the year happens due to wrong behaviour, which is

not consistent with the tolerant Islamic teachings that urge the necessity of rationalisation and eschew extravagance and waste in eating and drinking, so that it does not lead to food waste. Often, surplus foodstuff is thrown in the garbage without being touched or eaten. Conserving food means conserving the environment as well. According to reports, 8%-10% of global greenhouse gas emissions result from food waste, which contributes to global warming that the world suffers from. From this standpoint, those concerned must continue to carry out awareness campaigns

through the various media and civil society organisations, and work to instil a culture of that eschews extravagance, especially among young people and future generations. Balance in the process of eating and drinking and not wasting food will all improve food availability, access to food security and reduce pressure on natural resources, most of which are only available in foreign countries, according to FAO data. The region relies mainly on imports for more than 50% of its nutritional needs in the form of grains, meat, fish, vegetables and fruits.

India's grid strained by burgeoning power demand

JOHN KEMP

India's electricity transmission system is coming under increasing strain as booming power demand outstrips growth in despatchable generation. Mild temperatures in February and March have masked the struggle to meet fast-growing loads from industry as well as for refrigeration and air-conditioning. But periods of more severe temperatures between April and September are likely to reveal the increasingly thin margin of spare generation. Total electricity consumption increased by 8% in February 2023 compared with the same month a year earlier and by 13% compared with February 2021, according to the Grid Controller of India. Peak demand met was up by 8% compared with a year ago and 11% compared with 2021. But generation capacity has increased by only 4% since 2022 and 9% since 2021, ensuring generation units must be used more intensively. Like other countries before it, India is experiencing classic pressure on its transmission system associated with rapid industrialisation and electrification of the economy. Pressure on the network is evident from the amount of time frequency on the transmission system is below the minimum target level. Frequency is related to the balance between generation and load — excess generation causes frequency to accelerate, excess load causes frequency to drop. Grid controllers are therefore instructed to keep frequency within tight limits to ensure the network remains stable and avert the risk of a cascading failure. India's grid is synchronised at 50.00 cycles per second (Hertz) with a maximum acceptable

operating limit of 50.05 and a minimum of 49.90. But frequency fell below the minimum acceptable target of 49.9 Hz almost 11% of the time in February 2022 up from 6% in 2022 and 7% in 2021. The increasing incidence of under-frequency shows controllers struggled to schedule enough firm generation to meet increasing demand on the system. So far, periods of under-frequency have been modest, in contrast to March and April 2022 and October 2021, when severe under-frequency was the forerunner of widespread blackouts. But strain on the system will increase as temperatures rise towards their summer peak in June and again in September-October after the monsoon fades. The system is already running hard. Peak electricity demand in January (210,618 MW and February (209,665 MW was only slightly lower than at the height of last summer in June 2022 (211,856 MW). India needs to maximise generation from all sources, fossil fuels as well as renewables this summer to keep the lights on. Government policy aims to maximise the availability of firm generation by prioritising coal movements on the rail network, mandating coal imports, and building up inventories in the yards of coal-fired power stations. Policymakers have ordered privately owned and captive coal-fired and gas-fired generators to ensure their units are ready to run in the event of an instruction from the grid. — Reuters

Can governments still steer the economy?



ROBERT SKIDELSKY

The author, a member of the British House of Lords, is professor emeritus of Political Economy at Warwick University.

In 1969, the British financial journalist Samuel Brittan published a book called *Steering the Economy: The Role of the Treasury*. At the time, it was still widely assumed that the United Kingdom's economy was steerable and that the Treasury (which was still in charge of monetary policy) was at the helm. Back then, the Treasury's macroeconomic model, which calculated national income as the sum of consumption, investment and government spending, effectively made the budget the regulator of economic performance. By varying its own spending and taxation, the Treasury could nudge the UK toward full employment, real GDP growth and low inflation. Subsequent models, influenced by the monetarist and New Classical revolutions in economic theory, have since reduced the state's capacity to intervene. Yet the belief that governments are responsible for economic performance still runs deep. The UK's recent budget announcement is a case in point. When presenting his budget to Parliament this month, Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt sought to reassure lawmakers that the government is on track to tame inflation, reduce debt, and boost economic growth. Hunt even went so far as to present detailed predictions for each of the next five years. As he put it, "We are following the plan, and the plan is working." Yet, it has long been clear that inflation and growth depend on global trends over which the British chancellor has no control. The fact is that international finance, technology, and geopolitics rule out any possibility of "steering" the UK economy. While these variables were regarded as stable (or at least



Chancellor of the Exchequer Jreemy Hunt holds a red box as he leaves 11 Downing Street to deliver his Spring Budget to UK Parliament. — Reuters

predictable) parameters of national policymaking as late as the 1990s, today all three are considered a source of exogenous shocks, unpredictable or unexpected events, with the potential to spoil any budget forecasts. No UK policymaker, for example, predicted the global financial meltdown caused by the 2008 collapse of Lehman Brothers. Likewise, no one can foresee the repercussions of the recent failure of Silicon Valley Bank and Credit Suisse, especially in an era when every possible effect of every disruptive economic event is amplified on social media. And with heightened geopolitical tensions threatening global supply chains, the models on which policymakers like Hunt rely are becoming increasingly obsolete. Specifically, the relationship between fiscal and monetary policy is veiled in mystery. The reigning economic model assumes that controlling inflation is a necessary and sufficient condition for macroeconomic stability, and that inflation is primarily caused by budget deficits, or "governments printing too much money". With that in mind, the government outsourced the task of steering the economy to the Bank of England (BoE) in 1997, while the Treasury remained in charge of balancing the budget over a five-year forecast period and reducing net debt to a sustainable level. The combination of BoE

independence and fiscal discipline was supposed to assure markets that politicians would not go on spending sprees. But, given that the BoE has been printing as much money as politicians want since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the separation between fiscal and monetary policy has become largely fictional, along with the stability and prosperity it was said to ensure. Hunt should have looked to US President Joe Biden for more creative economic thinking. Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, which includes \$370 billion in clean-energy subsidies, is based on an almost-forgotten macroeconomic idea known as the balanced-budget multiplier: higher public spending can be paid for by raising taxes on the rich. Biden's stated policy is still to balance the budget, but this approach would enable him to do so while boosting spending, rather than adopting the sort of austerity policies UK governments continue to pursue. Biden's economic policy represents a welcome return to the old Keynesian view that aggregate demand matters. By contrast, Hunt's plan to boost economic growth depends entirely on remedying so-called structural (or supply-side) deficiencies. The UK's puzzling labour shortage underscores the inadequacy of the British government's approach. The number of unemployed people is 1.3 million, and millions

more working-age Britons are not employed or actively seeking work. Yet many businesses are struggling to find workers, with job vacancies jumping to 1.1 million. Hunt's answer is to increase incentives for the "economically inactive" to rejoin the labour market. But in practice, he is encouraging people to apply for jobs that do not exist. The reason is that despite supply bottlenecks in sectors such as retail, hospitality, and agriculture, the economy as a whole is experiencing a deficiency of aggregate demand. Given that the British economy has still not recovered to its 2019 level, and that consumption has fallen while the population has grown by 1.7 million between 2020 and 2023, this should not come as a surprise. Yet, the government's latest budget makes no mention of boosting aggregate demand for labour, either on the consumption or the investment side. In late 2020, former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown and I proposed a scheme whereby the government would guarantee a job and/or training to anyone who could not find work in the private sector, at a fixed hourly rate not lower than the national minimum wage. This, we argued, would be the quickest way to boost aggregate consumption in the economy without resorting to complicated forecasts about the size of the output gap. © Project Syndicate, 2023

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Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
 m.alrahd86@yahoo.com

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

Saada al Rashdi
 95919344

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ramadhan



Celebrity food designer shares traditional Ramadhan dishes

As the country celebrates the holy month of Ramadhan, the dishes served during iftar is always highly anticipated. Experience the flavours of the Arab world with food designer and chef Ananya Banerjee's Ramadhan spread... **P20**



QURAN VERSE OF THE DAY

When there comes God's victory, and conquest. And you see the people entering God's religion in multitudes. Then celebrate the praise of your Lord, and seek His forgiveness. He is the Acceptor of Repentance.

(An-Nasr)

HADITH A GUIDE FOR THE FAITHFUL

Anas and Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with both of them, reported that the Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, said: "None of you will attain perfect faith until I am more beloved to him than his child, his parent, and all people".

HEALTH TIPS

Sambousa and other appetisers should only be consumed in moderation as deep-fried dishes are heavy in calories and fat and may raise blood cholesterol levels. Instead, when you can, try to have them baked and stuffed with low-fat cheese.

STORIES FROM THE QURAN



The Story of Saba

SABA IS THE NAME OF one of the kingdoms of Yemen. Allah had blessed this civilisation in the most incredible ways; food was abundant, safety was at its best and the environment was as pure as can be. Messengers sent to them by Allah reminded them to thank Him as they enjoyed these blessings, something that they did do for a while. With the passage of time, they changed and so did the blessings that they had access to change as well.

For them were enormous fields of dense trees; endless varieties of ripe

fruits; rivers of pure water gushing through their meadows; gentle winds; abundant shade, and a disease-free environment. The fruits were so many and ripe that they could not wait to be picked. All that was required of the people of Saba was to enjoy these blessings whilst thanking Allah, as their messengers said to them.

The worship of Allah was abandoned and replaced with the worship of the sun. Their messengers warned them but they refused. Their gardens were flooded and their homes were flattened, their trees became few and thorny, and their sweet fruits turned bitter. God punished them by replacing their two gardens with gardens of bitter fruit, tamarisks, and lote trees here and there. "We repaid them with this because of their ingratitude, and do not repay except the ungrateful?"

After mentioning this, Allah then relays to us yet another blessing that

He had given them prior to the punishment, saying: "And We placed between them and the cities which We had blessed many cities (i.e. al-Sham) that can easily be seen and We determined between them the distances of journey..." Like everyone else, they would also travel for the sake of business, but their travel was altogether different.

Their business routes from Yemen to al-Sham were marked with numerous cities along the way. They would thus find themselves during their journey leaving one city, resting within it, and then entering another repeatedly until they finally arrived at their destination. This meant that there was not even a need for them to pack luggage with them due to the sheer number of 'service stations' - "cities that can easily be seen". Navigation was not a problem either, for Allah said, "We determined between them

the distances of the journey", thus they would never get lost as these cities along the way were of known distances from one another.

Their business routes were not lonely and they did not have to pass stretches of empty land, rather their routes were populated with people and very well served. However, they became bored of Allah's favors, met blessings with disobedience, and made one of the strangest praying that a people could make against themselves, saying: "Our Lord, lengthen the distance between our journeys," and they wronged themselves" They wished to struggle as everyone else did. They wished to prepare luggage and experience the fatigue of life. Things were just too comfortable. Thus, Saba - that kingdom of heaven - was made into a mere tale of the past, which people relate to one another. That gathered civilisation of unity

was shattered into a fragmented, scattered, and dispersed community of people.

LESSON FROM THE STORY

The lessons learnt from the Sura Sabah to the modern generation are the punishments to the disbelievers of Allah Almighty and how He would take every action of these people into account and hold them liable for their action. The Sura also sheds light on the challenges and warnings against the disbelievers as well as the promises related to the Day of Judgment.

More than the punishments and promises, the sura teaches on how to respect one's mother the lesson is reiterated through a hadith. The Prophet was asked by Hurayra to whom should one be dutiful to which the prophet replied to his mother three times and finally to his dad.

IN PHOTOS



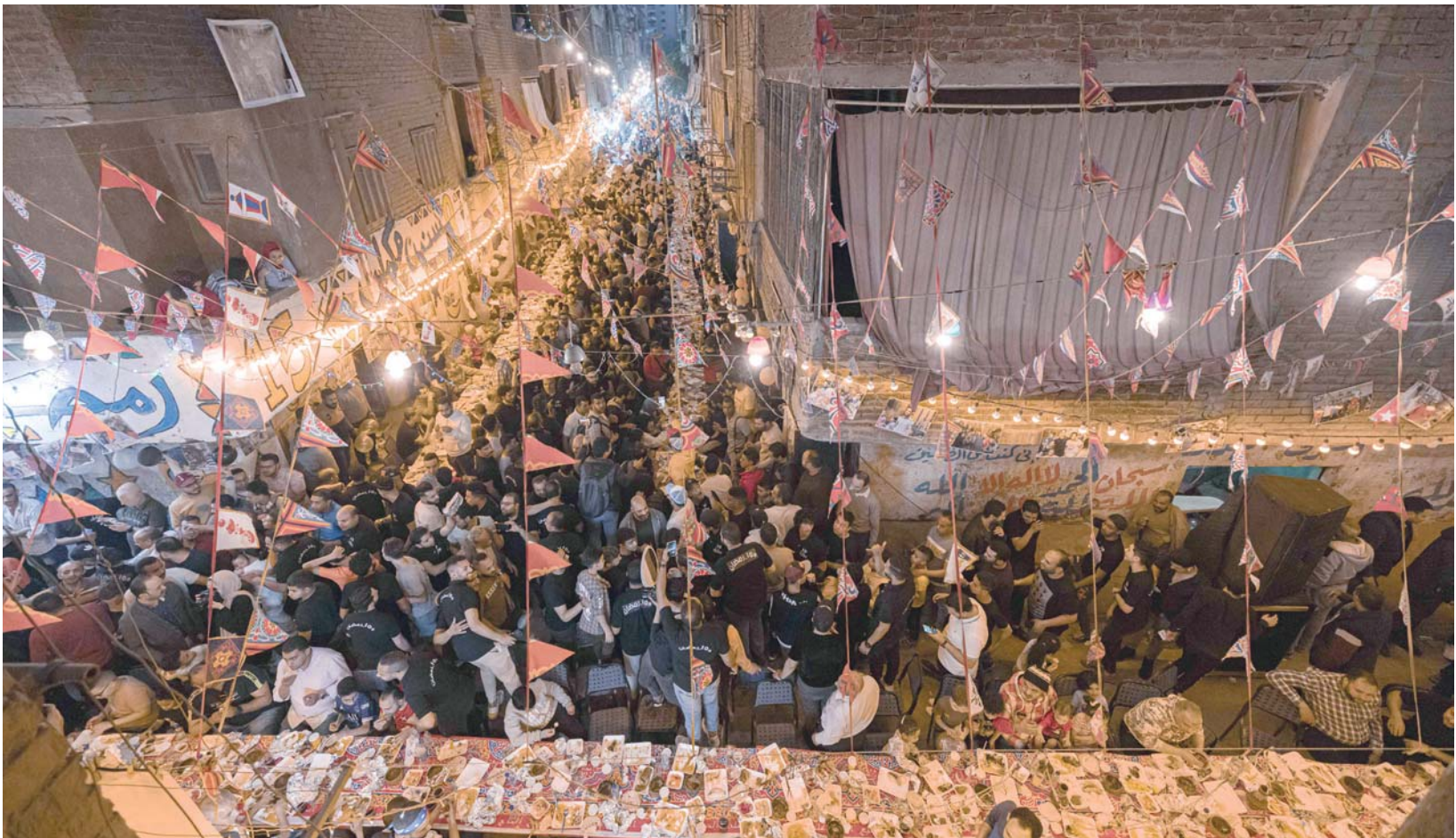
A Muslim person prepares meals for breaking fast during the Islamic holy month of Ramadhan at a mosque in Yogyakarta. — AFP



Girls read copies of the Quran during the Muslim holy month of Ramadhan at Baitussalihin mosque in Banda Aceh. — AFP



A vendor sells dates and dried fruits at a market in Cairo's central Sayyida Zeinab district. — AFP



Egyptians cling to Ramadhan charity as inflation soars

IN A TIME OF DIRE economic trouble, Egyptians are holding fast to the Ramadhan tradition of charity, with both donors and those in need pinning hopes on holiday generosity. Families have buckled under the weight of inflation, which hit 32.9 per cent in February as Egyptians tried to fill their shelves ahead of the Islamic holy month of daytime fasting and special evening meals, known as iftar. "Last year, we were giving out 360 iftar meals every day — this year, I'm not sure we'll make it to 200," said the founder of a small charity in the working-class Cairo district of al Marg. Yet those meals have never been more vital, the charity worker said, asking not to be named for privacy concerns. For many families, Ramadhan boxes of food staples or daily charity iftar meals, organised in droves across the country, "are their only chance to eat meat or chicken," she added. Even before the current economic crisis — worsened by Russia's attack of Ukraine last year, which destabilised crucial food imports — 30 per cent of Egyptians were living under the poverty line, with the same

number vulnerable to falling into poverty, according to the World Bank. In addition, surging costs of animal feed have pushed the once-affordable meal of chicken out of reach for most of Egypt's nearly 105 million-strong population. Before Ramadhan began, the charities upon which tens of millions of Egyptians depend raised the alarm that they were struggling to meet more people's needs, at higher costs, with dwindling donations. **TIS THE SEASON** But a focus on generosity, even and especially in times of trouble, is baked into Ramadhan, "when most Egyptians give out their yearly charity, a very cherished custom," said Manal Saleh, who heads the Egyptian Clothing Bank. Egyptians gave nearly five billion Egyptian pounds to charity (at the time, around \$315 million) during 10 months of donations recorded in 2021, according to state media. But of that, around "90 per cent" was given during Ramadhan, Saleh estimated, who also helped found one of the country's biggest charities, the Egyptian Food Bank. Each day of the holy month, a staple



of Egyptian city streets at sunset is the sight of mawaad al rahman, charity tables where strangers come to break their fast for free, sometimes hundreds at a time. Many are organised by anonymous donors such as Fouad, a 64-year-old retired engineer, who asked to use a pseudonym because his initiative is not a legally recognised charity. This year, he and his group of friends who run the soup kitchen out of a local mosque have had to double their budget, committing to feeding even more people in their community and "not just the least fortunate." Since the Covid-19 pandemic, they have forgone the conventional banquet table for a grab-and-go makeshift cafeteria. All month, the kitchen serves meals to the community, including underprivileged families and, increasingly, store clerks and other workers who can no longer afford a mid-shift hot meal, saving them some 60 or 70 pounds, around two dollars. "They know their family needs that money," Fouad said. **PEOPLE STICK TOGETHER** According to the latest official figures from 2021, the average salary

in Egypt is 4,000 pounds a month, or \$129. Meanwhile, the price of a kilogramme of the cheapest subsidised local meat has nearly doubled to 220 pounds, about a quarter of a week's pay. Savings have been slashed as the currency lost half its value in a year, and more and more people are struggling to make ends meet. With families across classes cutting back on everything from grocery bills to schooling, charity budgets could have been the first to go. "Honestly, I had grown almost hopeless a couple of weeks ago, when we looked at the numbers and realised we may not be able to pull it off this year," Fouad said. "But those who could have doubled their donations from last year, because they know how important it is for us to step up in times like this." Saleh said that Ramadhan charity is a tough habit to break. "We've seen crises before, and people stick together," Saleh said. "I think that even if individuals can't give as much, you'll see more people lending a hand, volunteering, making meals for those around them, even if cash is tight." — AFP

Libyan Berbers revive their language in class and on air

A PUPIL SHYLY approached the whiteboard, picked up a marker and carefully traced a letter from the Berber alphabet as the teacher watched — a scene unimaginable under Libyan dictator Moamer Kadhafi. Tamazight has been the native language of indigenous people across North Africa since pre-Roman times. It has survived despite centuries of Arab domination and has undergone a revival in Libya since Kadhafi's four-decade rule ended in a 2011 revolution. In the city of Zuwara, a majority-Berber community near the border with Tunisia, teacher Assirem Shawashi encourages her nine-year-old pupils to approach the board, one by one, to draw out symbols. "Children love this subject because they find their identity and their culture in books," said Shawashi, dressed in a black dress and grey

hijab. "It's not just about the alphabet and vocabulary, but it's a whole culture we're passing on to them." Around 10 per cent of Libya's seven million people are ethnically Berber. Kadhafi worked to crush their culture while promoting Arab identity. But some, especially in the remote western mountains, continued to speak their language at home, out of earshot of the feared secret police. They include residents of Zuwara, 120 kilometres (75 miles) west of the capital Tripoli, who have held onto their culture throughout Greek, Roman, Arab, Ottoman and Italian rule. **NATURAL RIGHT** Libya has seen a decade of complex and often violent power struggles since Kadhafi's fall in a Nato-



backed uprising, but authorities in Tripoli have been accommodating towards Berber culture, even providing textbooks — although they have not given the language official status. Shawashi is a member of the first-ever class to graduate with degrees in Tamazight last year from the University of Zuwara. Her younger pupils never knew life under Kadhafi,

she notes. "It's just a natural right to learn their mother tongue, and they can't imagine that anyone would ever ban that." She said that Tamazight textbooks arrived immediately after the revolution, from Morocco where the language is constitutionally recognised. Since then, the community has



made "enormous advances", Shawashi added. "We ourselves are surprised." School director Sondoss Saki said the first classes in 2012 had "difficult beginnings" due to a lack of trained teachers and confusion about which curriculum to follow. Some parents feared the children would be overloaded, arguing that Arabic and English were a higher priority. "But the children come here to learn, and their minds are wide open to knowledge," Saki said confidently, sitting behind her desk where the Libyan and Amazigh (Berber) flags stood side by side. When classes are over, Shawashi heads off to the studio of Kasas FM, founded in 2012 as Libya's first local radio station to broadcast in Tamazight. Shawashi, who works as a presenter in her spare time, meets pro-

gramme director Ismail Abudib to discuss his upcoming shows on Amazigh literature. Abudib, a 28-year-old architect in a white shirt and grey blazer, says he sees it as his duty to defend his community's rights. Kasas FM is one way of doing that, he said, sitting in front of a small mixing desk in the station's control booth. The station covers social issues, culture, religion, entertainment and sport, he said, "all the subjects that interest listeners, in the language they know best." "Respecting your language and being proud of your identity doesn't stop you living with other communities," Abudib said. "We're walking forward and not looking back to the times of repression and marginalisation. The whole world is full of diversity, and as Libyans we should be able to live together in peace." — AFP



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AROUND THE WORLD

ART

Dusty painting hidden behind door turns out to be Brueghel ‘masterpiece’



A REDISCOVERED painting of Flemish 17th-century painter Pieter Brueghel the Younger, for years hidden in a family house, will be presented for auction in Paris on Tuesday and is expected to fetch 600,000 (\$647,340.00) to 800,000 euros.

The painting L'Avocat du village (the Village Lawyer) is one of Brueghel's largest known works, measuring 112cm high and 184cm wide, and was unknown in the art world as the most recent generation of the family who had possessed it since the 1900s thought it was fake.

The family, who wishes to remain unknown, had asked Malo de Lussac of auctioneers Daguerre Val de Loire to estimate the value of their house but instead discovered a masterpiece.

"I found this painting [in the house], behind a door in the television room," de Lussac said, calling it one of the biggest surprises in his career.

"I started estimating this room and when I turned



back, I saw this painting. It was a very good surprise for me."

De Lussac said he believes the artwork was bought as an authentic one, but over several generations had completely lost its authenticity within the family.

"And that's what's incredible," he said. "We are giving them back this authenticity by saying 'in fact your artwork is real'". Brueghel the Younger, whose father Brueghel the Elder died when he was only five, didn't use one of his father's compositions for this painting as he usually did but did revisit the popular theme of the village lawyer.

Art experts estimated that the artwork was painted between 1615 and 1617. — Reuters

ENTERTAINMENT

In ‘Alma,’ Flamenco Star Sara Baras Warms Up



SPANISH STAR SARA Baras has appeared many times before an adoring public in the annual Flamenco Festival New York. Over the years, I've been impressed by her undeniably high technical abilities, suspicious of her fancy productions and ultimately left cold by a diva-like showmanship that retreats to the shallows.

That's ultimately how I feel about "Alma," which Baras and her company performed at New York City Center on Thursday as the sole dance production of this year's festival. But "Alma" is a looser, warmer show, its two hours spotted with soothing

bluesy sax solo near the end of the show is its high point.

The production design (scenery by Peroni and Garriets, lighting by Chiqui Ruiz) evokes a supper-club floor show: vintage microphones, precision spotlights, a fringe curtain. And something about the atmosphere and the music seems to relax Baras. This is still a star vehicle. When the other dancers — five women and Daniel Saltares — are given tiny solos, they demonstrate prowess, but mainly they function as a very tight chorus. Even when Baras is offstage, they seem like backup, giving her a breather. Dancing with Saltares

pass through.

At times, the choreography of "Alma" seems to allude to unseen presences. There's a lot of pointing to the wings or upward, and when the dancers break off into pairs, Saltares sometimes dances as if with an invisible partner. Soulfulness isn't Baras' strength, but "Alma" ("soul" in Spanish) has the most feeling of any show she's brought to New York. It's dedicated to her father, who died recently and who loved boleros.

Her main romance, as ever, is with the audience. The Spanish lyrics, characteristically for boleros, tend to address a beloved and, for Baras, the "you" in the



moments and good times. I was nearly won over.

Much of its distinct tone derives from the music. The score — by Keko Baldomero, who plays guitar in the excellent band — crosses traditional flamenco rhythms and forms with the wistful, slow-dance romance of boleros. The wonderful singers, Rubio de Pruna and Matias López, push crooning into the high-pressure zones of flamenco, and the mixed instrumentation (bongos, congas) offers new colours. Diego Villegas plays flute and harmonica, and his long,

or Charo Pedraja (the only one of the five women to be singled out), she can be chummy, but it's never long before the formations revert to centring her. She cedes attention to the musicians for stretches, but her overamplified feet (automatic weapons that are sometimes too automatic) are always at the front of the sound mix.

The chumminess is winning, though. In "Alma," Baras treats her dancers with a collegial affection that comes across in embraces and little gestures like holding the curtain as the others

songs is usually us. She blows us kisses, flashes a squinty smile, drops to her knees in gratitude for applause.

The crowd on Thursday ate it up, and it was hard not to be charmed, especially during the coda, a traditional "fin de fiesta" when the musicians bust out moves. Villegas, the saxophonist, used the classic gag of casting an invisible fishing line and reeling himself offstage. Baras joined the other female dancers in a kick line as López sang "New York, New York" — pandering but fail-safe. — NYT

LIFESTYLE

T-Rex skeleton on show in Zurich before auction



YOLANDA SCHICKER-SIBER gingerly fastens a pointy claw bone with a thin metal wire, putting the finishing touches on a giant Tyrannosaurus-Rex skeleton before a rare auction in Switzerland next month.

The Aathal Dinosaur Museum's curator was on Tuesday helping complete perhaps the world's biggest construction kit — reassembling a 67-million-year-old T-Rex dubbed Trinity.

Trinity was sent to Zurich from Arizona in the United States in nine giant crates.

The 3.9-metre (12.8-foot) skeleton has been mounted on a red carpet and under crystal chandeliers in a Zurich concert hall, where it will be on public display before going under the hammer on April 18.

The Koller auction house has estimated it will fetch between six to eight million Swiss francs (\$6.5-8.7 million).

But Christian Link, in charge of natural history memorabilia at Koller, said he believed that was a "pretty low" estimate.

Trinity is made up of bone material from three T-Rex specimens, excavated between 2008 and 2013 from the Hell Creek and Lance Creek formations in Montana and Wyoming in the United States.

The two sites are known for the discoveries of two other significant T-Rex skeletons that have gone to auction: Sue went under the hammer in 1997 for \$8.4 million, and Stan, which took the world-record hammer price of \$31.8 million at Christie's, in 2020.

Last year, Christie's withdrew another T-Rex skeleton days before it went on sale in Hong Kong, after doubts were reportedly raised about parts of the skeleton.

- 'VERY, VERY OLD' -

Reassembling Trinity was no easy feat, Schicker-Siber said as she secured another toe bone.

"The bones are very, very old. They are 67 million years old. So they are brittle, they have cracks," she said.

"They are stabilised, but you never know if there is a crack that you haven't seen so far... You have to have the glue ready."

Aart Walen, an exhibit preparator from the Netherlands with 30 years' experience assembling dinosaur skeletons, agreed.

"We didn't break anything yet," he said proudly, as he and his colleagues worked on two large ischium bones, which sat near the dinosaur's pelvic area where the eggs came out.

With a parakeet named Ethel perched on his shoulder, Walen filled in cracks in the bones, using what looked like dental tools and modelling compound.

It was important for the fixes to remain visible, he said, showing the dark lines where the fissures had been.

"You have to see where it has been repaired. There are some stories about fakes out there. We don't want that," he said, referring to the aborted Christie's auction.

Knocking on different parts of the bone, he also demonstrated the different sounds made on original bone and the plastic additions used to fill out the skeleton — AFP

ramadhan

Local Scene

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RAMADHAN RECIPES TO TRY FOR YOUR FAMILY



CELEBRITY FOOD DESIGNER SHARES TRADITIONAL RAMADHAN DISHES

By Liju Cherian

Imam Bayildi, Umm Ali, Muhammara, Tabbouleh Salad and Lebanese Manakish are some of the dishes that are typically served during iftars. As a food designer from India, chef Ananya Banerjee has a deep penchant for food and her fascination for the Arab world goes back to her childhood.

She has also travelled to many cities of the Arab world and the Middle East as a chef experimenting with world cuisine. Ananya is known for her remarkable dining experiences, especially her Ethiopian platter which has been applauded not only by the food industry but also Condé Nast Traveller and The Huffington Post. She regularly hosts dining experiences in Peruvian, German, Arabic

and Indian regional cuisines. Ananya also regularly conducts exclusive private pop-ups at reputed hotels and clubs all over the world. Author of 'Planet Gastronomy - 100 Most Popular Global Dishes,' and 'Bangla Gastronomy - the journey of Bengali food,' the two books on global cuisine are regarded as perhaps the most authentic international cookbook ever published in India.

She has her own line of gourmet products which ranges from authentic Bengali spice blends and relishes, to world cuisine as well as her interpretation of a fusion between the two. A food curator, Ananya cooks up some traditional dishes for Ramadhan for the Observer readers. Bon Appetit. The recipes are below:

Shish Tawouk

(A popular Middle Eastern chicken dish has its origin in Türkiye)

INGREDIENTS

250 gm boneless cubes of Chicken breasts
Ingredients for the marinade
¼ cup of Yogurt
1 Tbsp Lemon juice
2 Garlic cloves, grated
1 tsp Paprika powder
½ tsp Cinnamon powder
½ tsp Oregano flakes
½ Grated ginger
Salt

METHOD

In a mixing bowl add all the ingredients along with chicken cubes and mix well. Keep in a fridge for 4 hours or overnight to marinate. Skewer the chicken on a grill or pan fry them on a gas stove. Additionally, you can put onions in the skewer.

Umm Ali

(A traditional Egyptian dessert similar to bread pudding)

INGREDIENTS

One Croissant
½ cup Milk
Sugar
6/7 Slivered almonds
8/10 Chopped pistachios
6/8 Chopped cashews
4 Chopped pine nuts
4/5 Raisins
Grated coconut
Vanilla essence

METHOD

In a baking dish break the croissants and add half of the nuts, raisins, coconut and mix lightly and spread evenly. In a saucepan take the milk, sugar and the vanilla essence and mix well. Do not boil the mixture. Just heat until hot. Pour the mixture on the pastry spread and bake for 10 minutes or till the top is golden brown in a preheated oven (200 degrees centigrade). Take it out and let it rest for 10 minutes. Add the balance nuts on top and serve.



Imam Bayildi

(A recipe where whole egg plants are stuffed with minced meat, tomatoes and garlic, simmered with olive oil and baked)

INGREDIENTS

One Eggplant
Beef mince or chicken or lamb mince
Salt and pepper to taste
2 Tbs Olive oil
2 Garlic cloves, chopped
One onion, sliced
One Tomato, chopped
Parsley, chopped
1 Tbs Tomato Puree
Sugar to taste
Water

METHOD

Cut the eggplant into halves, keeping the stem intact. Scoop out the flesh with a spoon to create a hollow space. Sprinkle salt and let the juice drain from the eggplant. Set aside. Heat oil in a pan and add garlic, onions, tomatoes, parsley and minced meat and the eggplant flesh. Cook over high heat

for 4 to 5 minutes. Add tomato puree, salt, sugar, pepper and water. Cook till the mixture is thick and semi dry. Brush the scooped-out eggplants with oil and stuff with the minced meat mix. Bake in an oven for 20/25 minutes. Garnish with chopped parsley.

The Quick Baklava

(A popular dessert in Turkish, Iranian and Aran cuisine, baklava is a layered pastry dessert)

INGREDIENTS

Phyllo
1 pound box of phyllo 9x14 sheets to room temperature
¾ cup clarified butter or ghee
The Sugared Nuts:
3 cups raw or roasted walnuts coarsely chopped in food processor
½ cup granulated sugar
Simple Syrup:
1 cup granulated sugar
¾ cup water
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon orange blossom water

METHOD:

To make the simple syrup, combine the water, sugar and lemon juice in a small saucepan over medium-high heat. Bring mixture to a boil, then reduce heat to simmer, stirring occasionally until the sugar is dissolved and the mixture is thickened but still clear colored, about 5-7 minutes. Remove from heat, add the orange blossom water, and set aside to cool. In a large bowl, combine the walnuts and granulated sugar until well mixed. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Brush the bottom of a 9x13 pan with clarified butter. Open the two sleeves of phyllo sheet - each will have about 20 sheets. Unroll them and cut off an inch at the end to make them fit into the 9x13 pan. Lay one stack of 20 phyllo sheets in the pan. Add about 5-10 more phyllo sheets on top of the first stack. Spread the nuts mixture over the phyllo in one even layer. Lay the remainder 10-15 phyllo sheets over the nuts.

Cut the baklava into diamonds by making 5 cuts lengthwise and 9 cuts crosswise on the diagonal, holding down the phyllo sheets with your other hand as you cut carefully. Pour the melted clarified butter over the baklava evenly. Allow the butter to settle in, about 5 minutes. Bake until golden brown all the way into the cut lines, about 50-60 minutes, rotating the baklava halfway through baking. Remove the pan from the oven and immediately pour the cooled simple syrup evenly over the baklava. Allow to cool at room temperature for several hours before serving.

Muhammara

(A hot pepper dip from Syria is an integral part of Levantine and Turkish cuisines)

INGREDIENTS

3 Tablespoon Olive oil
Two roasted red bell peppers
Bread crumbs
2 Garlic cloves, smashed
8/10 Walnuts
4 Tablespoon Pomegranate molasses
½ tsp Cumin powder
½ Chilli flakes

METHOD

Blend everything in a mixture grinder to form a paste.



Tabbouleh Salad

(A healthy Levantine salad)

INGREDIENTS

Half cup Cracked wheat bulgur soaked in 1½ cup boiling water
One teaspoon Sea salt
2 Garlic cloves
2 Tbsp Olive oil
1 tablespoon Lemon juice
A few Mint leaves
Black pepper powder
Chopped Parsley
Two chopped tomatoes
One chopped cucumber

METHOD

Take garlic cloves and olive oil and blend to form a dressing. Add the mint leaves, salt and pepper and blend again till the mint leaves are absorbed in the dressing. Take the soaked bulgur wheat in a bowl and mix well with the dressing. Now add the chopped parsley first then the cucumber and lastly the tomatoes and toss lightly.

Lebanese Manakish

(Lebanese flatbread)

INGREDIENTS

250 grammes flour
One tsp active dry yeast
Six tablespoon Olive Oil
3 tablespoon Zaatar (mix of sesame seeds, sumac, thyme)
½ tablespoon Salt
½ tablespoon Sugar
¼ cup warm water

METHOD

Mix sugar, active dry yeast with warm water. Allow the yeast to activate. Take a mixing bowl and add the flour and salt and knead. Add the yeast when it's frothy. Mix all well along with olive oil. Knead the dough well. When the dough is smooth make a large ball out of it and keep in an oiled bowl and cover with cling wrap. Let the dough rise. Roll the kneaded dough like pita bread. Mix the Zaatar with olive oil to form a paste. Spread the Zaatar on the bread and bake.