

HM congratulates Vietnam President

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Vo Van Thuong of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on being sworn in as his country's new President. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Vo Van Thuong in leading the people of Vietnam towards further progress and prosperity. His Majesty also wished the bilateral relations further development and growth. — ONA



MUSEUM BUILDING INSPIRED BY THE GRANDEUR OF AL HAJAR MOUNTAINS

HM PATRONISES OVER OPENING OF OMAN ACROSS AGES MUSEUM

ADVOCATES
USE OF LATEST
TECHNOLOGIES
IN ITS
PRESENTATIONS

THE EDIFICE IS
ASSOCIATED
WITH OMANI
ENVIRONMENT

DISPLAYS
ANTIQUES FROM
EACH ERA AND
CHRONICLES
DIVERSE
FACILITIES

ENVISIONED
TO BE A
WORLD-CLASS
DESTINATION



HIGHLIGHTS
THE UNIQUE
CHARACTER OF
THE SULTANATE
OF OMAN

AN APPROPRIATE
WELCOMING
PLACE FOR ALL
SEGMENTS

TAKES THE
VISITOR ON
A NARRATIVE
JOURNEY
THROUGH
TIME

MORE THAN
1,200 DEVICES TO
OPERATE DISPLAY
METHODS

MANAH: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Monday patronised the official opening of Oman Across Ages Museum in the Wilayat of Manah, Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah.

Upon His Majesty's arrival at Oman Across Ages Museum, he was received by Nasr bin Hamoud al Kindi, Secretary-General of the Royal Court Affairs, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Museum and Chairman of the Main Committee of the Museum's Project, members of the Main Committee and the Director General of the Museum.

Then His Majesty the Sultan headed to the museum's memorial plaque, where he switched on the light of the plaque, marking the official opening

of the museum.

Then His Majesty the Sultan viewed the exhibition of the foundation stone of Oman Across Ages Museum, passing by the vehicle that was once used by late Sultan Qaboos bin Said when the latter laid the foundation stone for the museum.

After that, His Majesty the Sultan visited the Reception section, where the first ticket of entry to the museum was issued in the name of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, who presented the ticket as a gift to the museum, to be added to the museum's collections.

His Majesty the Sultan passed through the Arts Corridor to the National Day screen whose dimensions, measuring

18 metres by 11 metres, symbolise the glorious National Day (November 18).

There, His Majesty the Sultan listened to Oman Across Ages Museum's speech delivered, on behalf of the main committee of the museum project, by Eng Al Yaqdhan bin Abdullah al Harthi, Director General of the Museum. Eng Al Yaqdhan said that the museum advocates the use of the latest technologies in its presentations, represented by a set of valuable holdings that indicate the depth and authenticity of Omani history.

In his speech, Eng Al Yaqdhan said that the design of the museum's building was inspired by the grandeur of Al Hajar Mountains. He observed that the edifice is associated with the

Omani environment through the type of materials used in its construction.

Eng Al Yaqdhan voiced the committee's gratitude to His Majesty the Sultan for his constant support towards the accomplishment of this monument.

INFORMATIVE FILM

Then, His Majesty the Sultan watched a familiarisation film about the Oman Across Ages Museum.

The informative film outlined the architectural aspects of the museum and the use of modern interactive technologies employed in presenting ancient civilisations in a chronological sequence. It displays antiques from each era and chronicles the diverse facilities

housed by the museum.

After that, His Majesty the Sultan toured the corridors of the museum. He listened to a summary of the most prominent pavilions in the "Gallery of History", the "Gallery of the Blessed Renaissance" and the "Gallery of the Future". The latter exhibits projects that won awards at the second round of the Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design.

His Majesty the Sultan also visited the lecture hall and the "Ideas and Innovation Labs" at the Knowledge Centre. There, he listened to briefings about a number of innovations and student projects from the schools of the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

Russia agrees to 60-day grain deal extension

GENEVA: Russia has agreed to extend the Ukraine grain export deal following talks with the United Nations on Monday — but only for a further 60 days.

Moscow said it wanted to see "tangible progress" on a parallel agreement on Russian exports before the deal comes up for renewal again.

The grain export deal has helped ease the global food crisis triggered by Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine in February last year. The invasion saw Ukraine's Black Sea ports blocked by warships until a deal signed in July allowed for the safe passage of exports of



critical grain supplies.

More than 24.1 million tonnes have been exported under the UN and Turkey-brokered Black Sea Grain Initiative (BSGI), according to the United Nations.

Moscow wants to see deeds, not words on upholding this second part of the package, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin said after concluding the talks with top United Nations

officials at the Palais des Nations UN headquarters in Geneva.

"The Russian side ... does not object to another extension of the 'Black Sea Initiative' after its second term expiration on March 18, but only for 60 days," Vershinin said in a statement issued by the Russian mission in Geneva.

The initial 120-day agreement was extended once in November, and was due to expire on March 18, and the Kremlin had cast doubt on whether it would agree to a fresh extension, claiming that the twin deal on Russian exports was not being respected. — AFP

Budget surplus at RO 145 million

MUSCAT: The State Budget achieved a surplus of RO 145 million at the end of January 2023, compared to a surplus of RO 18 million registered over the same period in 2022, according to the Fiscal Performance Monthly Bulletin published by the Ministry of Finance.

Public revenue at the end of January 2023 surged by 22 per cent to reach RO 982 million compared to RO 804 million registered over the same period in 2022.

This is mainly due to an

increase in oil and gas revenues, representing 88 per cent of total public revenue.

Net oil revenue amounted to RO 602 million at the end of January 2023, up by 9 per cent compared to RO 554 million achieved over the same period in 2022. This is driven by higher oil prices of \$91 per barrel, as well as an increase in oil production to 1,063,000 barrels per day.

Furthermore, gas revenue rose by RO 39 million, i.e., 18 per cent compared to the same period in 2022. **SEE ALSO P13**



HM patronises over opening



FROM PAGE1

At the conclusion of the opening ceremony, His Majesty the Sultan received a commemorative gift from Oman Across Ages Museum. The gift, a model of Oman Across Ages Museum, was presented to His Majesty the Sultan by Nasr bin Hamoud al Kindi.

In a symbolic gesture, His Majesty the Sultan offered his own personal cane as a gift to the museum, to be added to the monument's holdings.

Before leaving the premises of the museum, His Majesty was briefed about an ancient limestone rock from Wadi Lahjaji in the Governorate of Dhofar that figured among the collections. The rock bears a set of primitive drawings.

The official opening ceremony was attended by some Royal Family members, the Chairmen of the State Council and the Majlis Ashshura, ministers, heads of security and military units and

other officials and dignitaries.

Oman Across Ages Museum was set up in implementation of the Royal orders of late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, who laid the foundation stone for the project on July 14, 2015.

STRATEGIC LOCATION

Given the project's significance to late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the museum was located near Hisn Al Shomoukh. The Wilayat of Manah has a strategic location in the heart of Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. This lends the museum an ideal position in the proximity of many other tourist attractions in the Wilayat of Manah and Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. The project also constitutes a cornerstone for other tourism, cultural and economic projects in the governorate.

Oman Across Ages Museum is envisioned to be a world-class destination that will contribute in spreading awareness and consolidating the attachment of Omani youth with their country's

cultural heritage, encouraging them to interact and contribute effectively to building their homeland and shaping its features.

The museum also aims to highlight the unique character of the Sultanate of Oman and to portray its advantages, its ancient history and its renaissance, which keeps gaining grounds locally and internationally.

The idea of the museum's design was derived from the shape of the Omani rocks and Al Hajar Mountains range. The edifice picks up from the ground and extends to the top in a unique design that reflects the Omani environment. The project also merges into the Omani environment through the stones used in its construction and its trees.

The museum halls take the visitor around on a narrative journey through time, starting from the late prehistoric eras until the present day. The permanent exhibition wings are divided into two: The History Gallery and the Renaissance Gallery.

The History Gallery deals with several epochs and historical eras, namely, the geological formation of the Land of Oman, the Stone Age, represented by the wing of the Early settlers, the Bronze Age, represented by the wing of the Civilization of Magan, the Iron Age, represented by the wing of the Kingdom of Oman, in addition to pavilions titled "Embracing Islam", the "Al Ya'ariba Dynasty" and the "Al Busaidi Dynasty".

The presentations in the History Gallery are based on digital media to create multi-dimensional virtual environments that enable the visitors to experience events of each era. It also documents evidence and maps to provide a state of realism.

The pavilions house a number of antiques and presentations on various topics and archaeological sites such as settlements of Ras Al Hamra and Ras Al Jinz and aspects of life at that time, including seasonal migrations, maritime communication, copper trade and the construction of the

aflaj water system.

They also contain a highly accurate virtual environment that documents Omani people's contribution to Islam, as well as aspects of intellectual, political, social, and economic life related to those interactions. The pavilions document the contribution of Omani scholars.

The Renaissance Gallery was designed in the form of an open space with gigantic columns in the centre which form an interactive space for the presentation of the high-resolution audio-visual display system that deals with the first five years of the blessed renaissance. This offers a panoramic view of the hall and consummates the visitor's experience as it explores various aspects of social, economic, industrial, and political transformation experienced by Oman, while at the same time preserving its authentic identity and ancient cultural traditions.

The gallery contains interactive digital museum tools that display

the speeches of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the speeches of late Sultan Qaboos bin Said. It also comprises pillars of the blessed renaissance, including education, healthcare, infrastructure, foreign relations, tourism and economy.

Knowledge Centre is divided into three floors targeting all segments of society. It occupies a total area of 6,000 sqm.

The ground floor comprises two laboratories and a large lecture hall, as well as a classroom fitted with appropriate tools and books dedicated to children. The Innovation Laboratory and the Ideas Laboratory are designed for children aged 3 to 14 years.

While the first and second floors include the Library of Hisn Al Shomoukh, which was transferred from Hisn Al Shomoukh to Oman Across Ages Museum. The library contains more than 46,000 titles in various areas of knowledge and it is equipped with devices that allow researchers to access their desired



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of Oman Across Ages Museum



titles and reference books in hard copy and digital copy.

The museum also contains facilities that serve visitors and provide them with the means of comfort. The museum provides special rooms as a free service for visitors who can leave their bags and belongings there before starting their tour. The service is available during the museum's working hours from nine in the morning until nine in the evening.

The museum includes a lecture hall that can accommodate 319 people. The hall gains spectacular view to an outdoor garden surrounding the museum building and is equipped with illumination, acoustic equipment and Internet, in addition to places designated for translation.

The museum includes an Innovation Laboratory dedicated to educational programmes, including those implemented by the Oman Across Ages Museum, or programmes of community institutions that participate in achieving educational benefits for

various segments of society. The lab, which is located at the ground floor, occupies an area of 149 sqm and it can accommodate 62 people.

The museum allocates special places for children. It includes an Ideas Lab for Children aged 3 to 14 years old. The lab is equipped with advanced educational equipment and it is designed to host and hold workshops and educational programmes for children of different ages. The lab is located on the ground floor. It occupies an area of 143 sqm and it can accommodate 56 people.

The museum also includes a multi-purpose hall equipped with the latest technological equipment. The hall is used for hosting lectures, conferences or workshops. It occupies a total area of 1,200 sqm and it can accommodate about 600 people.

Oman Across Ages Museum constitutes an appropriate welcoming place for all segments of society. It provides all facilities for its visitors, including people

THE IDEA OF THE MUSEUM'S DESIGN WAS DERIVED FROM THE SHAPE OF THE OMANI ROCKS AND AL HAJAR MOUNTAINS RANGE

THE MUSEUM HALLS TAKE THE VISITOR AROUND ON A NARRATIVE JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

THE PRESENTATIONS IN THE HISTORY GALLERY ARE BASED ON DIGITAL MEDIA TO CREATE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS

with disabilities, with paintings and texts written in Braille, tactile models similar to the museum's original possessions, electronic audio devices, wheelchairs and golf carts for transportation.

While the museum store offers a number of museum-specific products as gifts to visitors. It also provides Omani products such as pottery, palm leaves and various handicraft products. A contract was signed with a small and medium enterprise to provide these products from various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

Meanwhile, the First Aid Centre provides necessary medical services in case any visitor suffers any injury or any emergency circumstance. The centre is equipped with all necessary medical tools and equipment, in addition to an ambulance and a medical staff qualified to provide primary medical care.

The museum has a café that provides visitors with delicious

traditional and international food and drinks. The cafeteria is located next to the Reception Desk and close to the Multi-Purpose Hall. It has an area of 305 sqm. In addition, there is a place called "Sabla Café" near the lake and it provides coffee drinks, sweets and snacks. It is set up on an area of 144 sqm. Self-service machines for some drinks and snacks are also available at the Knowledge Centre.

The museum includes a garden where the visitors can relax. The garden is located at the back of the museum. Its design replicates Omani nature. It has terraces, seats, a long walkway and a set of trees reflecting the country's natural environment. The most important trees in the garden include frankincense trees and date palm trees. The garden also includes a falaj that runs over a distance of one kilometre.

The garden contains a limestone rock belonging to Wadi Lahjaj in the Dhofar Governorate. — ONA



FOUNDATION STONE LAID BY
LATE SULTAN QABOOS BIN SAID
ON JULY 14, 2015



LOCATED
NEAR HISN AL
SHOMOUKH,
WILAYAT OF
MANAH

MUSEUM
IS AROUND
160 KM
FROM MUSCAT



DESIGN
INSPIRED BY
AL HAJAR
MOUNTAINS



THE GARDEN
HAS A
LIMESTONE
ROCK
BELONGING
TO WADI
LAHJAIJ
(WEIGHS 75
TONNES)

CONSTRUCTED
AREA

66,591 SQM

BUILT ON
AN ESTIMATED
AREA OF

300,000 SQM

TOTAL AREA
OF KNOWLEDGE
CENTRE

6,000 SQM



international levels under the wise
leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham
bin Tarik.

According to officials, the museum
contributes to spreading awareness and
consolidating the relationship of Omani
youth with their cultural heritage, while at
the same time encourages them to interact
in a manner that effectively inspires their
participation in building their homeland
and shaping its structures.

I was informed that, the project,
whose foundation-stone was laid by
late Sultan Qaboos in 2015, occupies an
estimated area of 300,000 sqm, and it has a
constructed area of 66,591 sqm. Its design
is inspired by Al Hajar Mountains.

It introduces an architectural wonder
that represents the Omani environment,
with its unique geographical traits.

CREATIVE CHARACTER

The project organisers envisaged that the
edifice has a creative character, an icon
that represents Omani Renaissance era in
terms of structures and manifestations. It
portrays Omani architecture in a unique
modern style, along with its technical
details, construction features and building
materials. Its design replicates the
standards of castles and ancient buildings.
Typically, its walls cool down the passing
hot air. Since some specifications require
that the building be an environment-
friendly structure, high-quality Omani
stones from the governorates of Al
Dhahirah and North Al Batinah were used
to coat the walls of the museum, both from
inside and outside, covering a surface of
130,000 sqm. Waste materials from the
stones has been utilised in the garden.

The museum is distinguished for its
glass facades that extend to heights ranging
from 9 to 16 metres, and sometimes rising
up to 25 metres, offering the building
clarity and prominence over the horizon.

The specifications include the use of
steel colour glass. Four layers of glass
are used, each 6 centimetres thick and
extending to 5 metres upwards.

A WORLD-CLASS DESTINATION



LIBRARY HAS
MORE THAN
46,000
TITLES

SHADDAD AL MUSALMY
@shadadm

HIS MAJESTY Sultan Haitham
bin Tarik on Monday patronised
the official opening of the Oman
Across Ages Museum in Manah that was
built under the Royal orders of late Sultan
Qaboos bin Said who laid the foundation
stone for the project on July 14, 2015.

Following the official opening by His
Majesty the Sultan, I was honoured to
represent Oman Observer as one of the
first few journalists to visit the museum.
I found out that it demonstrates Oman's
transition between its past, present and
future in an interactive and modern style
by audio-visual means, right from the early
stages of past glories to its bright present.

As I entered the museum, one major
attraction of the museum is the Range
Rover vehicle that late Sultan Qaboos
used to visit the site of the museum. "The
car that belonged to late Sultan Qaboos is
the main attraction at the entrance of the
museum. It is significant because he used
it in 2015 to visit the museum project site,"
Haitham Saleh al Hinai, Cultural Relations
Administrator, said on Monday.

The museum, the largest-of-its-kind
in the region, offers visitors an interactive
experience of the cultural and geographic
diversity of the Sultanate of Oman. The
museum building includes galleries, a
library, an auditorium, cafés, and social and
research areas with a permanent exhibition
space being 9,000 sqm, and some galleries
stretch more than 20 metres high.

JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

The museum, located in the Wilayat of
Manah, around 160 km from the capital
Muscat, takes the visitors on a vast,
sweeping journey through time starting
with the first settlers of prehistory and
ending in modern-day Oman, as they
navigate through different ages, dynasties,
and civilisations.

Reaching the Oman Across Ages
Museum, I found that its building is an

environment-friendly structure. It assumes
a low profile on the eastern side, so that it
could receive sunlight in the morning, and
protect the internal spaces from direct sun
rays.

Gavriel Baruch, visitor service specialist,
said that Monday was a big day because
the museum was honoured to have His
Majesty the Sultan as the first visitor. "This
museum covers full history of Oman, from
pre-historic to renaissance period. The
museum has lot of facilities and we are
excited to welcome visitors," he said.

While inside, the Renaissance Gallery,
one of the significant galleries, caught
my attention. It marks the culmination
of Oman's long national story. It follows
the country's remarkable economic,
technological, political, and social
modernisation under late Sultan Qaboos
bin Said.

As a visitor, I was introduced to the
various historical eras witnessed by the
Sultanate of Oman, such as the country's
geology and its first inhabitants, up to the
era of the blessed Renaissance and the
various achievements in various sectors.

FUTURE VISION

The museum also takes the visitor to
the future in line with the aspirations
of Oman's future vision from the past
experiences – a journey through Oman's
past, a celebration of its present, and an
insight into its future.

The design of the building and the
materials used in the project have been
deeply connected with the local Omani
landscape.

Oman Across Ages Museum seeks
to highlight the unique model of
the Sultanate of Oman, introduce its
prominent features, its ancient history
and its renaissance which is continuously
making progress at the local and



جهاز الضرائب
TAX AUTHORITY

Announcement



The Tax Authority would like to draw the attention of taxpayers who are subject to Income Tax and their fiscal year ended on December 31, 2022 to submit their tax returns and pay the tax due, according to the forms prepared for this purpose through Tax Authority's Portal: www.taxoman.gov.om not later than April 30, 2023

We hope everyone will abide and commit to the deadline of sumbitting the return.



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3-day conference on acute respiratory infection surveillance begins



MUSCAT: The sessions of the '6th Meeting of the Eastern Mediterranean Acute Respiratory Infection Surveillance (EMARIS) Network' and the '3rd Scientific Conference on Acute Respiratory Infection,' kicked off in Muscat on Monday.

The three-day events, hosted by the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Health, are organised in conjunction with the World Health Organization (WHO).

Experts and researchers from more than 20 countries are taking part in the EMARIS meeting.

They reviewed the most prominent projects, research and practices in the field of combating acute respiratory infection in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

On its first day, the programme included visual presentations on genomic monitoring the spread of SARS epidemic strains in France during 6 waves of the pandemic, assessment of rates of recovery from influenza-related infections using accurate surveillance data

Experts, researchers from over 20 countries to review most prominent projects, research and practices in the field of combating acute respiratory infection in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

and evaluation of the direct medical cost of establishing influenza hospitals in Oman.

The meeting and conference will address several topics, including ways of enhancing preparedness, detection and response to respiratory diseases from one country to a region and to the world (lessons learned from the Corona pandemic) and impacts of the Corona pandemic.

The two events explore means of eliminating the epidemic and

preparing for the next pandemic of respiratory infections in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, as well as challenges and opportunities to improve control and prevention.

The conferees also looked into seasonal and pandemic influenza systems and other respiratory viruses that develop into epidemics and pandemics in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, bearing in mind the lessons learned from Covid-19.

The meeting and conference provide an opportunity to share data and study the best practices in the region about using SARS-related surveillance data to assess severity, besides detecting outbreaks during the seasons of normal influenza and other epidemics.

The events seek to document scientific achievements and utilise new operational research results from countries to prevent, detect and respond to seasonal, novel and other emerging respiratory viruses, notably Covid-19. — ONA



MARCH 13 IS GULF NURSING DAY

43.9 nurse for every 10,000 individuals

MAI AL ABRI

MUSCAT, MARCH 13

There are approximately 43.9 nurses for every 10,000 individuals in the Sultanate of Oman, according to the data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The Sultanate of Oman, along with the rest of the GCC countries, observes Gulf Nursing Day on March 13 each year, paying tribute to the efforts of all nurses in the health sector.

Nursing is a profession that focuses on providing care to individuals and communities in order to maintain or restore health and improve quality of life. "The responsibilities are numerous, and this profession necessitates a great deal of loyalty and patience in order



to save patients' lives," said Salem al Rabaani, a nurse.

The workload increased during the Covid-19 pandemic, and it took a long time to get things back on track. A heavy workload can impair efficiency and quality of life. During the pandemic, there was a significant inverse relationship between workload and quality of life.

"Things are gradually returning to normal. The assistance of officials and managers, as well as social support, was critical in increasing our capabilities and allowing us to manage the negative effects of the workload. We appreciate having this day to commemorate our efforts to restore health. "I also believe that society's understanding of the magnitude of the burden that we endured during the pandemic has grown," Al Rabaani added.

It is worth noting that the goal of the day is to shed light on the accomplishments of nurses and the efforts made in the nursing field, as well as to improve the nursing profession in the country's various health establishments. It also seeks to honour the nursing profession and encourage nurses to provide high-quality nursing care.

GLOBINVEST The Global Omani Investment Company SAOC ANNUAL ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

The Board of Directors of The Global Omani Investment Company SAOC is pleased to invite the Company's shareholders to attend the company's ordinary Annual General Meetings, to be held at 2:00 pm on Thursday, 30/03/2023, via the electronic platform to hold general meetings which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om) if the quorum of the meeting is not completed, a second annual ordinary general meeting will be held on Wednesday 05/04/2023 at the same time and place to discuss the following agenda:

- To consider and approve the Board of Directors' report for the financial year ended December 31, 2022.
 - To consider the Auditors' Report and to approve the Financial Statements, Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss Account, for the financial year ended December 31, 2022.
 - To consider and approve the transactions entered into by the Company with related parties during the financial year ended December 31, 2022.
 - To consider and approve the transactions the company will enter into with related parties during the financial year ending on December 31, 2023.
 - To approve the sitting fees of the Board meetings paid to the Board members for the financial year ended on 31/12/2022, and to determine the sitting fees for the next financial year ending on 31/12/2023.
 - To consider and approve the proposed cash dividend (4%) to the shareholders, for the financial year ended December 31, 2022.
 - To consider and approve the proposal of distributing the total sum of RO 50 (thousand as remuneration for the Board of Directors of the Company for the year ended 31 December 2022.
 - Election of new members of the Board of Directors among the shareholders or others. Anyone who wishes to nominate himself for the membership of the Board of Directors must fill out the nomination form prepared for this purpose, which can be obtained from the company, and submit the completed form to the company five (5) working days before the date of the General Assembly meeting. The company will not accept any form submitted after that.
 - To appoint the Auditors for the Company for the financial year ending December 31, 2023, and to determine their fees.
- According to the Company's Articles of Association and the controls of holding General Meetings using electronic platform, we would like to draw your attention to the following:
- Juristic persons only, have the right to appoint a natural person as a proxy to attend the General Meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCDC.
 - Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meeting. If the shareholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be canceled, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the General Meeting.
- For further information, please contact Mr. Jamal Ahmed Al-Shanfari on phone 24489009 GSM: 92839933

Chairman

Auditors

Legal Consultante

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Annual ordinary general meeting agenda

إعلان الدعوة لاجتماع الجمعية العامة العادية السنوية

The Board of Directors of **Oman National Investments Development Company SAOC (Company)** has the pleasure to invite the shareholders to attend the Annual General Meeting, which will be held at 10:10 AM on Tuesday, 28 March 2023, and will be held in Kempinski Hotel Al Mouj. If the quorum requirement for holding the Annual General Meeting is not fulfilled, a second Annual General Meeting shall be held at 10:10 AM on Wednesday 29/03/2023, to discuss the following agenda:

- To consider and approve the board of directors' report on the activities of the company and its financial status for the financial year ended 31 December 2022.
 - To consider and approve the Corporate Governance Report for the financial year ended 31 December 2022.
 - To consider and approve the Board of Directors performance report for the financial year ended 31/12/2022. (As per the annexure).
 - To consider and approve the auditor's report on the company's audited financial statements for the financial year ending on 31 December 2022.
 - To consider and approve the proposed cash dividend of 2.5% which is (25 Baizas) per share for the financial year ended 31st December 2022.
 - To approve sitting fees of the Board and Committee meetings paid to the Board Members for the previous financial year and to determine the sitting fees for the upcoming financial year (as per the annexure).
 - To consider and approve the proposal of distributing the total sum of RO 56,750/- as remuneration for the Board of Directors of the Company for the year ended 31 December 2022.
 - To consider the related parties' transaction the company entered into in the financial year ended 31 December 2022. (As per the annexure)
 - To elect a new Board of Directors for the Company from amongst Shareholders or non-shareholders. Any person who wishes to be nominated to the Board of Directors of the Company is required to fill in a Director's Nomination Form. Such a form can be obtained from the Company. The completed Form should be delivered to the Company at two (2) working days prior to the date of the Annual Ordinary General Meeting of the Company (no later than the end of the business hours on Thursday 23/3/2023). The candidate must satisfy the company's board membership requirements.
 - To appoint Auditors of the Company for the financial year ending on 31 December 2023 and to approve their fees.
- In accordance with the Articles of Association of the company, each shareholder may authorize in writing any other person to attend the meeting and vote on the decisions taken on his behalf. Please come to the meeting venue at least half an hour before the scheduled time
- For further information please contact Sulaiman Al Sulti on telephone No. 91141129 or email: sulaiman@tanmia.om

يسر مجلس إدارة الشركة العمانية لتنمية الاستثمارات الوطنية ش.م.ع.م (الشركة) دعوة مساهمي الشركة الى حضور اجتماع الجمعية العامة العادية السنوية للشركة المقرر عقده في تمام الساعة ١٠:١٠ ص من صباح يوم الثلاثاء الموافق ٢٨/٣/٢٠٢٣ م في فندق كيمبسنكي الموج. في حال عدم احتمال النصاب القانوني للجمعية، سيتم عقد الاجتماع الثاني في تمام الساعة ١٠:١٠ ص من صباح يوم الأربعاء الموافق ٢٩/٣/٢٠٢٣ م، لمناقشة جدول الأعمال التالي:

- دراسة تقرير مجلس الإدارة عن نشاط الشركة ومركزها المالي خلال السنة المالية المنتهية في ٢٠٢٢/١٢/٣١ م والموافقة عليه.
- دراسة تقرير مجلس الإدارة عن تنظيم وإدارة الشركة خلال السنة المالية المنتهية في ٢٠٢٢/١٢/٣١ م والموافقة عليه.
- دراسة تقرير قياس أداء مجلس الإدارة عن السنة المالية المنتهية في ٢٠٢٢/١٢/٣١ م والموافقة عليه (حسب المرفق).
- دراسة تقرير مراقب الحسابات عن البيانات المالية المدققة للشركة عن السنة المالية المنتهية في ٢٠٢٢/١٢/٣١ م والموافقة عليه.
- دراسة مقترح توزيع أرباح نقدية على المساهمين بنسبة ٢.٥٪ وبمقدار ٢٥ بيسة للسهم الواحد للسنة المالية المنتهية في ٢٠٢٢/١٢/٣١ م والموافقة عليه.
- الموافقة على بدل حضور جلسات مجلس الإدارة واللجان المنيقة عنه الذي تقاضاه أعضاء مجلس الإدارة عن السنة المالية المنتهية في ٢٠٢٢/١٢/٣١ م، وتحديد مقدار البدل للسنة المالية القادمة (حسب المرفق).
- دراسة مقترح توزيع مكافآت على أعضاء مجلس الإدارة ببلغ ٥٦,٧٥٠ ريالاً عمانياً عن السنة المالية المنتهية في ٢٠٢٢/١٢/٣١ م والموافقة عليه.
- إحاطة الجمعية بالتعاملات التي أجرتها الشركة مع الأطراف ذات العلاقة خلال السنة المالية المنتهية في ٢٠٢٢/١٢/٣١ م (حسب المرفق).
- انتخاب أعضاء مجلس إدارة جديد للشركة من المساهمين وغير المساهمين و على كل من يرغب في ترشيح نفسه لتعبئة الاستمارة المعدة لهذا الغرض وتسليمها للشركة، قبل موعد الجمعية بيوم في عمل على الأقل في موعد أقصاه نهاية عمل يوم الخميس الموافق ٢٣/٣/٢٠٢٣ م وعلى المترشح مراعاة استيفاء الاشتراطات المقررة لعرضية مجلس إدارة الشركة.
- تعيين مراقب الحسابات للسنة المالية التي ستنتهي في ٢٠٢٣/٣/٣١ م وتحديد أتعابه.

وفقاً للنظام الأساسي للشركة، يجوز لكل مساهم أن يفوض خطياً أي شخص آخر لحضور الاجتماع والتصويت على القرارات المتخذة نيابة عنه، يرجى التكرم بالحضور إلى مقر الاجتماع المشار إليه آنفاً قبل الموعد المحدد بنصف ساعة على الأقل

في حالة وجود أي استفسارات يرجى الاتصال بالفاضل/ سليمان الصلتي على هاتف رقم: ٩١١٤١١٢٩ أو البريد الإلكتروني sulaiman@tanmia.om



Extraordinary general meeting agenda

The Board of Directors of **Oman National Investments Development Company SAOC (Company)** has the pleasure to invite the shareholders to attend the Extraordinary General Meeting, which will be held at 10:00 AM on Tuesday, 28 March 2023, and will be held in Kempinski Hotel A Mouj. If the quorum requirement for holding the Extraordinary General Meeting is not fulfilled, a second meeting shall be held at 10:00 AM on Wednesday 29/03/2023, to discuss the following agenda:

- To consider and approve the amendment of Para (a) of article (23) of the company's article of association (as per the annexure)

In accordance with the Articles of Association of the company, each shareholder may authorize in writing any other person to attend the meeting and vote on the decisions taken on his behalf.

Please come to the meeting venue at least half an hour before the scheduled time

For further information please contact Sulaiman Al Sulti on telephone No. 91141129 or email: sulaiman@tanmia.om

إعلان الدعوة لاجتماع

الجمعية العامة غير العادية

يسر مجلس إدارة الشركة العمانية لتنمية الاستثمارات الوطنية ش.م.ع.م (الشركة) دعوة مساهمي الشركة إلى حضور اجتماع الجمعية العامة غير العادية للشركة المقرر عقده في تمام الساعة ١٠:٠٠ ص من صباح يوم الثلاثاء الموافق ٢٨/٣/٢٠٢٣ م في فندق كيمبسنكي الموج وفي حال عدم احتمال النصاب القانوني للجمعية، سيتم عقد الاجتماع الثاني في تمام الساعة ١٠:٠٠ ص من صباح يوم الأربعاء الموافق ٢٩/٣/٢٠٢٣ م، لمناقشة جدول الأعمال التالي:

– دراسة مقترح تعديل الفقرة (أ) من المادة (٢٣) من النظام الأساسي للشركة والموافقة عليه (حسب المرفق)

وفقاً للنظام الأساسي للشركة، يجوز لكل مساهم أن يفوض خطياً أي شخص آخر لحضور الاجتماع والتصويت على القرارات المتخذة نيابة عنه،

يرجى التكرم بالحضور إلى مقر الاجتماع المشار إليه آنفاً قبل الموعد المحدد بنصف ساعة على الأقل

في حالة وجود أي استفسارات يرجى الاتصال بالفاضل/ سليمان الصلتي على هاتف رقم: ٩١١٤١١٢٩ أو البريد الإلكتروني sulaiman@tanmia.om

المستشار القانوني

مراقب الحسابات

رئيس مجلس الإدارة

المستشار القانوني

مراقب الحسابات

رئيس مجلس الإدارة



Oman presents vision for digital content, Arab community support

KUWAIT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Information took part in deliberations of the 98th regular session of the Standing Committee for Arab Media, being hosted by Kuwait.

Oman’s delegation to the session was led by Mohammed bin Said al Balushi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information for Radio and Television.

During the meeting, Oman, represented by the Ministry of Information, has put forward its visions on the item of media movement plan abroad, as it presented the vision on the observatory and the integrated electronic platform.

Oman has stressed the importance of supporting digital



content and adopting national initiatives capable of providing the Arab community with competitive content that carries deep implications. Oman also has expressed the desire to involve Arab countries with its experience in the “Ayn” platform.

During the meeting, several issues were discussed, most notably the Palestinian cause, including the issue of Jerusalem, Al Aqsa Mosque, Islamic and Christian sanctities, and the need to continue providing media support in this regard.

The meeting called on the Arab media to highlight efforts that support the Palestinian cause, in addition to devising a unified Arab plan to deal with developments in Jerusalem, and to confront attempts that aim to distort its features, as well as raising awareness of the public towards the gravity of the situation in Jerusalem.

The meeting seeks to approve a day for Arab media and an award for Arab media excellence, as well as adding the subject of media education in school curricula for all stages.

The meeting also discussed celebrating the capital of Arab media every year, in addition to the establishment of the Arab institute for peace journalism. — ONA

RGO holds traffic education activities

MUSCAT: The Royal Guard of Oman (RGO) organised traffic education activities for its members, under the auspices of Civil Officer Said bin Hamad al Malki, Director General of Finance, at the Royal Guard of Oman.

The celebration was held at the headquarters of the Royal Guard of Oman. The event began with a review of the educational efforts and roles made by the RGO leadership to enhance the level of traffic awareness among its members and to reduce traffic accidents through various traffic educational activities. It also included educational lectures, visual presentations and cultural events.

The chief guest toured the traffic awareness exhibition, which included works, projects



and innovations for participants from the Royal Guard of Oman, in addition to the participation of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority and the Consumer Protection Authority.

In conclusion, the chief guest also honoured the participants in the traffic education activities.

The event was attended by employees of the Royal Guard of Oman and invitees from government institutions.

— ONA

Retailers in Oman offer promotional packages for Ramadhan

KABEER YOUSUF
@KABEERYOUSEF

With the holy month of Ramadhan to begin on March 23 in Oman, malls and other retailers have launched promotional packages to woo the customers with an array of products for the citizens and expatriate communities.

While the traditional souq in Muttrah are decorated with lanterns, frankincense and decorative items, the shopping malls have once-in-a-year discount programmes and automotive companies boast of rare schemes to own the vehicles of their choice.

Hypermarkets and supermarkets of various grades have already

begun to decorate items required for the holy month days before the announcement of Ramadhan beginning arrived.

“We have launched a never-before offer for essentials, food items mostly, and dates and perfumes and garments in the offer, to receive most of the clients,” said the GM of a leading hypermarket chain.

“We have started to witness people in large numbers at our various departments since last week as the holy month is about to begin in after a week and only two weekends are left before they could purchase essentials in bulk quantities,” a representative of a leading mall told the *Observer*.

Automotive companies have,



on the other hand, charted out various EMI plans and service, resale packages.

“Anyone who desired to buy a car from us can do so during the Ramadhan days because we

we have great demand for our fruits and vegetables and it is applicable to both locally sourced ones and imported ones. In view of this, we have placed heavy orders for procuring huge quantities of the same in the coming days,” a representative from Suhul Al Fayha, the largest Omani trader in fresh fruits and vegetables said.

PRICES UNDER RADAR:

However, the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has made it clear that prices are strictly monitored and any unwarranted price hike will be questioned.

“So far, the demand is stable and we are strictly monitoring and at times, checking the retailers for assuring quality and price. Once

the demand goes up, we will be constantly following up with the trends and if there is any scarcity of any products, it should be brought to our attention before hiking the price failing of which will attract penalties,” a CPA representative said.

He further said that inspection teams are visiting the retail outlets to ascertain if measurements and quantity and quality are applied across various levels and no retail outlet is allowed to hike prices of necessities without prior approval from the Authority.

Meetings were held with the management of the various retail outlets and hypermarkets and ways to streamline prices of essentials were sought.

SAF Chief of Staff receives Governor of Arizona

MUSCAT: Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF) received at SAF Al Shafaq Club in Muscat on Monday Katie Hobbs, Governor of US State of Arizona.

The meeting dealt with various matters of mutual interest.

It was attended by a number of senior SAF officers and the Military Attaché at the Sultanate of Oman’s Embassy in Washington. It was also attended by General Daniel Hokanson, Chief of the National



Guard Bureau, US Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman and

the Defence Attaché at the US Embassy in Muscat. — ONA

Defence Ministry, Arizona National Guard sign partnership programme

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Defence and the Arizona National Guard of the United States of America signed a State Partnership Programme in Muscat on Monday.

The National Guard State Partnership Programme (SPP) is designed to establish long-term relationships in which US States and their partnered nations share best practices and expert knowledge.

The SPP is a US Department of Defence joint security cooperation programme administered by the National Guard Bureau that links a state’s National Guard with the armed forces of a partner country to build long-lasting, mutually beneficial relationships with US allies around the world.

The Arizona State Partnership Programme was signed from the Omani side by Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF), and from the US by Major General Kerry Muehlenbeck, the Adjutant General, Arizona National Guard, in the presence of Katie Hobbs, Governor of Arizona.

During the signing ceremony, the two sides issued a joint press statement reading as follows: “The Sultanate of Oman has a robust and historical strategic relationship with the US. The



signing of the partnership programme between MoD and the Arizona National Guard of the United States embodies this strong and advanced relationship and enhances joint cooperation in military, security, and a range of strategic fields. Through this new partnership, the Sultanate of Oman and the US reaffirmed historical ties between the two countries and mutual commitments to achieve shared goals and common interests.”

On this occasion, Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan’s Armed Forces said: “The official signing ceremony culminates the efforts of both countries’ leaderships to enhance the long existing bilateral cooperation and the strategic partnership between the two countries. It reaffirms the importance of strengthening the joint military and security efforts

to reinforce common strategic and national interests of both countries and paves the way for more cooperation in the field of joint defence and security in pursuance common interests and objectives.”

“This is a unique and exciting time for the State of Arizona and the Arizona National Guard,” said Maj Gen Kerry Muehlenbeck. He added: “2023 marks the 30th anniversary of one of the oldest State Partnership Programmes between Arizona and the Republic of Kazakhstan. With today’s signing, Arizona also welcomes the newest State Partnership with the Sultanate of Oman.

The talents and dedication of our service members make the Arizona National Guard the right choice. Together our capabilities will grow and strengthen our forces, communities, and countries we serve.” — ONA

JORDANIAN DELEGATION VISITS MARITIME CENTRE



A delegation from Prince Faisal Technical College in Jordan visited the Maritime Security Center (MSC) at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Monday. Upon their arrival at the MSC, members of the delegation were received by Commodore Adil bin Hamoud al Busaidy, Head of the MSC. The visiting delegation toured the centre’s facilities and viewed its latest equipment and technologies. It was also briefed on the roles and tasks carried out by the centre within its national duties. — ONA



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Cyclone Freddy returns killing 15 in Malawi, Mozambique

BLANTYRE, MALAWI: Fifteen people have died in Malawi and Mozambique as Cyclone Freddy hit the two countries with torrential rains and strong winds upon its return to southern Africa's mainland, authorities said on Monday.

Police in Malawi said 11 people died in areas surrounding the southern city of Blantyre, where heavy rains triggered flooding as the cyclone made a comeback, just weeks after it first struck the continent.

At least 16 more people were missing and four injured, according to a preliminary count,

police said.

Four more people died in neighbouring Mozambique, local authorities said, as an assessment of the damage was underway after the storm made its second landfall in the country on Saturday.

Earlier police said they found the body of a three-year-old girl after a water stream breached its banks washing away houses built along its course.

Malawi's government ordered schools in ten southern districts to remain closed until Wednesday, with rains and winds expected to continue to batter the



Branches of trees sway as cyclone Freddy hits, in Quelimane, Zambezia, Mozambique. - Reuters

nation's south.

National carrier Malawi Airlines said all flights to Blantyre have been cancelled until further notice after an inbound plane ran into the bad weather mid-flight and was forced back to the capital Lilongwe.

Freddy reached the landlocked country early on Monday morning after sweeping through Mozambique at the weekend.

In Mozambique, at least three people died in Namacura, a town in the central Zambezia province, according to district head Moura Xavier.

One more was reported dead

at the weekend, after a house collapsed in the nearby district of Zalala.

The death toll was expected to increase, as authorities worked to reach all affected areas.

"We are experiencing communication difficulties and this situation does not allow us to have reliable tolls," said Health Minister Armindo Tiago.

Guy Taylor, a spokesman for the UN children's agency UNICEF, said rains had abated on Monday but the hard-hit coastal city of Quelimane remained without access to clean running water. — AFP

Defence holds as Wagner forces seek Bakhmut breakthrough

KIEV: The situation around the embattled city of Bakhmut is still difficult, as Wagner forces are trying to break through Ukraine's defence lines, the commander of Ukraine's land forces said on Monday.

Oleksandr Syrskiy described the situation around Bakhmut as still difficult.

"The Wagner assault groups are attacking from several directions and trying to break through the defences of our forces and advance into the city centre," he said, according to a Ukrainian military statement.

He was referring to the Russian mercenary force led by Yevgeny Prigozhin.

Ukrainian units inflicted "noticeable losses" on the enemy with artillery, tanks. "The defence of the fortress continues!" the colonel general assured.

According to Ukrainian military observers, Russian units have gained ground mainly north and north-east of Bakhmut. The Monday morning report also reported fighting around several localities north of Bakhmut.



Soldiers of the Ukrainian Volunteer Army hold their positions at the front line near Bakhmut, Donetsk region. - AFP

On the Russian side, a Ukrainian counter-attack to relieve Bakhmut in the Donetsk region is increasingly expected. Prigozhin had mentioned this in a video message as a threat scenario for his units.

According to Russian reports, several Ukrainian brigades were massed between the cities of Sloviansk and Kostiantynivka for this

purpose. So far, however, the mud that appears in the spring has not allowed for quick advances off paved roads.

A Ukrainian counter-attack is not the only worry for Prigozhin and his Wagner troops, as they could face difficulties due to a lack of new prisoners as recruits, according to British estimates released on Monday.

Half of the prisoners previously recruited had become victims of the heavy fighting, it said. A nationwide recruitment campaign is not compensating for the losses.

"If the ban endures, Prigozhin will likely be forced to reduce the scale or intensity of Wagner operations in Ukraine," the ministry's tweets concluded. — dpa

Türkiye's quake toll tops 48,000 as govt to build container cities

ANKARA: The death toll in Türkiye from last month's major earthquakes has risen to 48,448, Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu said on Monday, as authorities rush to set up container cities to house for the longer-term those left homeless by the disaster.

The combined death toll including those killed in Syria has climbed to more than 54,000.

Speaking at a news conference in Malatya, one of the provinces hit by the quakes, Soylu said the toll in Türkiye included 6,660 foreign nationals, mostly Syrians, adding that authorities were still trying to identify 1,615 victims.

The earthquake and subsequent powerful tremors injured more than 115,000 in Türkiye and left millions sheltering in tents or seeking to move to other cities.

President Tayyip Erdogan has pledged to rebuild homes within a year but it will be many months



A general view of flattened buildings in Antakya Kucuk Sanyı Sitesi Industrial Estate is pictured in the aftermath of the deadly earthquake. - Reuters

before thousands can leave their tents or container housing, and daily queues for food, and move into permanent housing.

Soylu said the government plans to set up 115,585 containers for as many families in 239 sites across the affected region.

He said 23 sites had been established so far and 21,000 containers were set up, with 85,000 people living in them.

He said 433,536 tents had been set up since the earthquake in 354 sites, adding that businesses would be given new temporary workplaces in the next 10 days.

During a visit on Sunday to Hatay, one of the worst-hit regions, Erdogan said Qatar had pledged to send 10,000 containers, which were used during the soccer World Cup at the end of last year. — Reuters

جامعة صحر
SOHAR UNIVERSITY

TENDER NOTICE No. 001/2023

Sohar University invites sealed tenders from specialized, experience and authorized suppliers for Microsoft Enrollment for Education Solutions (EES) who are Microsoft Licensing Solution Providers (LSP).

The tender details are as follows:

Tender	Description	Fee OR	Submission Date
001/2023	Microsoft Enrollment for Education Solutions (EES) for three years	200/-	30/03/2023

The tender document can be obtained from Procurement and Contracts Department from 14/03/2023 to 20/03/2023 08:00 to 16:00 hrs at Sohar University Main campus in Sohar after payment of RO. 200.000/- in cash (Non-refundable) at the cash counter located in the Al Khauboora Building. The receipt of payment has to be taken to the Procurement and Contracts Department to collect the Tender Document.

Tenders offers must be submitted in closed envelopes sealed, delivered at the Sohar University premises, tender number shall be written only on the envelope, no indication shall be made, and deadline for submission of offers is 30/03/2023 15:30 hours.

Tender should be addressed to PVC Administration & Finance and deposited in the tender Box at PVC, A&F Office as given below during office hours 08:00 to 15:30 Sunday to Thursday

Pro-Vice-Chancellor – Administration and Finance Office
Sohar University
P.O Box 44, P.C. 311, Sohar. Sultanate of Oman.

Telephone: 26850100 Ext.: 421 & 289 (Procurement and Contracts Department)
Sohar University reserves the right to accept or reject any offer without assigning any reason.

The writer is a Life
Coach and NLP
Practitioner
@coach_hyesha

We need to alter our mindset and enrich our perspectives, so as to generate the lives we deserve and

With this clarity and vision, make a strategic, specific action plan with timeline and deadlines until next year. Make small daily steps on improving those areas through routine, repetition and the right attitude.

Partners and love, Family, Friends
and social life, Work, business
and career, Money and finances,
Fitness and health, Surroundings,
environment and quality of life,
Fun and recreation, Emotional
well-being, Personal growth

Do you feel your life is one tracked and you don't spend enough time with the family? What parts of your life have you ignored and what parts have you focused

The momentum brought about through constant and consistent daily effort and action will reap all the benefits needed in order to know you are becoming the best version of yourself. What more can you ask for?

Yet environmental and urban experts have questioned whether the small number of electric buses will have a significant impact, and called for a much wider and more meaningful transport overhaul. — **Thomson Reuters Foundation**

Switzerland has managed to cling to neutrality for centuries and through two world wars. It is a position supported by 90 per cent of its 8.7 million people, who uphold it as a national ideal. Hosts to the United Nations and the Red Cross in Geneva, they see themselves as the world's



A Leopard 2 tank during a Swiss military exercise in November. – **Reuters**

Switzerland, whose banks are notorious for secrecy and have often been accused of laundering money for the world's kleptocratic class, is still the world's biggest centre for offshore wealth. That includes about one-quarter of the global total, no doubt serving many Russian oligarchs allied with President Vladimir Putin.

Swiss neutrality began to be formalised after the Napoleonic wars, when European powers agreed it could create a buffer between regional powers. — **The New York Times**

One size might not fit all

We look for right size for a dress, for shoes and a hat, if you must have one, and the factories have set the sizes and we just have to fit in.

But it is not so easy in real life. Our past has an impact on us and so do our anxiety about the future. The ratio varies so do our personalities. What makes us are so many factors such as our environment while growing up, our orientation, our education, culture, values etc. Our response to different situations varies according to these characteristics. While we inhale and exhale differently we all know that we are taking in oxygen and exhaling carbon dioxide, but here too we have our differences some of us breathe shallow, while others are on autopilot hardly aware of this natural mechanism and then there are others who use the technique to control the mind with their breath.

Here we are — put us on the spot with pressure and we are in a panic mode, we can hear the heart pound, and almost feel that others can see the heart beating, forget the heart, the cheeks have become sizzlers so who needs rouge? The breath becomes shorter and the head becomes light and thoughts become disrupted and sentences incomplete.

There are others who fall asleep with ease as the mind demands rest, and yet there are many whose eyes become dry and lids become sore without being able to even afford a cat nap.

Sleep, they say, is what our body and mind needs most urgently when exhaustion takes over. So our nutrition needs differ along with our life patterns, so how can one size fit all especially in education?

Our professions are going to have makeovers with AI playing a major part, but imagination is something that an AI cannot fill in yet. Of course one can argue that the AI can throw in all possibilities but there is something magical about the human mind. Maybe the AI can provide the colours



Lakshmi Kothaneth @lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

THE POWERFUL MIND CAN EVEN CHANGE OUR REALITIES AND SO HOW CAN ONE SIZE FIT ALL?

but the mind can provide the shades. The powerful mind can even change our realities and so how can one size fit all?

There was a time when we just had to take our regular vaccinations as we grew up. But now the viruses are a force to reckon with so much that scientists are looking at the various ways they can be controlled in order to save the human population. The seasonal flu, the experts say are evolving. When we take vaccination now, within time they evolve and accordingly our vaccinations also have to catch up. One vaccination cannot fit all.

So does that mean we humans are losing immunity and becoming weaker?

To that question Dr Ahmed al Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Region, said each one of us should be responsible by being physically active, reducing risky behaviours such as smoking for instance.

Being responsible is something all of us can try to achieve and it is almost applicable to all of us unless of course they are children then parents have to apply the system in place. Being responsible is not just local or regional anymore, it is global as Covid-19 has proven to us just like climate change.

Hundreds of health experts from World Health Organization and Ministries of Health from different countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region have gathered in Oman for the conference on Acute Respiratory Infections and Surveillance Network, being organised by WHO and its partners and hosted by Oman's Ministry of Health.

The theme this year is, 'Better preparedness, early detection and rapid response for respiratory diseases.' Steps are being taken to strengthen the pandemic influenza preparedness plans because as experts pointed out the recent pandemic showed that the preparedness for the pandemic did not fit all — all the countries, as some nations faced major losses. So it is time to learn from each other.

ALL FOR BETTER PAY



Employees of public healthcare hold a placard reading “more for us is more for all” as they take part in a protest rally during a warning strike in Stuttgart, southern Germany, on Monday. The Verdi union representing public sector workers is pressing for better pay and conditions in the current wage negotiations. – AFP

How to fix the platform economy

Meta (Facebook), Alphabet (Google), Microsoft, Twitter, and a few other tech companies have come to dominate what we see and hear on the Internet, shaping hundreds of millions of people's perceptions of the world. In pursuit of advertising revenue, their algorithms are programmed to show us content that will hold our attention – including extremist videos, disinformation, and material designed to stimulate envy, insecurity, and anger. With the rapid development of “large language models” such as ChatGPT and Bard, Big Tech's hold on impressionable minds will only strengthen, with potentially scary consequences.

But other outcomes are possible. Companies could deploy the latest wave of artificial intelligence much more responsibly, and two current court cases serve as warnings to those pursuing socially destructive business models. But we also need public-policy interventions to break up the largest tech companies and to tax digital advertising. These policy levers can help change Big Tech's pernicious business model, thereby preventing the platforms from inflicting so much emotional harm on their users – especially vulnerable young people.

The legal cases include Gonzales vs Google, which is currently before the US Supreme Court. At issue is the tech industry's insistence that Section 230 of the 1996 Communications



Daron Acemoglu, Professor of Economics at MIT, is a co-author of Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty



Simon Johnson, a former chief economist at the International Monetary Fund, is a professor at MIT's Sloan School of Management and a co-chair of the Covid-19 Policy Alliance

Decency Act exempts platform companies from any liability for third-party content that they host. If platforms are acting more like news outlets than mere online repositories when they recommend videos, tweets, or posts, they should be held to the same standard as established media, which, under existing defamation laws, are not allowed to publish what they know to be untrue.

Hence, in a \$1.6 billion lawsuit filed against Fox News, Dominion Voting Systems has uncovered ample evidence that Fox's top on-air hosts and executives were well aware (and told each other) that former President Donald Trump's claims of election fraud were entirely false. Dominion thus has a strong claim to damages if it can show that Fox knowingly spread falsehoods about Dominion's voting machines in the 2020 election. Shouldn't online platforms whose algorithms disseminated the same lies be held to the same standard?

Addressing such questions has become even more urgent now that programmes like ChatGPT are poised to reshape the Internet. These sophisticated algorithmic recommenders could potentially be trained not to promote extreme content or deliberate lies, and not to encourage extreme emotions. If

an algorithm is exploitative or manipulative toward children (or anyone else, for that matter), the responsibility for such harm should lie with the humans in charge. After all, AIs at this level are not operating autonomously of human decision-making. To claim otherwise is to grant their creators legal immunity.

Tech companies should no longer be able to excuse their own inattention or negligence by arguing that “there's too much data” for them to monitor. That wealth of data is the source of their profits, and the sheer abundance of content on their platforms is what makes their AIs so potent. While they should enjoy a reasonable degree of protection against liability for what someone else posts on their site, this should apply only to

passive content that the platforms do not in any way recommend to other users. Active content that is algorithmically pushed out to millions of people to generate revenue is a different matter. Indeed, it is just like traditional publishing, only much more powerful.

If a daily newspaper publishes a commentary by a terrorist, some readers will probably stop subscribing. But since most individuals do not want to walk away from their existing online social networks, we need government regulation to re-empower consumers.

First, the largest platform companies should be broken up to create more intense competition between recommendation algorithms and their trainers. But for this to work

in the public's interest, platforms also must be required to allow a user's social network to be transferred to a different platform. The same “interoperability” rationale allows you to keep your cell-phone number when you change carriers. Social-media and digital-content consumers should be able to vote with their feet when they don't like what a platform is promoting.

Second, and even more importantly, we need to force an adjustment in the prevailing Big Tech business model, which is based on harvesting vast amounts of user data and monetising it through digital-advertising sales. This business model explains why disinformation, outrage, and insecurity are so prevalent online. Emotional manipulation maximises user engagement, enabling more intrusive data collection and higher profits.

A tax on digital advertising is one of the only practical ways to change this extraordinarily destructive business model. It would reduce platforms' temptation to maximise user engagement through emotional manipulation; and, if coupled with limits on data collection, it would provide incentives to develop alternative approaches, such as subscription-based models.

@Project Syndicate, 2022



Big Tech's hold on impressionable minds will only strengthen, with potentially scary consequences.

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SEEB EDGE SAHAM TO LIFT U20 LEAGUE CROWN

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MARCH 13

Seeb boys clinched the Under-20 football league crown as they defeated Saham 4-3 in penalties after the regulation time ended in a 1-1 draw in the final match on Sunday at Seeb Stadium.

In a thrilling clash, both teams remained focused with strong defending in the back lines. The real action began in the last ten minutes of the game as Nibras al Busaidy took Seeb to the lead as he netted the opening goal of the game in the 87th minute. Abdullah Habib scored the equaliser in the dying minutes (94th minute) and before the referee decided to end the game.

The equaliser moved both sides to the penalties. Seeb's goalie Hadhram al Hadhrami impressed in the penalty shoot-out as he saved Saham's first penalty which was taken by Khalfan al Rudaini and Al Muhannad al Buraiki's kick went outside. Seeb's players scored all their four penalties and snatched the title.

The bronze medals went to Al Salam players as they beat Qurayat

1-0 in the third and fourth play-off. The only goal in the match was scored by Hashar al Darmaki.

Later, Eng Mohammed bin Mahmood al Zadjali, Advisor of Tourism and Heritage Minister gave away the trophy and other awards to the top winners in the presence of HH Sayyid Melek bin Shihab al Said, Seeb club's vice-chairman, and officials.

SUHAR CLAIM U17 TITLE

Earlier last week, Suhar junior players lifted the title of U17 football league after beating Al Suwaiq 3-1 in penalties as the regulation ended in a 1-1 draw in the final clash. Al Musannah took the third place award as they defeated Saham 2-0.

On the other hand, Oman U20 team ended their campaign in the AFC Asian U20 Cup which is underway in Uzbekistan until Saturday. Oman boys finished their participation from group stage with one point only from a goalless draw against Jordan in the third match. The team had suffered two defeats against South Korea and Tajikistan 4-0 and 1-0 respectively.



Qualifier Garin stuns Ruud at Indian Wells

INDIAN WELLS, United States: Qualifier Cristian Garin shocked third-seeded Casper Ruud 6-4, 7-6 (7/2) to reach the fourth round at Indian Wells on Sunday as Daniil Medvedev and Cameron Norrie survived scares.

Garin's attacking game paid off as the 97th-ranked Chilean dispatched world number four Ruud in just under two hours.

"The way I played today I'm so happy," the 26-year-old Garin said. "I was aggressive the whole match."

His 39 winners were too much for Ruud, a two-time Grand Slam finalist last year who had hoped a quick victory over Diego Schwartzman in his second-round opener would mark a turnaround in a season where he hadn't advanced past the second round in three prior tournaments.

Meanwhile, Medvedev, long frustrated by the slow hard courts in the California desert, managed to push his ATP winning streak to 16 matches with a 6-2, 3-6, 6-1 victory over 85th-ranked Ilya Ivashka.

Medvedev, coming off three straight titles at Rotterdam, Doha and Dubai, said the victory was a matter of "a few points," but they went his way to keep him on track to improve on his previous best Indian Wells showing — the round of 16 in 2021.

"(It's) tough to make anything



Cristian Garin (CHI) hits a forehand against Casper Ruud (NOR). — USA Today Sports

during the rallies, so just have to kind of see who puts more balls in court. If you lose a little momentum you lose a set," said Medvedev, who was clearly frustrated at the end of the second set.

He grumbled to the referee that he would be "as slow as the court" in taking a bathroom break, but pulled himself together to take a 5-0 lead in the third, serving it out after Ivashka saved three match points to

hold in the penultimate game. "I cannot say I played much better in the third, but (I) managed to be the one not missing after 25 shots," said Medvedev, who next faces former world number two Alexander Zverev.

Zverev, coming back after torn ankle ligaments ended his 2022 campaign at the French Open, said much the same after a 7-5, 1-6, 7-5 victory over Finland's

Emil Ruusuvuori. "To be honest I think he played much better than me throughout the match," Zverev said. "It's just the way it is sometimes, one or two points can decide a match." Tenth-seeded Norrie, who reached the final in Buenos Aires and lifted the trophy in Rio de Janeiro last month, was down a set and 4-1 to Japanese qualifier Taro Daniel before rallying for a

INDIAN WELLS ATP AND WTA RESULTS

MEN (THIRD ROUND)

Alexander Zverev (GER x12) bt Emil Ruusuvuori (FIN) 7-5, 1-6, 7-5; Alejandro Davidovich Fokina (ESP x23) bt Karen Khachanov (RUS x13) 6-3, 1-6, 6-4; Christian Garin (CHI) bt Casper Ruud (NOR x3) 6-4, 7-6 (7/2); Andrey Rublev (RUS x6) bt Ugo Humbert (FRA) 7-5, 6-3; Cameron Norrie (GBR x10) bt Taro Daniel (JPN) 6-7 (5/7), 7-5, 6-2; Frances Tiafoe (USA x14) bt Jason Kubler (AUS) 6-3, 6-2

WOMEN (THIRD ROUND)

Maria Sakkari (GRE x7) bt Anhelina Kalinina (UKR x27) 3-6, 6-2, 6-4; Karolina Pliskova (CZE x17) bt Veronika Kudermetova (RUS x11) 6-1, 7-5; Jessica Pegula (USA x3) bt Anastasia Potapova (RUS x26) 3-6, 6-4, 7-5; Coco Gauff (USA x6) bt Linda Noskova (CZE) 6-4, 6-3; Rebecca Peterson (SWE) bt Jil Teichmann (SUI) 3-6, 6-3, 6-1

6-7 (5/7), 7-5, 6-2 victory.

Another Chilean qualifier joined Garin in the fourth round as Alejandro Tabilo triumphed 6-3, 7-6 (8/6) over unseeded Jordan Thompson, who had upset second-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas in the second round.

Tabilo lined up a meeting with American Frances Tiafoe, who eased past Aussie Jason Kubler 6-3, 6-2.

SABALENKA WINS BY WALKOVER
On the women's side of the combined WTA and ATP Masters 1000 event, second-seeded Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus advanced by walkover when Ukrainian qualifier Lesia Tsurenko withdrew from their scheduled match.
Tsurenko has now lost by retirement or walkover in nine of her 18 tournaments dating back to Indian Wells last year.
Third-seeded American Jessica Pegula again rallied from a set down, beating Anastasia Potapova 3-6, 6-4, 7-5.
"That was definitely a battle today," said Pegula, who also rallied from a set down in her second-round win over Camila Giorgi.
"She definitely came out hitting her shots and painting lines and going after it.
"So I'm just glad I was able to work my way back into the match and ended up playing much better than how I started."
Sixth-seeded American Coco Gauff advanced with a brisk 6-4, 6-3 victory over Linda Noskova. But last year's runner-up, Maria Sakkari, needed two and a half hours to seal a 3-6, 6-2, 6-4 win over Anhelina Kalinina — Sakkari's second straight come-from-behind victory. — AFP

HOSTS BOOK SPOT IN WTC FINAL AT THE OVAL

India extend Test dominance over Australia

AHMEDABAD, India: India won their fourth series in a row against Australia after a fourth and final Test lit up by an epic 186 by Virat Kohli ended in a draw on Monday in Ahmedabad.

The hosts won the series 2-1 and the world's two top-ranked teams will do battle again on June 7-11 at The Oval in the World Test Championship final.

Even before the players shook hands on day five, India knew they had reached the WTC decider thanks to New Zealand's thrilling last-ball win over Sri Lanka earlier in the day.

It will be India's second successive WTC final, having lost the inaugural edition to New Zealand in 2021.

Australia reached 175-2 in their second innings in the final session of play at the world's biggest cricket stadium when the players of both teams called it a day.

"We do understand the importance of this series and the opposition. Lot of hard work has gone into this," India skipper Rohit Sharma said.

Coach Rahul Dravid told broadcaster Star Sports: "It was a really hard-fought series, there were moments where we were put under extreme pressure by a really good cricket team and we responded."

India similarly lifted the Border-Gavaskar Trophy at home in 2017 and then beat the Australians in their own back yard in 2018-19 and 2020-21, each time 2-1.

Travis Head (90) and Marnus Labuschagne (63 not out) snuffed



India celebrate after winning the Border Gavaskar Trophy test series at the Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad. — Reuters

out India's push for a victory on the final day with a stand of 139 after nightwatchman Matthew Kuhnemann fell early for six.

The left-handed Head, capping a successful series after being left out of the first Test, missed out on his century after being bowled by Axar Patel.

Regular opener Usman Khawaja did not to bat due to "lower leg

soreness" after getting hurt while fielding on day four.

The match in Ahmedabad belonged though to Kohli, who hit a masterful knock on day four to end a Test century drought of 1,205 days since his previous ton.

The marathon 364-ball knock blocked every chance of a potential defeat for the hosts after Australia posted 480 on a vastly different

pitch from the previous three Tests.

EXPECTATIONS AND MORE

Kohli, one of the best players of his generation, recorded his 28th Test century to power India to 571 all out on Sunday as India managed a lead of 91 after their first innings.

"I think in Test cricket I wasn't able to play with my tempo and

template that I have played with for the last 10 years for a while now," said the man-of-the-match.

Kohli's partnership of 162 for the sixth wicket with Axar, who hit his third half-century of the series with an attacking 79, marked India's dominance on Sunday.

Opener Shubman Gill hit 128 to lead India's reply and make the most of his opportunity after

being added to the team in place of struggling KL Rahul in the third Test.

Indian spinner Ravichandran Ashwin excelled with his six wickets in Australia's first innings, in a run-filled match which was at odds with the first three Tests.

Ashwin managed 25 wickets in the series, ahead of Ravindra Jadeja's 22, as the spin duo received the player-of-the-series award jointly.

Not to be outdone, Australian spinner Nathan Lyon took 22 wickets including three in the final Test and was ably supported by up-and-coming spinners Todd Murphy and Kuhnemann.

"The spinners bowled really well," said stand-in-skipper Steve Smith.

"Murphy and Kuhnemann bowled with composure. Lyon bowled his best in the first innings here, the best I have seen him bowl."

The two teams now head into three one-day internationals starting on Friday in Mumbai, ahead of the 50-over World Cup in India later this year. — AFP

SCOREBOARD	
Australia 1st innings 480 all out	
India 1st innings 571 all out	
Australia 2nd innings	
M Kuhnemann lbw Ashwin	6
T Head b Axar	90
M Labuschagne not out	63
S Smith not out	10
Extras (b4, lb1, nb1)	6
Total (2 wickets dec, 78.1 overs) ---- 175	
Bowling: Ashwin 24-9-58-1, Jadeja 20-7-34-0, Shami 8-1-19-0, Axar 19-8-36-1, Yadav 5-0-21-0, Gill 1-1-0-1-0, Pujara 1-0-1-0	

Williamson leads New Zealand to last-ball win over Sri Lanka

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand: Kane Williamson was hailed as "world-class" after New Zealand's record Test run-scorer orchestrated a dramatic last-ball win over Sri Lanka on a rain-disrupted final day in Christchurch on Monday.

The thrilling triumph at the Hagley Oval scuppered Sri Lanka's chances of making the World Test Championship final, handing the spot to India.

In a helter-skelter finish, the only Sri Lankans not guarding the boundary for most of the closing 10 overs were the bowler and wicketkeeper as New Zealand chased down their target of 285.

Having lost eight wickets and on a day limited to 53 overs, skipper Tim Southee paid tribute to his star batsman Williamson.

The former captain finished 121 not out and ran a bye off the final delivery of the match in a remarkable conclusion, to go with New Zealand's one-run victory over England a fortnight ago.

"Seeing how calm he is out in the middle keeps us calm as well," Southee said as New Zealand celebrated another famous, nail-biting win.

"The guys were very trusting in what he was going to do and alongside Daryl (Mitchell) for most of the day it was a great partnership that got us in that great position.

"He's a world-class player and world-class players are able to



New Zealand's Kane Williamson (R) and Neil Wagner greet each other after winning the first Test against Sri Lanka at Hagley Oval in Christchurch. — AFP

perform in different conditions." Visiting captain Dimuth Karunaratne said that fielding

errors let his side down, particularly dropping the talisman Williamson on 33.

"We had a good chance to win, unfortunately we are the losing side," he said.

"We had misfields a few times that cost us the game. We have to minimise those mistakes."

'DIFFERENT STORY'

When rain wiped out the first two sessions on the fifth day, the umpires ruled there would be a minimum of 53 overs played in the evening, which meant New Zealand would have to average 4.85 an over.

After a steady but slow start which saw the hosts at 90-3, Williamson and Mitchell picked up the pace. — AFP

SCOREBOARD	
Sri Lanka 1st innings ----- 355	
New Zealand 1st innings ----- 373	
Sri Lanka 2nd innings ----- 302	
New Zealand 2nd innings	
T Latham b Jayasuriya	24
D Conway c & b Rajitha	5
K Williamson not out	121
H Nicholls c Mendis b Jayasuriya	20
D Mitchell b A Fernando	81
T Blundell b A Fernando	3
M Bracewell c sub b A Fernando	10
T Southee c de Silva b Kumara	1
N Wagner run out	4
N Wagner not out	0
Extras (b5, lb4, nb1, w6)	16
Total (eight wickets; 70 overs) ---- 285	
Fall of wickets: 1-9, 2-50, 3-90, 4-232, 5-238, 6-266, 7-273, 8-280	
Bowling: Rajitha 17-5-60-1, A Fernando 19-4-63-3, Jayasuriya 19-1-92-2, Kumara 15-3-61-1	

ISM clinch U16 title; MCCC Yellow emerge U13 champs

MUSCAT: Indian School Muscat U16 beat Sri Lankan School Muscat U16 by 37 runs and Muscat Cricket Coaching Centre (MCCC) Yellow U13 beat Boshier Sports Centre (BSC) U13 E by 9 wickets in the Oman Cricket Junior Domestic League Season 2022-23 powered by Mazoon Dairy SAOC.

In the U16 final, batting first, ISM U16 got off to a salient start scoring 42-2 in the first 10 overs. Devansh Loya (71 off 49; 9x4) batted magnificently scoring a half-century carrying the ISM innings to a par score of 153 all out in 28 overs. Omindu PM was the key armer claiming figures of 5-16 along with Mohammed Rushdaan and Senuka VN picking 2 wickets too.

In reply, ISM U16 bowlers dominated the second innings. SLSM batsmen couldn't stand the attack losing wickets at regular intervals. Omindu PM (38 off 27; 6x4) tried getting SLSM close to the target but couldn't take

them over the line. SLSM were bundled out at 116 in 25.2 overs courtesy Devansh Loya's 3-20 well supported by the rest of the bowlers. Devansh Loya was adjudged the man of the match as ISM U16 A were crowned champions.

In the U13 final, BSC U13 elected to bat first. Aditya Chaudhari (26 off 30; 3x4) and Vihaan Apte (27 off 24; 4x4) helped BSC U13 reach to 105-8 in 20 overs after losing wickets at regular intervals to the MCCC Yellow U13 bowlers. Arav Pillai, Karnik Mehta and Pranav NS were the key to the MCCC Yellow bowling picking 2 wickets each. In reply, Kriv Patel bolstered a quick fire (64 off 33; 9x4) well supported by Siddeshwaran S (29 off 23; 4x4) to chase down the target in 10.1 overs. Vihaan Apte was the only bowler to claim a wicket. Kriv Patel was adjudged the man of the match as MCCC Yellow U13 were crowned champions.

PRIZE DISTRIBUTION

In the prize distribution ceremony for the U13 and U16 Junior Leagues powered by Mazoon Dairy SAOC, Kiran Asher – Board Member, Oman Cricket and Duleep Mendis – Chief Development Officer, Oman Cricket graced the stage.

In the U16 Junior League, Kriv Patel bagged the best batsman award, Aneek Chakraborty was awarded the consolation batsman, Omindu PM became the best bowler and Jayapranesh Ayyapan won the best all-rounder prize. ISM U16 A won the champions medals and SLSM U16 claimed the runners-up medals.

In the U13 Junior League, Kriv Patel claimed the best batsman and the best all-rounder awards while Shravan Sharat Kurup bagged the best bowler prize. MCCC Yellow U13 won the champions medals and BSC U13 E took the runners-up medals.



Raphinha snatches Barca win in Bilbao

BARCELONA: Raphinha's strike earned Barcelona an agonising 1-0 win over Athletic Bilbao on Sunday to restore their nine-point lead over Real Madrid at the top of La Liga.

Real Sociedad stumbled to a 1-1 draw at Real Mallorca, with their bid to finish in the top four losing steam at an alarming rate.

Struggling Sevilla earned an important 2-1 win over Almeria to climb to 13th, two points clear of the relegation zone, leaving their opponents 19th.

In Barcelona's first game after being charged with corruption by Spanish prosecutors, they shut out the noise and took another step towards their first title since 2019.

The Catalans secured their 19th clean sheet in 25 La Liga games this season as they held on to earn their ninth 1-0 win of the season, keeping second place Madrid at arm's length after the champions beat Espanyol on Saturday.

Goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen made some superb saves in the second half and Alex Berenguer struck the post, but Athletic could not break down the league leaders.

When Inaki Williams eventually did late on, the goal was disallowed after VAR spotted a handball by Iker Muniain in the build-up.

"In the end what counts (is holding on), we defended with everybody, including in goal, on the goal line, these are games we have to



Barcelona's Brazilian forward Raphinha celebrates scoring his team's first goal during the Spanish league match between Athletic Club Bilbao and FC Barcelona at the San Mames stadium in Bilbao. — AFP

win," Ter Stegen told DAZN.

"I have not seen the disallowed goal, but that's why we have VAR. It's a decision (the officials) have to take. We are very happy to keep another clean sheet."

With Ronald Araujo suspended, Xavi used Jules Kounde alongside

Andreas Christensen and started Sergi Roberto at right-back.

The visitors put in a backs-to-the-wall display to keep Athletic out. Athletic fans threw fake banknotes with the word "mafia" printed on them into the air, in protest after Barcelona's corruption charge.

"I respect the fans at San Mames, they have always treated me well," said Xavi.

"It surprises me this atmosphere of hostility towards Barca. It saddens me there's hostility towards Barca at San Mames, I don't think it's good for society."

On the pitch the Catalans were under the cosh too, with Ter Stegen denying Williams and Raul Garcia heading against the crossbar.

In-form winger Raphinha finished well from Sergio Busquets' clever pass before the break, against the run of play, and top scorer

Robert Lewandowski missed two good chances on his return from injury.

The win leaves the Catalans sitting comfortably clear ahead of next Sunday's Clasico at Camp Nou, while Athletic are winless in five in the top flight.

SOCIEDAD STRUGGLE

Real Sociedad have just one win in their last nine matches across all competitions and were frustrated by hosts Mallorca, 10th.

The Basque side remain fourth, level on 45 points with third-place Atletico Madrid, who visit Girona on Monday.

Carlos Fernandez fired Real Sociedad ahead early on but they could not extend their lead, and soon paid the price with Lee Kang-In levelling. — AFP

SPANISH LA LIGA RESULTS ON SUNDAY:

Real Mallorca 1 (Lee 50) Real Sociedad 1 (Fernandez 3)

Sevilla 2 (Ocampos 45+2-pen, Lamela 73) Almeria 1 (Akieme 2)

Villarreal 1 (Pino 55) Real Betis 1 (Iglesias 38)

Athletic Bilbao 0 Barcelona 1 (Raphinha 45+1)

On Saturday

Real Madrid 3 (Vinicius 22, Militao 39, Asensio 90+3) Espanyol 1 (Joselu 8)

Elche 1 (Morente 90+6) Real Valladolid 1 (Larin 4)

Celta Vigo 3 (Aspas 51, 85, Ciss 52-og) Rayo Vallecano 0

Valencia 1 (Kluivert 74) Osasuna 0

On Friday

Cadiz 2 (Sobrinho 39, Alcaraz 82-pen) Getafe 2 (Unal 61-pen, 90+16-pen)

HM Cup camel racing kicks off in Barka



AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MARCH 14

The competitions of His Majesty the Sultan's Cup for Camel Racing 2023 began on Monday at Al Fulaij Racecourse in the Wilayat of Barka, which comes as a conclusion to the annual festival of private camel racing in its 20th season, and it will include 56 races over four days.

As many as 27 cars and 16 icons including five HM Cups will be presented as prizes for the final races in six categories, 'Hagayeg', 'Lagaya', 'Ardah', 'Al Ythaa', 'Al Thanaya', and 'Al Hool' divided into four days.

The opening day is allocated for 'Hagayeg' which is for two-year-old camels (4 km), competing in 22 rounds, 14th rounds to the 'Al Bakar' and 8th to the 'Al Jadaan' with nine cars, two icons, and cash prize for the top ten.

'Al Taiarah' claimed the opening round owned by Hamdan bin Khushir al Jahfi. While 'Mufreh' owned by Khamis bin Abdullah al Saadi won first

place in the second round. In the third round, 'Amseh' came first owned by Mubarak bin Hamad al Jedili. The fourth round was claimed by 'Almnarah' owned by Ghosn bin Saeed al Musalmi.

In the fifth round, 'Mushgelah' owned by Awadh bin Ali al Balushi came first. 'Al Shadi', owned by Yasser bin Saeed al Wahibi, snatched the sixth round. 'Wazn', owned by Saeed bin Nasser al Hashemi, won first place in the seventh round. The eighth round was claimed by 'Khal' owned by Ali bin Abdullah al Balushi. The ninth round was snatched by 'Mthhel', owned by Salim bin Saeed al Jahfi.

SAMHA, RADAD WIN HONOURS

'Samha', owned by Mohammed bin Rashid al Zari, won the tenth round. In 11th round, 'Shandara' owned by Maher bin Musabah al Rashidi came first and 'Jazeel' owned by Hammoud bin Abdullah al Muharbi took the 12th round. In the 13th round, 'Anjaz', owned by Badr bin

Hamad al Derei, came first. 'Al Afret', owned by Hamad bin Saed al Omari, won first place in the 14th round.

In the 15th round, 'Sarabah', owned by Saeed bin Mohammed al Hajri, came in first place. 'Shaheen', owned by Nasser bin Salim al Owaisi, claimed the 16th round. The 17th round was snatched by 'Fn' owned by Saeed bin Nasser al Hashemi and the 18th round was claimed by 'Majd' owned by Hamad bin Saeed al Nusairi. 'Jabarah' owned by Hamdoun bin Ali al Owaisi took first place in the 19th round.

'Sarab', owned by Abdullah bin Hamad al Omari, came first in the 20th round. The 21st round was claimed by 'Al Shaheenih', owned by Obaid bin Alabd al Wahibi, while the last round was snatched by 'Radad' owned by Salah bin Saeed al Wahaibi.

The competition will continue on its second day, with 13 rounds for the 'Lagaya' category for three-year-old camels (5 km), with six cars, two icons, and a cash prize for the top ten.

Tender Notice

Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI), announces following E-Tenders for 2023:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Deadline for Specifications Request	Deadline for tender bids	Tender Price
17/2023	Supply, Mount and Install an Uninterruptible Power Supply UPS & PDU for PASI Branches	23 Mar 2023	06 Apr 2023	25 OMR
18/2023	Supply of Laptops with Accessories, Printers and Print Management System	23 Mar 2023	06 Apr 2023	48.6 OMR

Interested companies registered with Tender Board may obtain Tender document from the E-Tendering website: <http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>. The Vendors must provide **Electronic Bank Guarantee** issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of (2%) of the Tender value valid for (120) days on website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> and addressed to Public Authority for Social Insurance.

CORRESPONDANCE:

1. Tender inquiry : All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at E-Tendering system (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

2. E-Tendering system inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering system technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: Tel : **+968 24402200** , E-mail : etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

PASI is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other tender that may be received

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State General Budget posts surplus of RO 145m as of Jan-end 2023

MUSCAT: The state general budget recorded, at the end of January 2023, a financial surplus amounting to about RO 145 million, compared to the same period in 2022, which recorded a surplus of about RO 18 million.

The financial performance bulletin issued by the Ministry of Finance indicated that the state's general revenues increased by 22 per cent until the end of last January, recording about RO 982 million, compared to RO 804 million in the same period in 2022, mainly due to the increase in oil and gas revenues, which accounted for about 88 per cent of public revenues.

The bulletin indicated that net oil revenues increased by the end of January 2023 by 9 per cent to about RO 602 million, up from RO 554 million until the end of January 2022.

The average production amounted to about 1,063 thousand barrels per day, and gas revenues increased by about RO 39 million, or by 18 per cent, compared to the same period in 2022.

Current revenues until the end of last January increased by about RO 91 million to reach RO 122 million, compared to earnings of RO 31 million in the same period in 2022.

Public expenditure until the end of January 2023 amounted to RO 837 million, recording an increase of RO 51 million, which was up 7 per cent over the corresponding period of 2022.

Current expenditures of the civil ministries



recorded about RO 299 million, compared to RO 296 million in January 2022.

The total contributions and other expenses amounted to RO 37 million, an increase of 19.3 per cent, compared to RO 31 million in the same period in 2022. Subsidies for petroleum products amounted to about RO 4 million, while an allocation of RO 33 million was made towards debt payment.

During January 2023, the government paid government loans amounting to about RO 511 million, including the payment of outstanding international bonds worth RO 480 million, which contributed to reducing the total public debt to about RO 17.2 billion by the end of last January.

The International Monetary Fund has indicated that the real GDP growth of the Sultanate of Oman will reach about 4.1 per cent in 2023 and 1.9 per cent in 2024, while the current account balance will achieve positive growth during the year 2023 by 2.7 per cent.

The Ministry of Finance, through the use of the automated public debt management system, works to enhance the effective management of public debt.

This is done by recording debt portfolios, preparing reports and analysing them, providing possible tools for organising and tracking debts, prioritising payments, and developing a plan to repay debts in a timely and effective manner. — ONA

W R Grace, Sohar University and OQ inaugurate new refining DCR Pilot Plant in Oman

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 13

W R Grace, a global leader in refining technologies and specialty chemicals, and Oman's Sohar University will inaugurate a jointly operated DCR Pilot Plant at the University in Oman. The plant is part of a refining catalyst research lab located at Sohar University.

The Grace DCR Pilot Plant is a proprietary circulating riser pilot Fluid Catalytic Cracking (FCC) unit and the leading, commercially available technology for small-scale FCC pilot units. It will help simulate refinery operating conditions and analyse refining feedstocks to allow Oman energy company OQ and other regional refiners to maximise value from existing and new feeds.

This project, which is the result of a 15-year partnership between Grace, Sohar University and OQ, is an important part of Oman Vision 2040 initiative, which aims to harness and develop Omani talent and enhance scientific



innovation.

"This collaboration is the first of its kind in the Middle East and reflects the perfect synergy between Grace, Sohar University and OQ," said Bhavesh (Bob) Patel, Chief Executive Officer. "It will become a hub for world-class catalyst research to benefit our partners and the industry as a whole."

"OQ, Sohar University and Grace have a long-standing collaboration providing value to all stakeholders. The DCR Pilot Plant is a realisation of this partnership and fulfils a key ICV initiative in line with Oman's and OQ's values" said Kamil al Shanfari, Managing Director OQ RPI & Plastics.

Datamount is close to launching Al Bandar Center, one of the largest data centers in the Sultanate



- Al Bander, the third data center with more than 700 racks in an area of 8400 square meters, with a future expansion plan.
- A great addition to the data centers and cloud sector in the Sultanate and the Middle East region.



During this year, Datamount, the company that specializes in data centers and cloud services owned by several government pension funds and other investors is preparing to launch the Al-Bandar data center, which is the third and the largest data center for the company after the Muscat and the Al Jabal Akhdar Data Center. On this occasion, Dr. Tahir Al Kindi, Chairman of the Board of Directors, said, "in line with the future vision of the digital transformation of the Sultanate, we are getting close to inaugurating one of the largest data centers in the Sultanate, which represents a qualitative step that reflects the global position

of the Sultanate in this field. The center will contribute to advancing digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and cloud services in the government and private sector in the Sultanate of Oman to keep abreast of the fourth industrial revolution's developments and ensure the digital economy's continuity and growth. The center was designed with international specifications and the latest technologies, where our customers can obtain greater flexibility in managing their data operations with high protection from any potential dangers that may arise from cyber threats. In addition, our various services and products and our experience in managing data centers will ensure the integration of digital solutions for our customers and simplify their business operations under one umbrella smoothly and at competitive prices. The locations of Datamount's three data centers were chosen with high accuracy. In distinct locations, the sites were comprehensively studied regarding the availability of safety, closeness to customers, and essential services such as electricity, water, and fiber net. The future expansion plans for all centers were also considered in terms of land area availability.

In a statement, Abdulmonem Al Futaisi, CEO, said, "The technologies of

the digital age require that Datamount provide high-level services to its customers and provide the necessary environment according to the latest technologies, with a high level of efficiency and information security. We are approaching the operation of the third and largest data centers of the company, which is a great addition to the data centers and cloud services sector in the Sultanate and the Middle East; the center is built at Tier 3 level with the latest international specifications on the area of 8400 square meters

with a total building area of 5400 square meters. The center will provide services with the latest technologies of the Internet of Things, cyber security, digital twin technology, artificial intelligence, and managed services while maintaining the highest levels of security, and a highly qualified specialized team will manage it. Data Mount is an accredited Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology provider to provide cloud services, video conferencing, and meeting systems. It holds a certificate from the American Uptime Institute that evaluates global data centers. It is granted to centers that provide electronic systems and infrastructure components with high quality, safety, and reliability. The company has obtained all the ISO certificates that are granted to data center companies, such as Information Technology Service Management, Business Continuity Management, Information Security Management, and Quality Management. Our services and competitive prices will ensure that customers achieve integration in digital solutions smoothly."

Eng. Said Al Hosni, project manager, said: "Datamount is about to inaugurate one of the largest data centers in the Sultanate of Oman, designed according

to the latest specifications. Upon completion of its three phases, the Al Bandar data center will accommodate more than 700 racks; Suitable location has been chosen for the center nearby all services and customers, and the standard specifications required to meet the requirements of Tier 3 (Uptime Tier 3) and (TIA 942 Rated 3) were taken into account. The data center is fully equipped with double electric lines, double backup generators, double data transmission lines, and double electrical rooms and cooling systems with iced water in cooperation with Tabreed Oman. The center has also provided an internal cooling device with iced water (Chiller) as an additional supplement.

Al Bandar data center provides the latest security and monitoring systems, such as advanced surveillance cameras, access control systems, and internal environment monitoring systems. It's also equipped with safety systems such as firefighting systems that operate on environmentally friendly gas (Novec 1230). The company has also given great attention to the security of customer data, whether physical security or logical security, as accessing servers goes through strict procedures with multiple security levels by providing the system with network firewalls, access control, and data encryption."

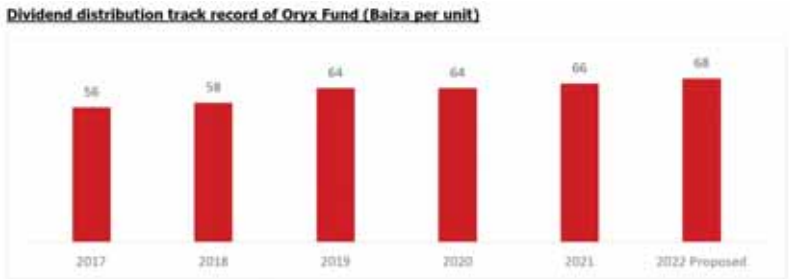


Bank Muscat Oryx Fund proposes highest ever dividend to its investors for FY 2022

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat Oryx Fund continues to reward its investors with a growing stream of dividend distributions and capital growth. The fund management body of Oryx Fund has proposed a dividend distribution of 68 bz per unit to be paid to the unitholders for FY 2022, subject to requisite approvals from the unitholders and other competent authorities.

Accordingly, the fund has maintained its track record of consistently growing dividend distributions despite a challenging market environment. In addition to the regular income distributions through dividends, the fund has also been rewarding its investors with attractive capital appreciation since its inception in 1994.

The Oryx Fund delivered an average return of 12.7% per annum to investors over the last 10 years which translates into an aggregate return of 230.5% over this period, or in other words an amount of RO 10,000 invested in Oryx Fund has grown to approximately RO 33,050 over the last 10 years, consisting of original investment of RO 10,000 and investment gain (returns) of RO 23,050.



The return delivered by Oryx Fund over the last 10 years is significantly higher than average returns offered by alternatives over the same period like the MSX 30 Index 3.4% per annum, S&P GCC Index 3.9% per annum, MSCI Emerging Markets index 1.8% per annum, gold negative 1.9% per annum, Barclays Global Aggregate Bond index -0.4% per annum and term deposits with commercial banks in Oman generally offering varied average interest rates up to 4% to 5% per annum.

As such, the Oryx Fund clearly stands out as an attractive investment choice for prospective investors with a medium to long term view.

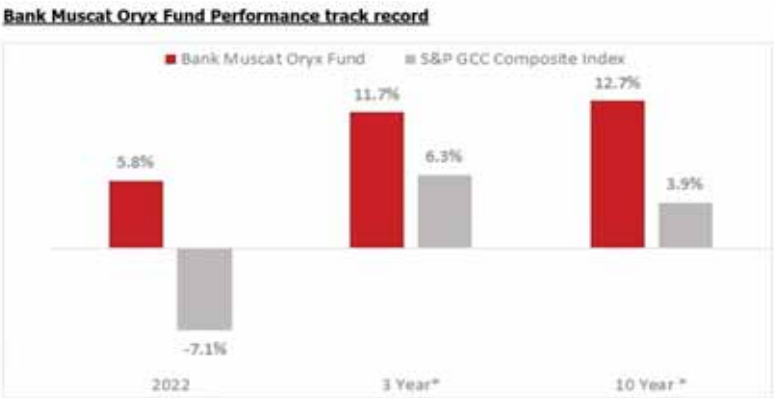
Furthermore, the Oryx Fund has delivered positive performance of 5.8% for the one-year period ended December 31,

2022 against negative return of 7.1% in its benchmark i.e. S&P GCC index.

Backed by this strong performance, Oryx Fund has once again been recognised as the best performing MENA equity fund by the reputed Citywire rankings for the year 2022.

These rankings are based on the returns generated by the fund for its investors against approximately 20 other funds focusing on MENA region during 2022.

The Bank Muscat Oryx Fund has won several accolades for generating wealth for its investors and for significant outperformance compared to peers. It has been top rated by various renowned global fund reviewers such as Lipper, MENA Fund Manager and Emerging Market Finance. The Oryx Fund represents an attractive investment proposition



Note: Return over 1-year period is annualised
Data source: Bloomberg

Performance as on December 31, 2022

for long-term investors. The fund's strategy to follow a bottom-up approach focused on selection of quality stocks, has been proven over various market cycles and time periods.

The fund management team's insights in the GCC region, quality of research across industries and sectors and knowledge of investee companies' performance and future direction are the key factors that have enabled the fund to provide consistent and stable long-term returns to the investors.

An open-ended fund regulated by the Capital Market Authority, Oman, the Oryx Fund offers daily liquidity, providing flexibility to

invest or redeem on any business day. Investors can subscribe to the fund with a minimum subscription amount as low as RO 50. Investors may also choose to invest every month by subscribing to Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) option.

The fund's NAV is published on a daily basis on Bank Muscat website and on Muscat Stock Exchange website, so that investors can track the value of their investments on a daily basis. Interested investors may contact the fund's Investor Servicing Desk at 24768064 or through email at assetmanagement@bankmuscat.com to understand the process to subscribe into the fund.

OAB announces its first car loan package with the lowest interest rates in Oman



MUSCAT: With Ramadhan on the horizon, Oman Arab Bank (OAB) customers can now rev their engines rather than budgets thanks to the bank's new attractive car loan package.

Offering the most competitive and affordable prices on some of the most desirable cars, the package – the first of its kind for the bank – features the best interest rates in the market, starting from 3.75 per cent per annum for two years.

In another first, financing is available for up to 10 years, for both new and pre-owned cars.

OAB has also secured special agreements with car dealerships in the Sultanate of Oman for discounted rates on their best-selling cars, with a simple, transparent and easy-to-understand process. Credit card fees are also waived for the first year for new customers.

"With market-leading rates and our unique tie-ins with car dealerships, OAB's first car loan package is responding to the needs of our customers and rewarding them with the best rates on the market, with unique additional benefits," said Khalid al Amri, Assistant General Manager & Head of Branch Banking, Retail Banking Division, at OAB.

"A car is among the most important purchases our customers will make in their lifetimes and we want to be with them every step of the way, helping them to invest in their futures, while balancing their finances."

ahlibank hosts Exclusiv Banking clients



MUSCAT: ahlibank hosted selected Exclusiv Banking and Wealth Management clients in its new state-of-the-art headquarters at Wattayah, who have been a part of its impressive growth in the local and regional banking sector.

The upscale construction, reflecting its innovative approach to banking,

was welcomed by Exclusiv customers at a special meet-and-greet event organised by ahlibank. The new ahlibank building embodies ethos as a customer-centric institution, received overwhelming appreciation from the gathering of Exclusiv Account holders of the Bank.

The architectural strengths of the building, its aesthetic interiors, and designated lounge facilities, in addition to the wealth management department design in a modern and distinctive style, all aim to ensure our customers' comfort and privacy while conducting their transactions, which is a prime example of the Bank's commitment to enhancing the experiences of our customers.

LG introduces its 2023 AC product line-up in Oman

MUSCAT: LG Electronics has introduced its 2023 product line-up at the Dealer Convention Conference that took place on March 8 in Oman, highlighting how air conditioning plays a vital role in improving the quality of life, allowing people to live and work comfortably even in the hottest and most humid weather conditions that can be witnessed in some countries such as Oman, where temperatures can get extremely hot.

To cater Oman market demand, LG Electronics introduces new range of 2023 air conditioners. It has the most advanced cooling system for a comfortable life which is a perfect blend of powerful cooling up to 58 Deg C along with Uniform cooling all around Thanks to LG's Dual Sensing system.

LG's exclusive anti-corrosion Gold Fin coating forms a protective shield that ensures longer lasting performance. Easy Installation & Easy Maintenance



gives peace of mind to customers.

Being one of the pioneers in Inverter air conditioners segment, LG continues to dominate the premium segment. LG's DualCool Inverter Residential Air Conditioners empower residents to experience 60% faster and more consistent cooling.

All-new Lexus RX Luxury SUV launched in Oman

MUSCAT: At an exclusive function recently held at Saud Bahwan Automotive showroom, Wattayah, the all-new RX SUV was unveiled in Oman. Gracing the occasion were Dignitaries from the Public and Private sectors.

Speaking at the occasion, a Representative from Saud Bahwan Automotive said, "This evening we are celebrating the launch of the all-new Lexus RX, an unconventional luxury SUV, which since its introduction has been rewarding owners with exceptional drives and inspiring ownership experiences.

As a brand, Lexus has made a very special place in the hearts of many. Since its launch in Oman more than two decades ago, Lexus has always offered customers much more than just luxury vehicles.

And this is evident in its unique offerings that promote Japanese hospitality, luxury and craftsmanship. We take this opportunity to thank our



customers for their continued patronage. We would also like to thank Toyota Motor Corporation, for their constant support and encouragement."

The fifth-generation RX has been completely reimagined to deliver greater style, comfort, and

performance than ever before and comes with a choice of three powertrains, two of which are electrified.

The all-new Lexus RX is built on Lexus' Global Architecture K (GA-K) platform and delivers excellent body rigidity and a low centre

of gravity, guaranteeing a more rewarding driving experience.

Complementing the all-new RX's distinctive design is a thrilling drive personality imbued by three powertrain options. A newly developed inline 4-cylinder, 2.4-litre turbocharged engine

that produces 275 hp and 430 nm of torque is paired to a new 8-speed Direct-Shift automatic transmission (8AT).

Meanwhile, the new hybrid-electric system combines a 2.5-litre petrol engine and electric motor to produce a total of 247 hp, which is paired to an electronically-controlled continuously variable transmission (E-CVT) to provide excellent fuel efficiencies.

A hybrid-electric system pairing a 2.4-litre turbocharged engine with an electric motor is also available, which provides a combined power of 366 hp mated to a 6-speed automatic transmission.

On the exterior of the RX, the triple LED headlights are sleeker, sharper and more horizontal, and the body and spindle grilles merge at their boundaries to create a seamless expression symbolised by the sense of a solid mass, striving toward a new identity and

originality. The introduction of a new Lexus badge on the tailgate adds to the vehicle's clean and contemporary look, while single-line Lexus signature taillights at the rear underline the vehicle's iconic shape.

The 2023 RX's spacious interior offers ample luggage space and five newly designed luxury seats with excellent legroom, including an 8-way adjustable powered driver seat. Drivers can also create an oasis with nature-inspired

Thematic Ambient Illumination, an optional feature that bathes the RX interior in a choice of 14 themes. Additional features include SmartAccess with a push-button start, a 21-speaker Mark Levinson Clari-Fi 2.0 sound system, and a panoramic roof with movable outer sliding glass for the front section.

The all-new Lexus RX is now on display at Saud Bahwan Automotive showrooms.



Forum underscores importance of energy and environmental sustainability



HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, MARCH 13

The latest edition of 'Oman Sustainability Week' was launched yesterday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre with the aim of promoting sustainability as a crucial element in supporting comprehensive development, in line with the goals of Oman's Vision 2040.

Oman Sustainability Week, hosted by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals in partnership with Petroleum Development Oman as host organisation, is a high-profile event that seeks to raise awareness about the importance of sustainable practices and preserving the environment whilst safeguarding natural resources.

The event aims to advance sustainability in the fields of energy and water, reflecting Oman's commitment to creating a more sustainable future.

With extensive participation from a range of stakeholders, including officials, experts and specialists from various sectors, the event is expected to attract over 7,000 attendees, more than 150 distinguished speakers and over 80 exhibiting companies.

The week-long programme features a variety of activities, including conferences, workshops, summits, interactive sessions, awards and site visits focused on promoting dialogue and collaboration around

sustainability-related topics.

Mohsin bin Hamad bin Saif al Hadhrami, Under-Secretary, Ministry of Energy and Minerals said, "In light of the rapid developments and transformations the world is witnessing, sustainability and practices aimed at preserving the environment and resources have become increasingly important.

Today, everyone, including institutions, individuals and specialists, is working to adopt the latest practices and technologies that promote and support sustainable principles. Undoubtedly, Oman Sustainability Week will create momentum around sustainability issues by raising awareness and promoting concepts related to hydrogen and renewable energy technologies, while emphasising the importance of reducing carbon emissions and preserving natural resources, water, and energy."

"The OSW serves as a national platform that showcases Oman's unwavering commitment to achieving leadership in sustainability, whilst also providing an opportunity for knowledge and experience exchange.

It features the latest technologies, solutions and initiatives from around the globe, making it a model for enabling sustainability efforts through innovative strategies in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals," he added.

Opportunity Oman: Manufacturing



DR YOUSUF BIN HAMED
AL BALUSHI

The author is the founder and CEO of Smart Investment Gateway; email: yousuf@omaninvestgateway.com

Global manufacturing has been helping drive economic growth and raise living standards for almost three centuries. And today it continues to grow, accounting for approximately 16% of global GDP and 14% of employment.

The manufacturing sector has many characteristics, making it a key determinant of economic growth. It is the fastest-growing sector, as compared to other economic sectors. Its productivity is higher than that of the agricultural and service sectors.

The possibility of specialisation is greater in the manufacturing sector. Moreover, it has forward and backward linkages with other sectors. Given industrial products tradable and access to international markets, the manufacturing sector has better opportunities for increasing demand.

In Oman, manufacturing started in 1975 and currently the sector employs 61,000+ people and exports to 140 countries. In 2021, Omani non-oil exports to other countries jumped by 122.7 per cent to \$7.15bn against \$3.21bn in 2020, which show the impact of Covid-19 in the sector in 2020, but also it shows the importance of this sector in the economy of Oman.

The Sultanate of Oman's manufacturing industry has been growing steadily since the 1970s. The share of the manufacturing industry increased from 0.8 per cent of GDP in 1970 to around 3 per cent in 1999 and again to around 9.6 per cent in 2020.

The country's manufacturing



industry has witnessed ups and downs, but since the advent of the new millennium, manufacturing has become a key driver of the Omani economy.

Manufacturing has been central to Oman's economy and is key to the creation and retention of good paying jobs, and providing a solid standard of living for Omani families. A strong manufacturing industry is fundamental to Oman's continued prosperity and vital to boosting the Sultanate of Oman's non-oil exports.

The government has been working hard to establish a new place-based vision for Oman's economic growth and prosperity, integrating the work of several public sector agencies to promote sustainability, inward investment, and economic competitiveness.

The government clearly recognises that manufacturing's success and ability to create jobs are dependent on having a skilled, multi-lingual, internationally focused workforce, a modern infrastructure to transport Oman-made goods, a commitment to on-going improvement through energy efficiency and waste reduction and a stable supply of appropriate manufacturing workspace.

Moreover, critical to all these factors are public-private partnerships that create an increasingly competitive and attractive Omani manufacturing sector.

As for Oman Vision 2040, 'Manufacturing for Wellbeing' sets the vision for the manufacturing sector, where knowledge-driven industries focused on health and environmental clusters produce goods that will enhance the welfare of peoples around the world and will sustain diversification, innovation, and high-tech development in the Sultanate of Oman.

This will be supported by an expanding, modern capital-intensive industry that is heavily involved in the emerging Fourth Industrial Revolution and hence continuously adopts the most advanced production and communication technologies and the accompanying cutting-edge sets of skills.

Natural resource-based industries will gradually evolve away from their formerly dominant role to one of supporting other industries and sectors.

The manufacturing sector of 2040 will be able to compete globally and will thus not only serve the local Omani or GCC markets, but the entire world, very much like Singapore or Ireland currently do.

Availability of a good number of projects including refinery, petrochemical, ports, airport, etc sets the foundation of having a successful manufacturing cluster that includes machinery, transportation, and equipment; chemicals and plastics; metals;

and electrical and electronics. The machinery, transportation, and equipment sector has the highest number of high-potential products.

Some examples of potential manufacturing and assembly projects include but not limited to following: aluminium extrusion for construction, 3D printing centre, manufacturing electric vehicle batteries, fabrication of fishing fleet, assembly of domestic appliances, manufacture of food products and medical supplies, ACs, refrigerators, washing machines and cooking machines, assembly of batteries and assembly of tyres.

To conclude, Oman's manufacturing sector has demonstrated growth over the past five decades and is moving forward with confidence. The Omani domestic market remains underdeveloped and over 90% of its goods and services are currently met through imports, which yet offers additional lucrative manufacturing opportunities in the local market.

The current focus is to encourage local manufacturing through infrastructure support, The Export Credit Guarantee Agency, tax benefits, entrepreneurship support, and attracting FDI that can fulfil the local demand and export. Oman has all that it takes to position the manufacturing sector as an engine of growth.

New Oman Emirates Gateway telecom project unveiled

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 13

Omantel and UAE's du, from Emirates Integrated Telecommunications Company (EITC), have come together to link the Sultanate of Oman and UAE through a newly activated 275km international fibre optic submarine cable named the Oman Emirates Gateway (OEG) that will meet the evolving market demands, scale up speed, expand connectivity, deliver enhanced customer experience and provide wider commercial offerings.

Oman and UAE are currently connected through terrestrial and submarine routes. The new cable system of OEG will serve as an express connection between both countries and the partnership will reiterate Omantel's and du's position as leading wholesale players supporting the region to evolve into the new promising global communication hub.

Talal al Mamari, CEO of Omantel, said, "I am glad to announce this partnership with



du. This direct and dedicated corridor will synergise the goals of Omantel as the global wholesale hub and of du as the regional data hub, bringing huge benefits to our Wholesale and Enterprise customers.

Both companies will also be able to further expand their networks with higher efficiency and improved connectivity which will result in a significant positive impact in terms of services quality and product variety."

"The importance of this partnership is reflected by the fact that it is the first of its kind

regional fibre optic submarine cable which connects two international data centres — Equinix MC1 in Barka, Oman and datamena DX1 in Dubai, UAE.

This link will act as a major facilitator for hyperscalers, content providers and international carriers that are currently hosted in these datacentres to avail improved connectivity services and higher capacities and will be able to directly link their Point of Presence (POPs) in the region. Increased connectivity between the two data centres will also attract more global players to the region, improve the quality of connectivity, which will in turn, boost customer experience," Al Mamari added.

Fahad al Hassawi, CEO of du, said, "We are excited to enter into this partnership with Omantel. The agreement comes from a common vision for a new strategic direction that will help both companies optimise their assets and positions in the local, regional and global markets."

MSX hosts MEIRA Oman Chapter meeting

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 13

Middle East Investor Relations Association (MEIRA) under its mutual support partnership with Muscat Stock Exchange will organise the next MEIRA Oman Chapter Meeting hosted by MSX Sustainable Investments Team at the MSX Businessman Hall on Tuesday March 14, 2023 at 12:00 noon, post the Abraj IPO launch.

The meeting will provide its attendees with a great networking opportunity, followed by IR (Investor Relations) insights and market trends shared by Paolo Casamassima — Head of Global Market Intelligence at Orient Capital, George Allen — Senior Vice President at Teneo Holdings and Andy Parnis — Managing Director also from Teneo Holdings.

Investor relations are not



only a top trending professional function among capital market issuers but is also a global best practice that can help companies disseminate information, manage investor perception in crisis situations and ultimately impact companies' stock prices to achieve fair price valuation which is the best direct impact of a good IR.

Therefore, today investor relations is a strategic management responsibility at the part of listed companies, that should integrate finance, communication, marketing and securities law compliance to enable the most effective two-way communication between a company, the financial community, and other constituencies.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Why Giselle and the dance of the Wilis must make a repeat performance at ROHM

Giselle is a tragic love story with hauntingly beautiful music and equally challenging choreography, first performed in Paris in 1841. It follows the story of the eponymous character, Giselle, a peasant girl who lives in the middle of the forest and falls in love with a nobleman but hers would not be a happy ending... **P20**

Parthenon Marbles return possible without ownership accord, campaigners say

THE RETURN OF The British Museum's Parthenon Marbles to Greece is possible even if the two sides cannot come to an agreement over who owns the sculptures, a campaign group working to resolve the long-standing dispute said on Sunday.

Greece has asked for others to imitate the Vatican Museums after they agreed this month to return three 2,500-year-old pieces of the Parthenon. London and Athens

are in talks over the Parthenon Sculptures held by the British Museum.

The Parthenon, which is on the Acropolis in Athens, was completed in the fifth century BC as a temple to the goddess Athena, and its decorative friezes contain some of the greatest examples of ancient Greek sculpture.

Greece has repeatedly called for the permanent return of the sculptures, which British diplomat



Lord Elgin removed from the temple in the early 19th century when he was ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Greece's then-ruler.

The Parthenon Project, which has been backed by British politicians from different parties, said the

British Museum's Parthenon collection could be returned to Greece under a long-term cultural partnership agreement.

They would be reunited with Greece's artefacts in the Acropolis Museum in Athens, "as a complete

artistic work consistent with its creators' vision," the campaign group said.

The plans, which have been discussed with Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and British Museum Chair George Osborne, would see a rotation of Greek masterpieces offered to the British Museum, including some that have never been seen outside Greece.

The Parthenon Project said the agreement would be predicated on "the acceptance by both sides that this transformative cultural partnership is possible, despite the absence of a shared position on ownership of the Parthenon Collection."

That would mean the arrangement sidesteps the requirement for a change in the law to allow the British Museum to dispose of its artefacts.

Osborne has played down the prospect of a permanent return of the marbles, citing the potential legal hurdles, and instead suggested an arrangement where the marbles can be seen in both London and Athens.—Reuters

READ

I HAVE SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

BY REBECCA MAKKAI

A film professor and podcaster is invited back to teach a course at the boarding school where her roommate was murdered.



CONSERVATION

A member of a French team, specialised in the restoration of antiquities, restores the antiquities in the Mosul Museum, which were destroyed by the militants in Mosul, Iraq. — Reuters



LIFESTYLE

A girl looks at candles bearing messages in support of people in areas hit by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, during a candlelight vigil at Iwaki 3.11 Memorial and Revitalisation museum to mark the 12-year anniversary of the disaster, in Iwaki, Fukushima prefecture, Japan. — AFP





‘Everything Everywhere’ all-conquering at Oscars

SURREAL SCI-FI FILM “Everything Everywhere All at Once” dominated the Oscars on Sunday, winning seven golden statuettes including best picture, Hollywood’s most coveted prize.

The unorthodox but beloved movie — which features multiple universes, sex toys and hot dog fingers — also won best director, best actress, best original screenplay, best editing, and both the best supporting actor and actress prizes.

Michelle Yeoh, who is Malaysian, becomes the first ever Asian woman to win best actress, for her portrayal of an exhausted Chinese laundromat owner embroiled in battle with an inter-dimensional supervillain — who happens to be her daughter.

“Thank you to the Academy, this is history in the making!” she said.

“Ladies, don’t let anybody tell you you are ever past your prime,” added the 60-year-old, whose career began decades ago with martial arts films in Hong Kong.

Brendan Fraser won best actor for playing a morbidly obese teacher in “The Whale,” capping a remarkable career comeback.

Fraser was a major action star in the late 1990s with films like “The Mummy,” before largely disappearing from the public view.

“I started in this business 30 years ago, and things — they didn’t come easily to me,” he said.

He thanked director Darren Aronofsky for “throwing me a creative lifeline and hauling me aboard the good ship “The Whale.”

AMERICAN DREAM

“Everything Everywhere,” comfortably the night’s biggest winner, is a word-of-mouth smash hit that has grossed \$100 million at the global box office.

In a plot that is not easily described, Yeoh’s heroine Evelyn must harness the power of her alter egos living in parallel universes, which feature hot dogs as human fingers, talking rocks and giant dildos used as weapons.

The film, which features a predominantly Asian cast, was directed by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert — two young filmmakers who were previously best known for an oddball comedy about a talking corpse.

Kwan thanked his “immigrant parents,” while his counterpart thanked his mother for never “squashing my creativity,” including when he had dressed in drag as a child.

“Which is a threat to nobody,” he added, to enormous cheers.

Vietnam-born Ke Huy Quan, 51, who was a major child star in the 1980s with “Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom” and “The Goonies,” completed a stunning comeback from decades in the Hollywood wilderness by winning best supporting actor.

“My journey started on a boat. I spent a year in a refugee camp. And somehow, I ended up here on Hollywood’s biggest stage... this is the American Dream,” said Quan.

After the show, he came bounding into the backstage press room, shouting “Wow, wow, wow... Can you believe I’m holding one of these?”

He shared that “Indiana Jones” director Steven Spielberg had grabbed him and said: “You are now an Oscar winner!”

Best supporting actress Jamie Lee Curtis paid tribute to her parents Tony Curtis and Janet Leigh, both Oscar-nominated actors who never won.

ALL QUIET’ MAKES NOISE

“All Quiet on the Western Front,” Netflix’s German-language World War I, finished the night in second place with four awards.

It won best international feature and best cinematography early in Sunday’s ceremony.

As the night progressed, it also gathered Oscars for best original score and best production design.

But it ultimately could not stop the “Everything Everywhere” juggernaut, and lost adapted screenplay to “Women Talking,” and best sound to “Top Gun: Maverick.”

Tom Cruise’s “Top Gun” sequel had been seen as another potential best picture contender, having helped bring audiences back to movie theatres after the pandemic.

While Cruise did not attend Sunday’s ceremony, the night began with a thunderous flyover by two US Navy jets, soaring at 345 mph over the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood.

Host Jimmy Kimmel was then lowered onto the stage, and he quickly launched into a monologue which laid into Will Smith’s infamous attack on Chris Rock at last year’s Oscars.

The specter of “The Slap” has hung over the Oscars since Smith assaulted Rock on stage for cracking a joke about his wife.

Smith was allowed to stay at the gala, and accept Hollywood’s top male acting prize soon after, but has since been banned from Academy events for a decade.

“If anyone in this theatre commits an act of violence at any point during the show — you will be awarded the Oscar for best actor, and permitted to give a 19-minute-long speech,” joked Kimmel.

NAATU NAATU

In the night’s other prizes, “Guillermo del Toro’s Pinocchio” won best animated film, and “Avatar: The Way of Water” won best visual effects.

“Navalny” — about the imprisoned Russian dissident Alexei Navalny — won for best documentary.

Dozens of dancers brought a colourful, energetic performance of “Naatu Naatu,” the showstopper tune from Indian crowd-pleaser “RRR,” which won the Oscar for best original song.

Academy bosses hope that Oscars television ratings will pick up from recent years, calling in heavy hitters from the world of music to perform the other nominated songs.

A dressed-down Lady Gaga sang an emotional, heartfelt rendition of her song “Hold My Hand” from “Top Gun: Maverick.”

And Rihanna — draped in diamonds, including over her baby bump — sang “Lift Me Up” from “Black Panther: Wakanda Forever,” which won for best costume design.

Lenny Kravitz performed the annual “In Memoriam” segment. — **AFP**

Mum and Malaysia celebrate Yeoh’s Oscar win

“MALAYSIA BOLEH!” cried Michelle Yeoh’s mother in a video chat with her daughter minutes after her historic Oscars win was announced — citing a popular slogan that loosely translates into “Malaysia can do it!”

“I’m very happy... I’m proud of my daughter. She is very hard-working,” Janet Yeoh told reporters after her daughter became the first Asian woman to win the Academy Award for best actress.

“I’ll call her to come back (to Malaysia) and celebrate very soon. Next month is my birthday.”

She and other relatives and friends of Yeoh’s were gathered at a live screening of the awards ceremony at a Kuala Lumpur cinema, where there were loud cheers, embraces and tears of joy the second the announcement was made.

“It was such a jaw-dropping moment,” Yeoh’s niece Vicki said.

“I was speechless, I cried. Everything was, it happened so quickly. We are so happy that she won, that our auntie won...”

“We kept telling her: ‘You will win... You’re going to stand on stage with the golden man,’” she said, referring to the Oscar statuette.

- ‘Pride of Asia’ -

The 60-year-old Malaysian actress won the award for her role in the sci-fi film “Everything Everywhere All at Once”, beating Cate Blanchett who had long been the favourite to win a third Oscar for “Tar”.

“Everything Everywhere” follows a Chinese immigrant laundromat owner locked in battle with an inter-dimensional supervillain — who happens to be her own daughter.

“As Malaysians, we are so, so proud of her... I always look up to her and she is my idol,” said Emily Ng, a Yeoh fan.

Another fan, Tan Ooi Hong said: “She is the pride not just for Malaysia, but she is the pride of Asia as well.”

The former Bond girl was born to Malaysian-Chinese parents in 1962 in the city of Ipoh, 200 kilometres (125 miles) north of Malaysia’s capital, Kuala Lumpur.

She embraced dance as a child and specialised in ballet, which she studied in England.

On a vacation while visiting family, her mother entered her in the Miss Malaysia contest without consulting her.

“I agreed to go to shut her up,” Yeoh, who went on to win the beauty pageant, told a talk show.

A back injury made her give up her dancing career, but by the mid-1980s, she was using the body control she had learned in ballet to appear in action films alongside the likes of Jackie Chan.

Yeoh was awarded the title of “Tan Sri” by the Malaysian king in 2013, one of the country’s highest honorifics bestowed upon civilians.

Meanwhile in Hong Kong, where she worked for a decade before becoming a Hollywood star, Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism Kevin Yeung congratulated Yeoh, calling her a “shining star with impressive achievements”.

“This is a testimony to the strong potential of Hong Kong’s talents and film industry,” he said.—**AFP**

FACTBOX Full list of winners at the 2023 Oscars

The 95th Academy Awards took place at a ceremony in Los Angeles on Sunday and were broadcast live on ABC television. The following is the full list of 2023 Oscar winners:

BEST PICTURE
“Everything Everywhere All at Once”

BEST ACTRESS
Michelle Yeoh, “Everything Everywhere All at Once”

BEST ACTOR
Brendan Fraser, “The Whale”

BEST DIRECTOR
Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert, “Everything Everywhere All at Once”

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR Ke Huy Quan, “Everything Everywhere All at Once” BEST

SUPPORTING ACTRESS Jamie Lee Curtis, “Everything Everywhere All at Once”

BEST INTERNATIONAL FEATURE FILM “All Quiet on the Western Front,” Germany

BEST ANIMATED FEATURE FILM “Guillermo del Toro’s Pinocchio”

BEST DOCUMENTARY FEATURE FILM “Navalny”

BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY “Everything Everywhere All at Once,” written by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert

BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY “Women Talking,” screenplay by Sarah Polley

BEST ORIGINAL SCORE “All Quiet on the Western Front,” Volker Bertelmann

BEST ORIGINAL SONG “Naatu Naatu,” from “RRR,” music by M.M. Keeravaani; lyrics by Chandrabose

CINEMATOGRAPHY “All Quiet On The Western Front,” James Friend

VISUAL EFFECTS “Avatar: The Way of Water”

SOUND “Top Gun: Maverick”

FILM EDITING “Everything Everywhere All at Once”

PRODUCTION DESIGN “All Quiet On The Western Front”

COSTUME DESIGN “Black Panther: Wakanda Forever,” Ruth Carter

MAKEUP AND HAIRSTYLING “The Whale”

DOCUMENTARY SHORT FILM “The Elephant Whisperers”

SHORT FILM, LIVE ACTION “An Irish Goodbye”

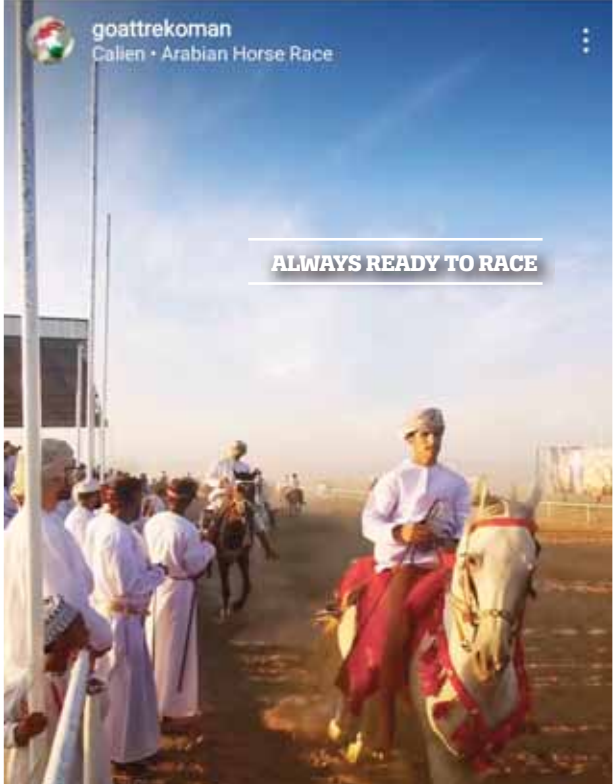
SHORT FILM, ANIMATED “The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse”





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AROUND THE WORLD

RECIPE

Peru returns seized Roman coins to Italy



PERU ON THURSDAY returned a collection of 73 Roman coins, some from the second and fourth centuries, to the Italian embassy in Lima, the foreign ministry said.
The coins were seized from a Peruvian woman in 2021 at the international airport in Cusco, a tourist hub and gateway to the world renown Machu Picchu Inca citadel.
Peru's deputy foreign minister, Ignacio Higuera, told reporters that the collection of 73 coins "are part of Italian heritage."



Higuera said the "valuable collection is made up of 42 coins from the imperial Roman era of the second and fourth centuries."
The other coins were from the medieval, Renaissance and Byzantine periods in Italy, comprising a collection "with more than 1,000 years of history," said Higuera.
A handful of silver coins were shown to reporters, some with the profile of a Roman citizen, others containing just letters.
Italian colonel Lanfranco D'sibio said the coins were seized from a Peruvian woman who had arrived at the Cusco airport from Italy.
"The coins have great historical and cultural value," D'sibio said, also praising international cooperation in "the fight against illicit trafficking in cultural assets."
"Thanks to the collaboration between Peru and Italy, these 73 coins will return home," said Giancarlo Maria Curcio, Italy's ambassador to Peru. — AFP

CULTURE

Syrian castle among quake-hit ancient sites at risk



ZUHAIR HASSOUN EXAMINES worrying cracks in a Crusader-era castle in Syria, a Unesco World Heritage site that survived centuries of conflict only to be badly damaged by last month's deadly earthquake.
Hassoun, the custodian of the Fortress of Saladin, an architectural treasure with Byzantine roots in the 10th century rebuilt by Frankish Crusaders in the 12th century, walked carefully past fissured walls and crumbling arches.
"All of the fortress's towers are in danger," Hassoun said, warning that one had already fallen after the quake.
Other parts "will inevitably collapse," he said, adding that it was only "a question of time."
The hilltop fortress surrounded by forest was among dozens of cultural heritage sites that officials say were damaged in the devastating 7.8-magnitude quake that hit Türkiye and Syria on February 6.
More than 50,000 people were killed in the disaster, almost 6,000 of them in Syria.
Ancient sites damaged included the Syrian city of Aleppo's famed citadel and Old City.
The Fortress of Saladin has been on the United Nations' World Heritage List since 2006, and on the list of World Heritage in Danger since 2013, two years after the start of

Syria's civil war.
But the castle, in western Syria's mostly government-held province of Latakia, scraped through the conflict unscathed and was still open to the public -- until last month's quake.
Hassoun said he feared that aftershocks or even heavy rain could cause further damage to the site, whose main facade is now cracked from top to bottom.
"Every (stone) slab weighs at least a tonne," he said. "Any part of the fortress that falls into the valley can never be retrieved."
The earthquake hit one of the longest continuously inhabited areas on the planet within the so-called Fertile Crescent home to ancient civilisations including the Sumerians and Phoenicians.
This rich history has left behind a plethora of archaeological sites, many of them thousands of years old.
At the national museum in the capital Damascus, the head of the antiquities and museums department pored over a map of quake-stricken Syrian heritage locations, including in areas outside government control.
"We have identified more than 40 damaged sites," Nazir Awad said, noting that the provinces of Aleppo, Idlib, Latakia and Tartus were badly

affected.
"The Citadel of Aleppo and the Old City recorded the worst damage," he added.
The day of the quake, AFP photographers saw damage in Aleppo to parts of the citadel, including to a minaret of a mosque at the World Heritage site. Unesco, in a preliminary assessment, cited "significant damage" to the citadel and said the western tower of the old city wall had collapsed, while several buildings in the souks had been weakened.
Some Syrian heritage sites "require urgent intervention so we don't lose priceless historical treasures", Awad said.
He called for "international quake experts" to assess damage across the country, citing reports of "severe damage" to several sites in rebel-held areas.
An AFP photographer saw heavy damage to the Saint Simeon Stylites monastery -- an ancient Christian pilgrimage site named after a famous hermit -- in northern Aleppo province, an area controlled by the Hayat Tahrir al Sham group.
In the north of neighbouring Idlib province, some of the walls and courtyard arches of a centuries-old castle in the border town of Harim had collapsed, another correspondent said. — AFP

LIFESTYLE

Kenzaburo Oe: novelist who won Nobel with 'poetic force'



NOBEL-WINNING JAPANESE novelist Kenzaburo Oe, a leading liberal voice who defended the disenfranchised and challenged the conformity of modern society, has died aged 88.
"He died of old age in the early hours of March 3," publisher Kodansha said in a statement on Monday, adding that a family funeral has already been held.
Known for his pacifist and anti-nuclear views, Oe saw himself as part of a generation of writers "deeply wounded" by World War II, "yet full of hope for a rebirth".
His esoteric stories, influenced by French and American literary culture, confronted issues from perceptions of disability to the disconnect between village traditions and big-city life.
"With poetic force (Oe) creates an imagined world, where life and myth condense to form a disconcerting picture of the human predicament today," the Nobel panel said when it awarded him the 1994 literature prize.
Born in 1935, Oe grew up in a forested valley on Japan's western Shikoku island, a remote setting which he frequently evoked in his writing as a microcosm of humanity.
Growing up, his mother and grandmother would recount legends passed down through the community about defiant local uprisings.
But his young life was also marked by the war, with his school days dominated by militarist propaganda.
That all changed after Japan's 1945 surrender, and Oe soon became fascinated by the democratic principles espoused by the occupying US forces.
In his Nobel lecture, the writer described the tensions between the country's indigenous culture and its rapid postwar westernisation.
"Present-day Japan is split between two opposite poles of ambiguity," he said.
"I too am living as a writer with this polarisation imprinted on me like a deep scar."
PERIPHERAL VISION
Oe left his village to study French literature at the University of Tokyo, immersing himself in existentialist philosophy and Renaissance humanism.
He began writing fiction while still a student, and in 1958 won Japan's prestigious Akutagawa Prize for young authors with "The Catch" -- about a Black American pilot taken captive by Japanese villagers during World War II.
The same year, Oe published his first full-length novel "Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids", a fable about teenage boys left to fend for themselves after being evacuated during the war.
From the outset, he vowed his work would focus "on the peripheries" of society and promised to never collaborate "with those at the centre of things, who have power", he said in an interview in the mid-2000s.
In 1963, Oe's personal life was upended by the birth of his son Hikari, meaning "light" in Japanese, who has intellectual disabilities.
Writing and living with Hikari are activities which "overlap and enrich each other", Oe said. "It's something that shapes my imagination."
Oe published a series of novels that drew on his family situation, including 1964's "A Personal Matter", in which a troubled young father struggles to come to terms with the birth of his disabled son. — AFP

TUESDAY | MARCH 14 | 2023

A big congratulations have to be extended to conductor Sergey Smbatyan and the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra. It is for their professionalism and refined training that we were able to experience a range of emotions making the *Giselle* performance in Oman truly worth watching and a repeat.

