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JABEUR TARGETS
GRAND SLAM SUCCESS
AFTER CHARLESTON
CROWN



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OIA-BACKED
NATIONAL PHARMA
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CERTIFICATION



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4 DESERT ADVENTURES
INTO YOUR ITINERARY
BEFORE THE WINTER
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AL DUQM

JAPANESE FIRM TO INVEST IN DUQM

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Kobe Steel, a leading Japanese steel manufacturer, and Mitsui & Co Ltd., a global trading investment company, to develop low CO2 iron metalics project in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm. Moreover, Kobe Steel and Mitsui signed a land reservation agreement with Port of Duqm Company and inked another MoU with the Centralised Utilities Company (Marafiq), to supply the project with power and water. The project is expected to produce five million tonnes of Direct Reduced Iron (DRI) annually through the MIDREX Process.

DETAILS ON P13

MUSCAT

CRUDE PRICE AT \$84.71 A BARREL

Oman oil price for June delivery on Monday reached \$84.71, comprising a rise by 81 cents from the price of last Friday, which was \$83.90. The average price of Oman oil for April delivery has stabilised at \$82.23 per barrel, thus \$1.31 per barrel higher than March delivery. Meanwhile, US crude fell 0.09 per cent to \$80.63 per barrel and Brent was at \$85.00, down 0.14 per cent on the day. Gold prices slipped below the key \$2,000 level due to a resurgent dollar, while Treasury yields rose on growing market expectations that the Fed will hike rates when policymakers conclude a two-day meeting on May 3.

State public revenues rise by 12 per cent as of February

MUSCAT: The state’s public revenue by the end of February 2023 stood at RO 2,148 million, up by 12 per cent when compared to RO 1,918 million registered over the same period in 2022, according to the Fiscal

Performance Monthly Bulletin Published by the Ministry of Finance.

This is mainly attributed to an increase in oil and gas revenues, representing 78 per cent of total public revenue, and an increase

of current revenue by 51 per cent. Net oil revenue at the end of February 2023 amounted to RO 1,153 million, up by 5 per cent compared to RO 1,094 million achieved over the same period in 2022. This is driven by higher oil

prices of \$86 per barrel, as well as an increase in oil production to 1,064,000 barrels per day.

Furthermore, gas revenue increased to RO 521 million, up by 2 per cent when compared to the same period in 2022.

Current revenue at the end of February 2023 increased by RO 160 million, amounting to RO 471 million compared to RO 311 million registered over the same period in 2022.

DETAILS ON P13

BREAKING THE FAST



The religious spirit is evident as people of Fanja in the Wilayat of Bidbid in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, gather for mass iftar to break their fast during the holy month on Monday.

PHOTO BY ISSA AL RAISI



Biden says he will run again in 2024

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden said on Monday he plans to run for reelection in 2024 but was not prepared to announce it yet. “I plan on running... but we’re not prepared to announce it yet,” Biden said in an interview with NBC’s “Today” show before the White House Easter Egg Roll. Biden has said he intends to be the Democratic candidate in 2024 but has not made a formal announcement. Both Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris have said they will run together. Top White House advisers are set to make final decisions on launching Biden’s re-election campaign, NBC News reported, citing several unidentified sources. “The decision part is over, but he resents the pressure to have to announce what he’s already decided,” one source familiar with the matter told NBC. – AFP

INSIDE



POLLUTION CHOKING THAILAND HITS TOURISM

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UKRAINE ON LULA'S AGENDA IN CHINA VISIT

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Conserving Arabian Oryx as a major identity of natural history



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman attaches great importance to the ecosystem and gives wide attention to endangered wild animals. This attention has been manifested by the many achievements in the environment sector over the past five decades. This includes the establishment of nature reserves, enacting laws and regulations that govern and manage the environment and criminalise all forms of acts that harm wildlife. Besides, the government devised plans for preserving and sustaining the environment.

In comments to ONA, Sultan bin Mohammed al

Balushi, Director of the Arabian Oryx Department at the Environment Authority, said the Arabian Oryx is deemed a major identity of the environment in the Sultanate of Oman as well as being one of its valuable environmental legacies. The most important achievement in this regard was the project that aimed to return the Arabian Oryx to its natural habitats in the 1970s. The project saw the Arabian Oryx receiving attention throughout the project’s four phases namely: breeding, healthcare, re-release into the wild and monitoring their movement in their environment.

TURN TO P2

LIFE EXPECTANCY TO IMPROVE TO 79.8 BY 2040

Population projected to hit 8.1-8.7 million by 2040

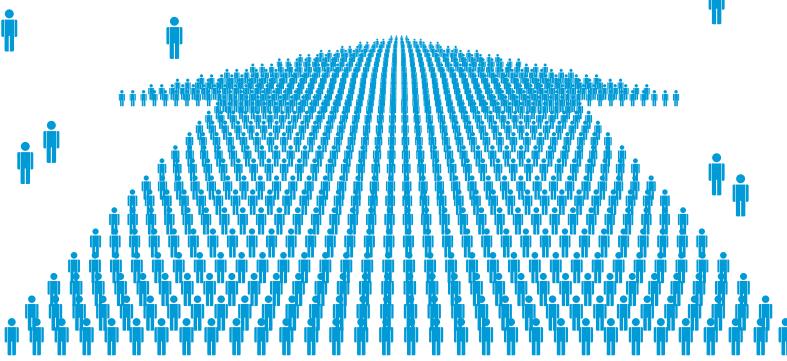
VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Sultanate of Oman’s population, which was around 4.5 million in 2020, is expected to be between 8.1 million to 8.7 million by 2040.

According to the population projection report released by National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), the percentage of expatriates in the total population is expected to drop to 33 per cent from the current level of around 50 per cent. The country’s population crossed the 5-million mark on March 22, with Omanis constituting 57.62 per cent (2,881,313), and the rest 42.38 per cent (2,119,459).

As per the e-census results of December 2020, the population increased by 61 per cent in 10 years from the 2010 census.

If the population growth is low (2.8 per woman), the Sultanate of Oman’s population will be 5.3 million in 2025, 6.1 million in



2030 and 7 million by 2035, and 8.1 million by 2040. If the population growth is moderate (3.3 per woman), the population will be 5.3 million in 2025, 6.1 million in 2030 and 7.1 million by 2035, and 8.3 million by 2040.

If the population growth is high (4 per woman), the country’s population will be 5.3 million in 2025, 6.2 million in 2030 and 7.3 million by 2035, and 8.7 million by 2040.

The life expectancy of Omanis is expected to increase from 76.2 in 2020 to 78.4 in 2030 and 79.8 in 2040. The number of Omanis in the age group (15-59) will increase by 7 per cent during the pe-

riod (2003-2040), while Omanis in the age group (0-14) will drop by 11 per cent during the same period. The percentage of Omanis in the age group 60 and above will increase by 5 per cent during the period (2003-2040).

The percentage of Omanis in the age group (15-59) will increase by 5 per cent during the period (2020-2040), while the Omanis in the age group (0-14) will decrease by 8 per cent during the period (2020-2040).

NCSI said the population projections, including citizens and expatriates, have been made with the population of 2020 as a base year.



MORE THAN 4,000 PEOPLE ATTENDED IFTAR GATHERING AT RUWI CLOCK TOWER ON APRIL 7

‘Collective iftars enhance relationships with cross spectrum of people’

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

Collective iftars organised by NGO's, associations, and corporates, the platforms that reassure bonding and enhance networking, have been on the rise as the holy month is entering the final phase.

The capital city has been witnessing a number of such gatherings these days, the iftar that hosted more than 4,000 people around the Ruwi Clock Tower on April 7 which stands as the perfect example for coordination and flawless cooperation among several teams which were assigned with the different sides of the once-a-paradise-of-jaywalkers venue.

Organised by the Indian Social Club, Deccani Wing, the Community Iftar was open to everyone regardless of the background. The origin of this mega annual event traces back to two decades ago. The Hyderabad community in Oman initiated the event nearly 20 years back and the Deccani wing took over the organisation when it was established as a part of Indian Social Club in 2017. The latest such gathering saw 1000 ladies and nearly 3,000 men and children attending with many visitors from Nizwa, Suhar and Salalah, making it probably the biggest such event held in Muscat this year..

Said al Riyami, Director of Daw'ah Centre at the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (MoARA) was the guest of honour while the Indian Ambassador was the chief guest. The Indian Ambassador



was taken around the venue by Suhail Khan, chief Organiser, Dr Wasifuddin, Convener, Ismail Baig Co-Convener and Mansoor Sabri, Treasurer of Deccani Wing. The Ambassador in his brief address wished the community blessings of the holy month and appreciated the efforts of the organisers. Later Dr Wasifuddin and Ismail Baig presented a copy of holy Qur'an with English translation to the Ambassador. Said al Riyami, Director of Da'wah Centre made special supplication after Maghrib prayers.

A plethora of corporate iftars

are being held these days and seeing the enthusiasm that the volunteers are displaying, it seems the energy and eagerness that was harnessed over the past three years is breaking all its limits and pouring on to the believers in the form of care and compassion.

A corporate iftar which hosted more than 3,000 people from different walks of life comprising labourers of the central fruits and vegetables market, ministerial representatives and representatives of various organisations registered with the Ministry of Social Development

(MoSD) and others who gathered over an iftar at the Mawaleh Fruits and Vegetables Market gained attention of the public.

Organised by Suhol Al Fayha, the gala annual gathering attracts people from all the faiths from across the capital city was another example for how people can dedicate their passion for care and love for hosting fasting people together.

"Islam attributes paramount importance to unity, sharing, and give and take so that human race will live in peace flourish setting models for the generations to come", said Hatim Abdussalam,

an Islamic scholar.

"Making Iftar gatherings to enhance relationships with a cross spectrum of people, sharing the spirit of the holy month and feeling the hunger of your next door neighbour, friend or colleague and to show solidarity can certainly make the world a better place to live in," said Abdul Vahid, MD of Suhol Al Fayha.

Underlining the true spirit of Ramadhan, a large number of corporates and NGO's keep hosting people over iftar for they know for a fact that iftar to a fasting person is the best moment to cement the bonds of humanity.

Conserving Arabian Oryx as a major identity of natural history

FROM PAGE 1

He noted that the Royal Decree No 18/2023 renaming the Living and Fungal Organisms Reserve in the Governorate of Al Wusta, as the Arabian Oryx Reserve, as the first nature reserve of its kind in the country that is home to diverse wildlife including the Arabian Oryx after which the reserve was named owing to its historical symbolism and deep connection to the region and its local community.

Al Balushi underscored the importance of preserving Oman's historically-important wild environmental symbols and the need to preserve their environmental value.

The economic and industrial expansion does not encroach on environmental preservation as the natural reserves have become one of the main enablers of economic development, supportive of urban development as well as being an essential element for the success of projects and a contributing factor to raising the standard of living of local communities. Protecting, preserving and passing the cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value to future generations forms the basis for the continuity of ecosystems and their ecological components; The conservation of the world heritage would have a significant contribution to protecting the environment and nature, the official concluded. — ONA



EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR SOLAR PV POWER GENERATION PLANTS

Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) is inviting interested parties to submit their Expression of Interest (EOI) to develop a circa 10-15 MWp (PV Power Plant), to be located at Muscat Governorate as per Authority for Public Services Regulations (Under Lease Agreement Framework).

An area of over 65500 square meters has been earmarked within but not limited (Al Ansab STP, A'Seeb STP, Al Ghubrah water tanks & Ghala water tanks) at the first stage.

The proposed project, sized at between 10-15 MWp of capacity, aims to provide the operation assets of OWWSC "with a cheaper and green source of electricity, while also allowing in generating Renewable Energy (green/clean) scheme as part of environmental sustainability towards Oman vision 2040 and to contribute to reducing carbon emission roadmap to achieve Net Zero target by 2050. This is in order to ensure effective, balanced and resilient ecosystems to protect the environment and ensure sustainability of natural resources to support the national economy. Moreover, this will support reduction of greenhouse gas emissions as per decarbonization strategy roadmap.

Interested companies with relevant experience in the deployment of solar PV power generation plants are invited to email their Expression of Interest (EOI) along with evidence of experience before 3:00 pm on Thursday 4th May 2023 to tender@owwsc.nama.om.

For any further information or clarification, please email to tender@owwsc.nama.om.



State Council holds 3rd meeting of annual convening

MUSCAT: The State Council Office on Monday held its third meeting of the fourth annual convening during the 7th Term. The meeting was chaired by Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah bin Ali al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council.

The meeting looked into various topics, including studies and proposals undertaken by the Council's permanent and special committees.

The Council's office was briefed on reports submitted by its members about their participation in regional



and international events and forums.

It also reviewed a follow-up

report on decisions that were implemented, the Council's activities during the past period

and a draft of the agenda items for the forthcoming 8th session.

— ONA

Cooperatives get nod to open branches

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 10

As part of the steps to promote local products and boost investments in the retail sector, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) issued on Sunday a ministerial decision regulating the activities of consumer cooperatives in various governorates.

The consumer cooperatives will now have the right to establish branches across the Sultanate of Oman

in coordination with the competent governorate after obtaining the approval of the ministry.

A license to practice consumer cooperative activity must be obtained from the ministry, provided that the phrase (a consumer cooperative) follows the company's trade name. The license period should not exceed three years, renewable for a similar period based on a request submitted to the ministry on the form prepared for that within a maximum date

of 60 before the expiration of the license period, and when renewing it, all conditions must be met.

The ministry emphasised that the consumer cooperative must be committed to achieving the level of quality of the services provided by it, and to the principles regulating corporate governance, and be committed to keeping its accounting records in its main centre for a period of no less than ten years from the date of the end of the financial year.

It is not permissible for the

consumer cooperative to spend funds outside the scope of its purposes.

The regulation indicated that there are incentives and facilities for the consumer cooperative without prejudice to the provisions of the legislation in force, as the consumer cooperative enjoys many incentives and facilities, including coordination with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning by allocating government lands with usufruct rights for the consumer cooperative.



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SAYYID SHIHAB RECEIVES AMBASSADOR OF TURKIYE

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Monday Muhammet Hekimoğlu,

Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and means of enhancing them.

They also discussed several matters of mutual interest.

Sayyid Shihab wished the ambassador success in carrying out his duties as his country's Ambassador to Oman.— ONA

Gen Numani bids farewell to Philippines ambassador

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office received on Monday Imelda Panolong, Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines to the Sultanate of Oman, to wish her farewell at the end of her tour of duty.

The ambassador expressed her appreciations for the cooperation extended to her by all officials in Oman. She also lauded the advance bilateral relations between the two countries.

On his turn, Gen Numani expressed his thanks to the ambassador for the efforts she exerted in enhancing the relations between her country and the Sultanate of Oman during her tour of duty. He also wished her continuous success.—ONA



Call for students to take part in letter-writing competition



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL, 10

Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), in cooperation with the Ministry of Education (MoE), is calling participants to register for the 52nd international letter-writing competition for the year 2023, being organised by the Universal Postal Union.

The competition aims to encourage students to write letters on various topics to improve their education through the art of writing letters. The deadline for receiving letters is

Thursday, April 20.

A statement issued by TRA said, 'The competition is open to participants aged between 9 to 15 years. The letter should be written in Arabic, and may contain drawings. Participants must adhere strictly to the topic and the word limit of 500 to 800 words.' The letter should be handwritten and attached in PDF format.

The top three winners at the national level will be selected by MoE, where the winner will qualify to participate in the international competition.

KABEER YOUSUF
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Authorities have advised people to be modest in their appearance and respect the cultural values of the country while being outside of their homes and dress appropriately as the country upholds modesty in all its forms.

Both visitors and residents have been urged to follow the dress code befitting the culture and tradition of the country, especially during Ramadhan, respect the local heritage and tradition and abide by the cultural values and not to infringe the cultural values of the country.

This is equally applicable to those who visit public places, shopping malls, parks and beaches as there have been concerns from local residents that their values have been hurt owing to poorly dressed visitors in their premises.

While dresses that cover knees and shoulders are recommended for both men and women, they are also advised to refrain from



wearing clothes that reveal their body, and or tight or low cut dresses when visiting a public place in the country.

The Public Affairs Committee of the Municipality of Muscat, at its fourth meeting earlier, reviewed the proposal to issue a decision or a local order to apply the legislation on modest

dress when entering commercial complexes.

A proposal to issue a decision or a local order to apply the legislation on modest dress when entering commercial complexes and markets, in accordance with the council's terms of reference contained in the Municipal Council Law No. (116/2011) in

Article (22/16) within the limits of the state's general policy and development plans.

"Wearing dresses with no concern for the culture and heritage of the place where they are living is not one's personal liberty but is tantamount to hurting the sentiments of the local population," said Amer Salem al Hasani, member of the Board of Directors of Muscat Municipality.

He added that establishing a kiosk at the international gateways of Oman are currently in the pipeline to educate visitors and tourists to this country.

In addition to adhering to the Omani Penal Law No (7/2018) in its article (294/a), to contravene and punish everyone who appears on the roads and public places in a way that violates public modesty or contradicts the traditions and customs of Omani society.

Accordingly, any citizen or resident can report such dressing law violation in public places to the judicial control whose whereabouts will be kept confidential.

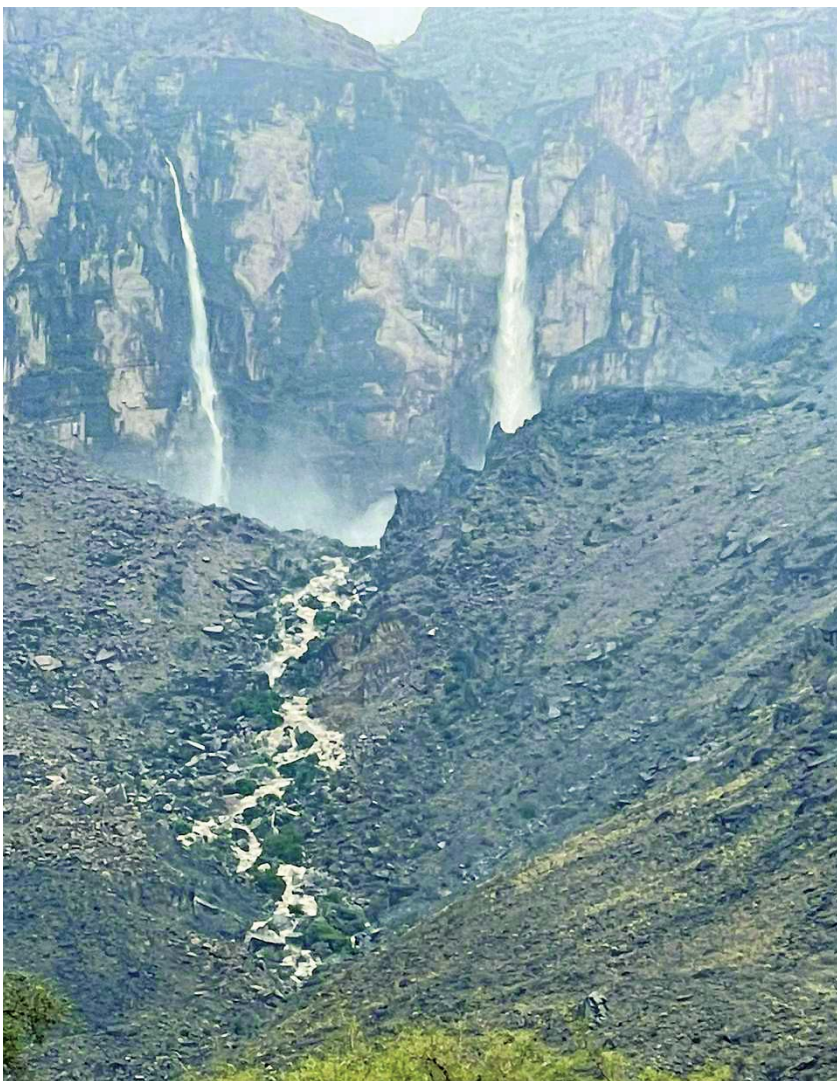
Rains lash most governorates for third day

MUSCAT: Thundershowers and rain of varying amounts were reported from many governorates of the Sultanate of Oman as the impact of upper air trough continued for the third day on Monday.

Cumulonimbus clouds formed over the Hajar Mountains on Monday. Rains varying in intensity were reported in the governorates of North Batinah, South Batinah, Dakhiliyah, Dhahirah, North Sharqiyah, South Sharqiyah, Muscat, Dhofar and Wusta.

Liwa recorded the highest rainfall with 61 mm, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources on April 8-9. Khabourah recorded the second highest rainfall of 42 mm, followed by the Wilayat of Amerat with 36 mm.

The Met office forecasts the formation of cumulonimbus clouds to continue over the Hajar Mountains with strong chances of that being extended to the wilayats adjoining the Hajar mountain range. Cloud formation is also expected to extend to the coast of the Sea of Oman. Rains of varying intensities are predicted over the of





EID SHOPPING

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

Festivals are a time for buying new items, new clothes, home utilities and even luxury goods. Many on the shopping list are just 'for the festival', while many others are 'for the future'. Since the beginning of the holy month of Ramadhan people go into shopping mode, whereas the 'Sale' tags in shopping outlets work as catalysts.

Ramadhan is a good time for businessmen of all sorts to come out with lucrative promotions to clear stocks as also to introduce new products because the volume is very high and the word 'Sale' act as a rewarding agent pushing the buyers to buy more than their requirements.

One can see 'Sale' panels pasted everywhere in the marketplace. They easily catch the eyes of Ramadhan customers. No doubt about the prices of many products, which are discounted substantially, but many casual customers fall into the trap of 'Sale' and they end up buying many things for cheap even if they do not need them now, later or even for years.

Buying things for the festival is a necessity, it works as a mood elevator, still one should buy things which are required for the festival or even later, but not for the sake of buying under the influence of promotions being announced by the shopping outlets.

Taking advantage of 'Sale' is not a bad idea but falling into its trap can never be encouraged. Many buyers fall into the trap of these attractive promotions and indulge in buying things beyond their current requirements. "For the future," they say, "because the things were so cheap," without realising the fact that such promotions keep on coming and it is human nature not to be content when it comes to buying when money is there. It is called the 'problem of plenty' in economics. If there is money, it will find a way to be spent, and today's 'mood elevator' can become tomorrow's 'mood dampener' when the buyer realises that the stuff he purchased was not needed after some time.

The best thing to avoid this trap is to sit and make a list of requirements and then hit the market, not just go to the market and start searching for things to buy. Product promotions are designed to attract buyers, so it is best in the interest of the customers to be cautious while shopping, particularly during festivals. The idea is not to be 'miser' but 'wiser' while doing the shopping.

Customers should be careful with consumable goods because they have a shelf life. There are occasions when some business outlets keep their customers in dark while offering the goods on promotion because they have a very short shelf life.

It is advisable to draw a list and decide on a budget before shopping and give time while deciding to buy something. Reading product details, its expiry etc before rushing to the cash counter is necessary. Otherwise, people end up buying many things which they do not need and buy something, the expiry of which is just one day after.

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF 'SALE' IS NOT A BAD IDEA BUT FALLING INTO ITS TRAP CAN NEVER BE ENCOURAGED



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5 dead after shooting attack in downtown Louisville

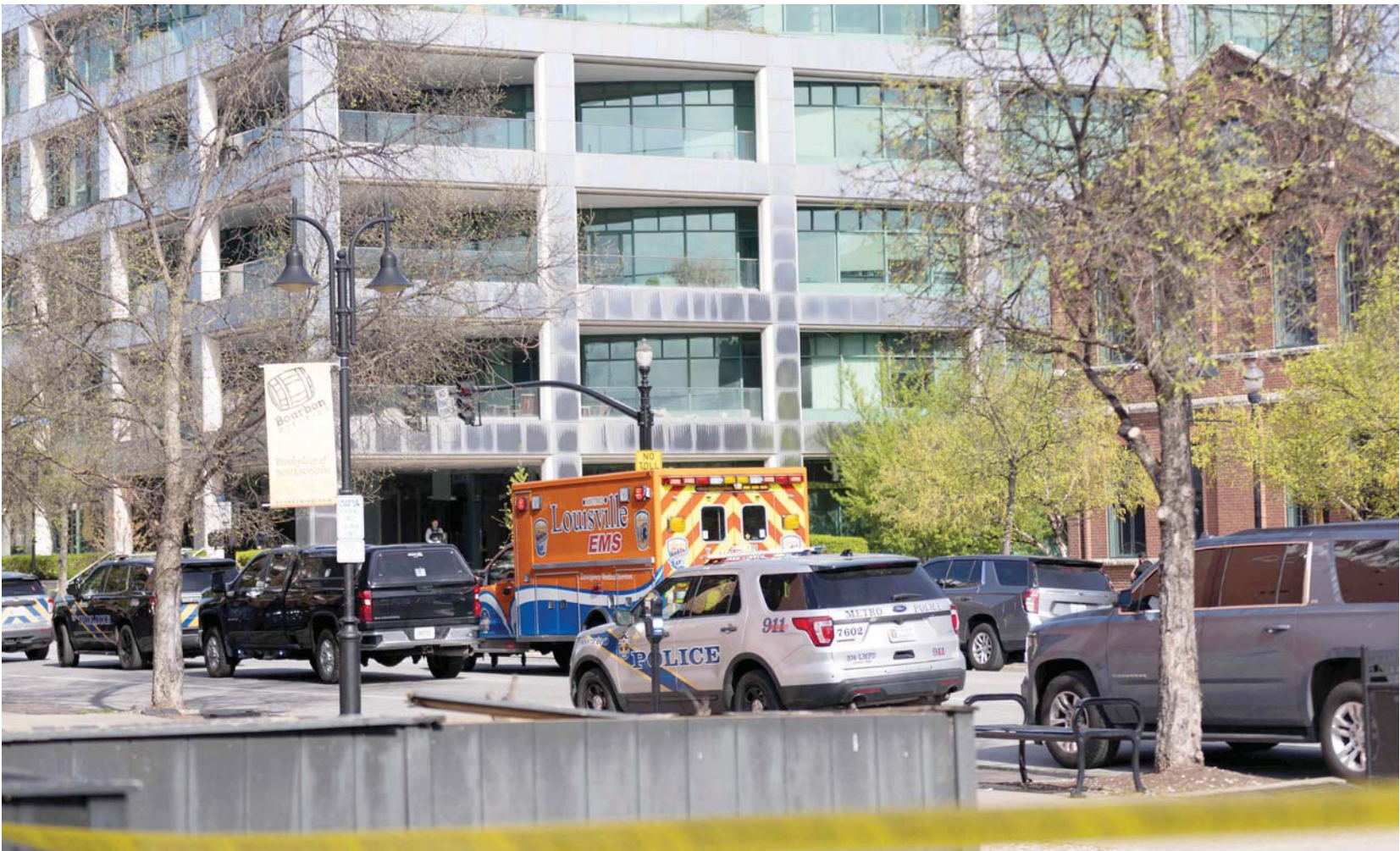
LOUISVILLE: Five people were killed and eight others were wounded in a shooting attack on Monday at a bank in downtown Louisville, Kentucky, the city's police department said.

Shortly after confirming the attack, police said the shooter was dead, without giving further details. It was unclear whether the death toll of five included the shooter, who police described as either a current or former employee of the bank.

Police were still trying to determine whether the shooter shot himself or was shot by police, Paul Humphrey, a Louisville Metro Police Department deputy chief, told reporters.

Police said they responded within minutes to reports of an attacker at about 8:30 am at a branch of the Old National Bank, near Slugger Field baseball stadium in the city's downtown.

At least two police officers were among the eight wounded; two of the wounded, including one of the officers, were in critical condition at a hospital.



Picture shows the area where a shooting took place in downtown Louisville, Kentucky leaving five killed and at least six hospitalised, according to police. – AFP

“We will come together as a community to work to prevent these horrific acts of gun violence from continuing here and around the state,” Craig Greenberg, mayor of the city of 625,000, told reporters at a briefing.

Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear, on the verge of tears, said he knew victims in the attack.

“I have a very close friend that didn't make it today,” he said at the briefing, “and one who's at the hospital that I hope is going to make it through.”

Mass shootings have become recurrent in the United States. So far this year, the nation has experienced 146 mass shootings — using the definition of four or more shot or killed, not including the shooter — according to the Gun Violence Archive, a nonprofit group.

In one of the most recent high-profile incidents, three 9-year-old students and three staff members were killed by a former student at a school in Nashville, Tennessee, on March 27.

— Reuters

Pope prays for ‘gift of peace’

ROME: Pope Francis issued a renewed call for peace to mark the end of the Easter period on Monday.

Following the Regina Caeli (Queen of Heaven) chant on St Peter's Square in Rome, Francis prayed for “the gift of peace for the whole world.”

Several thousand pilgrims gathered to celebrate the second Easter holiday with the 86-year-old head of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Regina Caeli replaces the Angelus normally said on a Sunday up to Pentecost Sunday, which falls this year on May 28. Francis has made use of all the church's occasions this Easter to issue a call for peace at the climax of the Christian calendar.

Around 100,000 faithful were on hand on Easter Sunday to hear the traditional Urbi et Orbi address, when Francis urged peace in Ukraine, praying for both Ukrainians and Russians. — AFP

Turkiye launches its first amphibious assault ship, eyes drone capabilities

ANKARA: Turkiye launched its first amphibious assault ship on Monday, aiming to extend its drone capabilities from land-based to naval operations amid increased regional tensions as war rages in Ukraine on the other side of the Black Sea.

The TCG Anadolu can handle only light aircraft, chiefly helicopters and jets that can take off from shorter runways. It is 232 metres long and 32 metres wide, and can carry some 1,400 personnel — one battalion of soldiers — combat vehicles and support units to operate overseas.

“This vessel will allow us to conduct military and humanitarian operations in every corner of the world, when needed,” President Tayyip Erdogan said at the launch ceremony in Istanbul.

“We see this vessel as a symbol that will consolidate Turkiye's regional leadership position,” he said.

The amphibious assault ship was built in Istanbul's Sedef Shipyard by a Turkish-Spanish consortium, based on the design of Spanish light aircraft carrier Juan Carlos I.

Ankara's original plan was to deploy F-35 B-model fighter jets, which can take off from shorter runways, on its largest warship.

But its plans had to change after the United States removed Turkiye, a Nato ally, from its F-35 programme over Ankara's purchase of Russian S-400



Turkiye's President Tayyip Erdogan on board an amphibious assault ship TCG Anadolu during its launch ceremony in Istanbul. – Reuters

defence systems in 2019. Turkiye then converted TCG Anadolu into a drone carrier.

In addition to helicopters, Turkiye plans to deploy on the new carrier Bayraktar TB3 and Kizilelma unmanned aerial combat vehicles — both under production by Turkish defence firm Baykar — as well as Hurjet light attack aircraft being developed by Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI).

TCG Anadolu will be the world's first amphibious assault ship whose fleet is

made up mostly of armed drones once the plan is implemented.

Turkiye, which has Nato's second largest army, shares a border with conflict-ridden Syria and Iraq and has a long Mediterranean as well as Black Sea coastline.

In the nearly 14-month Ukraine war, Turkiye has positioned itself as an intermediary between Kyiv and Moscow, helping to broker with the United Nations a deal allowing for the safe export of grain from Ukrainian ports via the Black Sea. — Reuters

Lula reaffirms promises in 100th day in office speech

BRASILIA: Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said on Monday he is confident the new fiscal framework will be approved by congress as his government builds a new political chapter in the country's history.

In a speech marking his 100th day in office, Lula said he still thinks interest rates are “too high” and hinder economic growth, but he is sure congress will approve the long-awaited new fiscal framework.

The leftist leader, who is serving his third term as president, also commented on the January 8 riots in which supporters of former President Jair Bolsonaro stormed government buildings in Brasilia seeking to provoke a military coup just days after Lula's inauguration. “The far-right didn't want to leave power,” Lula said. “We're building a new chapter in the history of Brazil, my optimism is not exaggerated.”

Lula said Brazil will soon launch tenders for solar and wind energy and that he will not miss the opportunity to turn Latin America's largest country into a green hydrogen powerhouse.

Meanwhile, Lula da Silva will meet Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in Beijing this week to discuss trade and Ukraine mediation, having overcome the pneumonia that forced him to postpone the trip.

Lula, 77, also hopes to reclaim Brazil's role on the geopolitical stage following a period of isolation under his far-right predecessor, Jair Bolsonaro.

They “will talk about the war in Ukraine,” Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira told reporters, with Lula hoping to promote his proposal for mediated talks to end Russia's invasion of the country. By the time Lula returns home, a group of mediator countries will have been “created,” said Vieira. — Reuters

DECLARATION OF TERMINATION OF A BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP



Dar Altomoh Projects LLC register announce that **Mr. Naveen Thota** holding **Passport No. R4801415 of Indian Nationality**, used to work for us in the Muscat Branch with the profession of Sales and Marketing Manager.

He dose not represents our company from the date of this announcement in any way and he is therefore not authorised to receive any money or carry out any other business on behalf of the company, and the company will not be responsible for this dealing.

US, Cuba migration talks soon

WASHINGTON: The United States and Cuba will hold another round of migration talks on Wednesday, officials said, as the Biden administration braces for the end of Covid-era border restrictions that have blocked Cubans in recent months from crossing into the US from Mexico.

The high-level meeting in Washington will follow one held in Havana in November and comes a year after the Biden administration resumed such conversations after a long hiatus under former President Donald Trump.

The US Embassy in Havana resumed full immigrant visa processing and consular services in January for the first time since 2017 in a bid to stem last year's record-breaking flow of migrants from Cuba north to the United States.

This week's meeting “represents a continuation of our long engagement with Cuba on migration matters as neighbouring states and is limited to the topic of migration,” a US State Department official said on Monday.

“Ensuring safe, orderly, humane, and regular migration

between Cuba and the United States remains a primary interest of the United States, consistent with our interest in fostering family reunification, and promoting greater respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Cuba,” the State Department official said on condition of anonymity.

Cuba's Communist government said it too seeks to encourage legal and orderly migration, but has long blamed the Cold War-era US embargo for strangling the island's economy and encouraging its youth to emigrate.

— Reuters



Tender Number		T-10-2023		Tender Announcement			
“Mwasalat” invites professional firms for the following tender:							
Tender Name		Modification work of MWASALAT office in Salalah					
Project Summary		Renovate MWASALAT reservation office and the scope includes Civil work, MEP work, provision for data network, provision for CCTV, supply and install AC's units and interior work.					
Tender Fee		NIL		Grade & Specialty		Qualified & Specialized Companies in the Field	
Start date for tender document distribution		Last date for tender document distribution		Last date for submission			
Tuesday 11 th April 2023		Wednesday 19 th April 2023		Sunday 30 th April 2023			
- The Tender documents may be shared by email during official working hours between 9:00A.M - 2:00 P.M. - Tenderers are requested to share commercial registration (CR) & business card through email tenders@mwasalat.om and tender number as the subject of email. Tender Document shall be shared by email. - All Tenderers shall submit with their offers a Tender Bond in the amount of not less than one percent (1%) of the Tender Value, valid for (90) days from the date of Tender Submission obtained from a locally registered Bank, drawn in favor of The Chairman of Procurement Committee, Oman National Transport Company SAOC “MWASALAT”. Any bid without tender bond will be rejected. - Waive for Bidders holding RIYADA Card issued by Public Authority for SME Development (RIYADA) - The submission Date / Time shall be on or before the deadline specified in the above table. - Participants should submit their offers in the tender box located in the head- quarter Oman National Transport Company SAOC (MWASALAT) at Ghala, Muscat (Jabal Shams Building 5th floor), Any proposal submitted after the given Date & Time shall be rejected.							
“Mwasalat” Head Quarter, Ghala Tel: +968 1551 P.O.Box: 911 , Al Khuwair, PC: 133, Sultanate of Oman				For more information please send to: tenders@mwasalat.om			



Israeli forces kill Palestinian teen in West Bank raid

JERICHO: Israeli forces killed a Palestinian teenager and injured two other people in the West Bank on Monday, the Palestinian health ministry said, in what the army described as a raid to arrest a “suspect”.

It comes amid surging violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in recent days, coinciding with the fasting month of Ramadhan, Jewish Passover and Easter.

Mohammed Fayeze Balhan, 15, was killed after being shot “with live occupation bullets in the head, chest and abdomen”, the ministry said. An earlier statement said two people were injured by “occupation bullets”.

The Israeli army confirmed its forces were operating in the Aqabat Jaber camp near Jericho, saying soldiers were working “to apprehend a suspect”.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said it had transferred one person to hospital with a bullet wound to the head.

Clashes erupted when the army entered the camp and surrounded several houses, according to Palestinian news agency Wafa.

A Palestinian security official said that five individuals were arrested during the raid.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since the 1967 Six-Day War and hundreds of thousands of Jewish settlers live



An Israeli soldier takes aim during a protest by Palestinians in the village of Beita, south of Nablus. — AFP

in Israeli-approved settlements there, considered illegal under international law.

The Jericho raid came as hundreds of Israelis marched in the northern West Bank, pushing for state approval of an Israeli settler outpost. Several ministers were expected to appear at the march to Eviatar, whose residents agreed to leave in 2021 while officials examined their case.

CLOSED ROADS

Demonstrators of all ages waved Israeli flags as they rallied along closed-off roads, accompanied by a heavy security presence.

Rivka Katzir, a 74-year-old resident of Elkana, another West Bank settlement, said “the one solution for this problem is if we settle this place”.

The rising tension has bought widespread concern and calls for calm from across the region.

On Wednesday, Israeli police stormed the prayer hall of Al-Aqsa mosque, Islam’s third-holiest site, in a pre-dawn raid aimed at dislodging “youths and masked agitators” they said had barricaded themselves inside.

The Israeli army also launched strikes on targets in Syria on Sunday morning, after rockets fired from there landed in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

— AFP

Ukraine seeks visit by India PM Modi, stronger political ties

NEW DELHI: Ukraine’s deputy foreign minister on Monday said Kyiv wanted New Delhi to be more involved in helping resolve its conflict with Russia and has sought a visit by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other top officials.

Emine Dzhaparova said in an interview that Kyiv also expected India to invite Ukrainian officials to participate in G20 events and intensify political dialogue with Kyiv.

India holds the rotating presidency of the Group of 20 this year and hosts a leaders summit in September.

Dzhaparova, who is on a four-day visit to New Delhi, said: “We believe India should be engaged and involved in the Ukraine issue to a great extent”.

“We believe intensification of political dialogue on the highest level is first step towards this big goal. My president is requesting a phone conversation with the Prime Minister. We are looking forward to welcome him in Kyiv



Emine Dzhaparova

one day,” she said.

Speaking to reporters earlier in the day, she said India should be pragmatic in securing its resources, including energy and defence equipment, while warning against dependence on Russia.

India has sought a diplomatic solution to the conflict in Ukraine, while Modi told Russian President Vladimir Putin in September that now is “not an era of war”.

India has also boosted its purchases of Russian oil, taking advantage of the deep discounts

following a European ban on Russian oil imports.

Russia has been India’s main source of arms and defence equipment for decades and it has now displaced Iraq as India’s top crude supplier as well.

“We only think it is crucial to diversify all of the resources, not only energy but also military resources,” Dzhaparova said. “When you are dependent from Russia, they always use this blackmail instrument”.

— Reuters

South Korea to discuss ‘issues raised’ from leaked documents with US

SEOUL: South Korea is aware of news reports about a leak of several classified US military documents and it plans to discuss “issues raised” as a result of the leak with the United States, a South Korean presidential official said on Sunday.

Several classified US military documents have recently been posted on social media offering a partial, month-old snapshot of the war in Ukraine, three US officials said on Friday, adding that Russia or pro-Russian elements were likely behind the leak.

The US Justice Department has said it is investigating the leak.

One of the documents showed details about internal discussions among top South Korean top officials about US pressure on Seoul to help supply weapons to Ukraine, and its policy of not doing so. The document, which does not appear to have a date on it, said that South Korea had agreed to sell artillery shells to help the United States replenish its stockpiles, insisting that the “end



Yoon Suk Yeol

user” should be the US military. But internally, top South Korean officials were worried that the United States would divert them to Ukraine.

The report was based in part on signals intelligence, which suggests the United States had been spying on South Korea, one of its most important allies.

The South Korean presidential official, speaking to reporters, declined to respond to questions about US to confirm any details from the leaked documents.

Asked if South Korea planned

to lodge a protest or demand an explanation from the United States, the official, who declined to be identified, said the government would review precedents and cases involving other countries.

South Korea has signed major deals providing hundreds of tanks, aircraft and other weapons to Nato member Poland. But President Yoon Suk Yeol has said that a South Korean law that forbids supplying weapons to countries engaged in conflict makes it difficult to send arms to Ukraine. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

MANILA

72 drown in accidents since start of month

Seventy-two people have died from drowning in the Philippines since the start of the month, as many Filipinos “got excited” to visit beaches and resorts around the country, especially during the Easter break, police said on Monday.

The death toll, tallied from 67 drowning incidents from April 1 to Easter Sunday, was “quite high”, according to Colonel Jean Fajardo, national police spokeswoman.

“People really got excited to



visit the beautiful beaches and resorts in the country,” she said. “Some of the fatalities were children left unattended, and others pulled each other down and drowned together.” — dpa

QUETTA

Four killed in blast targeting police

Four people were killed and fifteen injured in a bombing targeting a police vehicle in a marketplace in the southwestern Pakistani city of Quetta on Monday, a hospital official said.

“The injured numbers reached fifteen, and four dead,” Wassim Baig, a spokesperson for the Quetta hospital said. He added that the dead included one woman, while two women were injured. Senior police official Shafqat Cheema said that the target was the vehicle of the



acting superintendent of police investigations. He said initial reports showed an improvised explosive device was planted in a motorcycle parked behind the vehicle. — Reuters

MILAN

Migrant boat in Mediterranean supplied with fuel

A merchant ship has supplied fuel and water to a boat with around 400 migrants on board which is in distress between Greece and Malta but Maltese authorities have ordered it not to conduct a rescue, German NGO Sea-Watch International said on Monday.

The vessel, which departed from Tobruk in Libya amid a sharp rise of migrant boats crossing the Mediterranean from North Africa, was reported to be adrift and taking on water by support service Alarm Phone



early on Sunday. Alarm Phone said the boat was in the Maltese Search and Rescue area (SAR).

The people on board faced serious danger struggling with 1.5 metre waves. — Reuters



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In brief

MARSEILLE



TOLL RISES IN FRENCH BUILDING COLLAPSE

Rescue workers on Monday recovered a fourth body from the rubble of a collapsed apartment in France's Marseille, a cabinet minister said, as firefighters raced against the clock to find four people still missing. More than 24 hours after a suspected explosion at the building, where residents reported a strong smell of gas, dozens of civil defence staff and sniffer dogs worked among the debris as a fire still smouldered.

"Four bodies have been found," Housing Minister Olivier Klein said, at the site of the accident. But the deputy mayor of the Mediterranean port city, Yannick Ohanessian, said rescue workers still had hope of finding survivors.

LONDON



ABBA GUITARIST WELLANDER HAS DIED

The long-time guitarist of the Swedish pop band Abba, Lasse Wellander, has died at the age of 70, according to a report.

The musician died on Friday, according to a report in the Swedish newspaper Göteborgs-Posten on Sunday evening, citing family members. Relatives of the guitarist posted on Wellander's Facebook page that the musician had died of cancer in his sleep, surrounded by his loved ones.

He was an outstanding musician, but above all "a wonderful husband, father, brother, uncle and grandfather, and so much more that cannot be put into words," they said in the post.

ROME



BERLUSCONI STEADILY IMPROVING

Italian former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, who has been in hospital for leukaemia and a lung infection, is getting progressively better, doctors said on Monday, expressing "cautious optimism" over his condition.

Berlusconi, a billionaire and larger-than-life figure in Italian politics, has been in intensive care at Milan's San Raffaele Hospital since last Wednesday. "The last 48 hours have seen a progressive and steady improvement in monitored organ function," his doctors said in a bulletin on Monday.

Treatment was producing "the expected results, allowing us to express cautious optimism".

KYIV ALTERS COUNTER-OFFENSIVE PLANS AFTER DOCUMENT LEAK

Ukraine says Russian forces using 'scorched earth' tactics in Bakhmut

KYIV: A senior Ukrainian commander said on Monday that Russian troops were using "scorched earth" tactics in the embattled city of Bakhmut and destroying buildings and positions with air strikes and artillery.

Ukrainian forces have hung on for months in Bakhmut, a small city in eastern Donetsk region, where the fiercest fighting of Moscow's full-scale February 2022 war has killed thousands of soldiers and been dubbed the "meat-grinder".

"The enemy switched to so-called scorched earth tactics from Syria. It is destroying buildings and positions with air strikes and artillery fire," said Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi, commander of Ukraine's ground forces.

But the defence of the city of Bakhmut continued, he said.

Syrskyi, who is overseeing the operation in the east, on Sunday visited front line areas with the fiercest fighting around Bakhmut, Ukraine's Military Media Centre said. "The situation is difficult but controllable," he said.

Ukraine also accused Russia of using "scorched earth" tactics last summer in its assault on Sievierodonetsk, a city in the eastern Luhansk region. Kyiv's forces were forced to withdraw from there in July after a Russian onslaught.

Ukraine has said its defence of Bakhmut is buying time for it to



An armoured military vehicle speeds through Chasiv Yar during heavy fighting at the frontline of Bakhmut and Chasiv Yar, Ukraine, on Monday. — Reuters

build up and reconstitute forces for a much-vaunted spring offensive and that it is inflicting huge losses on Russian forces trying to seize control.

But Russian forces have gained ground on the flanks of Bakhmut in recent weeks, threatening key supply lines for Kyiv's defenders and have also made advances inside the city.

The capture of Bakhmut would be Moscow's first major gain since it took the similarly-sized cities of Sievierodonetsk and neighbouring settlement Lysychansk.

Syrskyi said Russia was bringing in special forces and airborne assault units to help their attack on the city as members of Russia's private Wagner military group had become "exhausted".

Wagner militia fighters have been spearheading the assault on Bakhmut.

Meanwhile, Ukraine has been forced to amend some of its military plans ahead of a much-vaunted counter-offensive due to a leak of classified US documents, CNN reported on Monday citing a source close to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Ukrainian officials said on Friday the allegedly leaked documents contained fictitious information and looked like a Russian disinformation campaign.

US officials are trying to find the source of a leak of classified documents detailing a wide array of topics from Ukraine's air defences to Israel's Mossad spy agency.

Reuters has not independently verified the documents' authenticity.

Asked about the CNN report, presidential aide Mykhailo Podolyak said Ukraine's strategic plans remained unchanged but that more specific tactical plans were always subject to change.

"There are strategic tasks — they are unchangeable," he said.

"But operational and tactical scenarios are constantly refined, based on an assessment of the situation on the battlefield, resource provision, intelligence data on the enemy's resources, etc." he said. "Right now its impossible to reassess plans, because they are only being worked out (now)," he added.

Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of the National Security and Defense Council, said: "We are working on our own plans... The opinion of people who have nothing to do with this do not interest us...The circle of people who possess information is extremely restricted." — Agencies

Battle over Biden labour nominee Julie Su heats up

WASHINGTON: "Biden nominee Julie Su wants to turn the lights off" reads a billboard in West Virginia; another in Montana warns that Su, US President Joe Biden's nominee for labour secretary, will turn the state into California; in Arizona, the message is, "Su's gig could be destroying your gig."

In addition to these, newspaper and digital advertisements will start appearing with more frequency in these states as her confirmation hearing date set for April 20 approaches. The White House and the administration have been touting Su's history of fighting for underpaid workers, while industry groups against her policies have begun to aggressively oppose her.

Su, a civil rights lawyer, former California labour commissioner, head of the state's sprawling labour agency and child of Chinese immigrants, needs at least 50 votes in a Senate where Democrats have a slim 51-49 majority.

Support of all Democrats and Independents is not a given, and several industry officials said they believe Su will have a tough time getting confirmed.

Industry groups are focusing their campaign on Montana, Arizona and West Virginia, as they worry Su would push nationwide policies that are similar to what she oversaw in California where she supported laws such as the one that classified some gig workers as employees, which some businesses claim



Julie Su

impacted their ability to rely on freelancers.

White House spokesperson Emilie Simons said the administration is "currently engaged with a broad coalition of supporters on Julie's nomination, including elected officials, labor leaders, key stakeholders, and business groups."

Simons said the White House has received "outspoken support for her nomination since the announcement was made."

Rachel Tripp, a spokesperson for a coalition of lobby groups representing businesses, freelancers and franchisees — called "Stand Against Su" — which was recently formed to oppose her nomination said they are "working to have senators from across the aisle and from every region understand what's at stake here."

Crucial senators in Montana, West Virginia and Arizona, who voted for Su to become deputy Labour Secretary in 2021, are on the fence about her confirmation for the top job. — Reuters

Pollution choking Thailand's north hits tourism, worries public

CHIANG MAI: High pollution levels in Thailand's northern city of Chiang Mai and surrounding provinces are keeping tourists away and alarming locals, with the government on Monday urging residents to avoid outdoor activities.

For several weeks last month the city was at the top of air quality information platform IQAir's global chart on poor air quality, ahead of Lahore and New Delhi.

Chiang Mai, known for its scenic mountainous views, temples and chic cafés, received 10.8 million visitors in pre-pandemic 2019, but hotel bookings in the city have dropped to 45 per cent occupancy, the Thai Hotel Association Northern Chapter president Phunut Thanalaoponich said on Monday. That is far short of the 80-90 per cent expected ahead of this week's Thai New Year holidays, known as Songkran.

"Its impacted my business... people aren't coming (they) can't see the view," said Sunat Insao, 53, who sells orange juice.

Addressing the deteriorating air quality in the north, Thailand's health ministry urged the public on Monday to avoid outdoor activities and wear masks that can filter particles.

Chang Mai, Thailand's third-biggest city, reached 289 on IQAir's air quality index (AQI) index in March, which measures the level of inhalable fine particles in the air.



A plane descends towards Chiang Mai International Airport amid high levels of air pollution in Chiang Mai on Monday. — AFP

On Monday it had eased to 171, but was still 19 times over the World Health Organization's recommended level.

"You can feel (the dust) in your face... I clean my face, I see the pad and I was like, 'this is really, really dirty,'" said Fernanda Gonzalez, 27, who was visiting from Mexico.

Authorities have blamed a combination of forest fires and crop burning in Thailand and its neighbouring countries.

Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha said last week he was coordinating with Laos and Myanmar to reduce hot spots in the border area to curb transboundary haze.

Chiang Mai resident Pathsharasakon Po, 36, said she was concerned about allergies, or even cancer.

"It's getting worse and worse year by year," Pathsharasakon said. — Reuters

The writer is a Life Coach based in Muscat

Similar to how the sinks in your house are initially clean and

- Water is essential for flushing waste.
- A balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables and fibre is crucial for an optimal system.
- A juice cleanse is incredible for your health.
- Include probiotics (soy, kefir, miso, kimchi) to improve gut health.
- Regular exercise and deep

- Sweating through exercise, from a sauna or steam room does wonders.
- Colon cleansing improves your overall health.
- Dry brushing is great to exfoliate dead cells and promote the growth of new ones.
- Tongue scraping is necessary to

- Have a digital detox and intentionally sit in an allocated area to read, day dream or journal to track your emotions and gain clarity.

- Cleansing also brings about forgiveness and cultivates a sense of gratitude and compassion making you feel more energised, focused and peaceful. What a wonderful way to be.

JOE JACKSON

— AFP

HELENE COOPER, MICHAEL
SCHWIRTZ, THOMAS
GIBBONS-NEFF AND ERIC
NAGOURNEY

The same document assessed that Ukrainian air defences designed



Russian police officers watch military aircraft fly over the Kremlin in Moscow.

PENTAGON OFFICIALS
ARE WORRIED THAT
MOSCOW'S BARRAGE OF
ATTACKS FROM AFAR IS
DRAINING UKRAINE'S
STORES OF THE MISSILES IT
USES TO DEFEND ITSELF

Days after US intelligence documents, some marked “top secret,” were found circulating on social media,

The material may be popping up Whac-a-Mole style on platforms such as Twitter, 4chan and the Telegram messaging app — to say nothing of a Discord channel dedicated to the video game Minecraft — but what is being circulated are photographs of printed briefing reports.

— **New York Times**

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The ‘Green Mountain’ beckons..

The month of April continues to see pleasant weather in Oman with upper air trough bringing rain, wind and cooler temperatures. Almost on daily basis one comes across the Al Hajar Mountains in weather reports.

The mountain range plays a significant role in deciding the weather pattern experienced in the Sultanate of Oman. One of the main reasons being it’s ability to form local clouds. They have always been fascinating whether seeing the images of the mountain ranges in a coffee table book, on screen or looking at them with your eyes because they narrate the geological story of Oman.

Today is different, I am sitting on top of Al Hajr Mountains as this article is being written.

With heavy dark grey clouds with the effect of ‘almost touching’ look casts the Al Jabal Al Akhdhar on a different mood. It was not the usual playful mountain that has showcased reflection of sunny rays, and echoed the wind. And before we knew the raindrops were running up the windshield as we drove against the wind.

At 4.30 pm it was 14 degrees Celsius. So here we were experiencing first hand the weather of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar. This makes Al Jabal Al Akhdhar obviously an attractive summer destination. The rocks of the mountains look different in each season and by the time pink roses are being harvested pomegranates have begun to bloom. Life’s a full circle and nature tells us so often.

Walking between the rose bushes is a treat, but it is not enough just to see it, but it is an interaction with the farmers and picking roses with them that makes it a memorable experience.

Farmers in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar have kept the tradition of making rose water for generations, and what is heartening is to see the youth carrying on the legacy, an ancient art.

Rose water is an integral part of Omani hospitality as it is used in the making of halwa, Omani coffee, and cooking especially while making sweets and beauty products and cosmetics. Today’s generation says it is a treat to



Lakshmi Kothaneth
@lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

FARMERS IN JABAL AL AKHDHAR HAVE KEPT THE TRADITION OF MAKING ROSE WATER FOR GENERATIONS

use the combination of rose water and frankincense water for face. The best part of all of these products made at traditional factories and homes are available at popular tourist places.

In fact, the way from Muscat to the Green Mountain is full of historical landmarks. A place we have read about so much is the first mosque in Oman. And this is Mazin bin Ghadoubah Mosque, located in Samayil, which is on the way to the mountains. As we move on it is Izki that is full of heritage.

Just before taking the road up to the mountain, one can explore Birkat al Moz - the name is catchy and it has a lovely story. Birkat means pool and Moz means bananas. A friend explained the story that goes like this - There was a big pool and the plant that was growing there was a banana plant and there were many because of the water from the pool. The pool - there is not much information about where it was located, but bananas were grown in many farms and were also sold in other villages and the name remained.

Is it not fascinating to see history staring at you. The Samayil’s nature is unique in its own way because of the rainfall it receives. In other words, a terrain that was difficult to access is now easily approachable today as Al Jabal Al Akhdhar has resorts, hotels and fine roads. The step farms of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar were legendary, but today there are also impressive cafes and restaurants that cater to visitors and travellers.

A holiday destination, the Wilayat of Al Jabal al Akhdhar is all set to receive holiday-makers during Eid vacation.

While discussions and plans have been taking shape among families, here is a destination within the country, and there are attractions in its radius to be explored.

But while we plan holidays, families are here enjoying the days of Ramadhan at almost 3,000 metres above sea level. Some preferred watching the sunset to reflect until the call of the prayer, while others just wanted to enjoy the togetherness while breaking the fast. Then again there is that special moment when one realises this too was meant to be.

HARVESTING CHIVE



This aerial photo shows farmers harvesting chive at a field in Taizhou, in China’s eastern Jiangsu province, on Monday. – AFP

Ukraine conflict on Lula’s agenda in delayed China visit

Brazil’s leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva will meet Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in Beijing this week to discuss trade and Ukraine mediation, having overcome the pneumonia that forced him to postpone the trip.

Lula, 77, also hopes to reclaim Brazil’s role on the geopolitical stage following a period of isolation under his far-right predecessor, Jair Bolsonaro. Expected to arrive in China on Tuesday, Lula, who was originally due to visit the Asian powerhouse from March 25-30, will meet Xi on Friday.

They “will talk about the war in Ukraine,” Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira told reporters, with Lula hoping to promote his proposal for mediated talks to end Russia’s war of the country.

By the time Lula returns home, a group of mediator countries will have been “created,” said Vieira.

Lula, who has been president of Brazil twice before, is keen to position the South American giant as a go-between, as he did in his second term, which ended in 2010, during nuclear discussions between Iran and the United States.

However, his diplomatic stock took a hit last year when he came under fire for claiming that Ukrainian President



Ramon Sahmkow

The writer works for AFP

LULA HOPES TO RECLAIM BRAZIL’S ROLE ON THE GEOPOLITICAL STAGE FOLLOWING A PERIOD OF ISOLATION UNDER HIS PREDECESSOR

Volodymyr Zelensky was “as responsible” for the war as his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin.

He has also refused to join Western nations in sending weapons to Ukraine to help in its defence.

And on Thursday, while Lula said that “Putin cannot keep Ukrainian territory,” he qualified that statement by insisting that Zelensky “cannot want everything.”

He also suggested that Kyiv renounce its claim to Crimea, annexed by Moscow in 2014 — words that did not endear Lula to authorities in Ukraine.

“There is no legal, political or moral reason why Ukraine should give up even a centimetre of its land,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Oleg Nikolenko said on Twitter.

“Any mediation efforts to restore peace must be based on respect for the sovereignty and full restoration of Ukraine’s territorial integrity in accordance with the UN Charter,” he said.

China, for its part, has proposed a 12-step resolution to the conflict, based on a ceasefire and dialogue, a plan Xi discussed with Putin during a visit to

Moscow last month.

“Those are basic conditions” for peace, said Vieira, judging Beijing’s proposal as “very positive.”

Ukraine’s Western allies have heavily criticised Xi’s approach as tacitly supporting Moscow’s war.

In a joint statement with French president Emmanuel Macron, who was visiting Beijing, Xi pledged on Friday “to support any effort in favour of a return to peace in Ukraine.”

But Moscow has rejected any “political solution” to the conflict.

And after Lula’s chief adviser Celso Amorim met Putin in Russia last month, the Brazilian diplomat told CNN it would be



Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva is expected to arrive in China on Tuesday.

an “exaggeration” to say that the doors were open for a negotiated peace.

Just over three months into his third term as president, Lula is making his third major foreign trip, having previously visited Argentina and the United States. China is Brazil’s largest trading partner and key to Lula’s ambitions to re-establish the South American giant on the global geopolitical stage.

Officials in Beijing also see Brazil — a leader in the global south — as a linchpin in their strategic and economic plans.

Lula’s original trip was due to put trade at its core, an important topic even if the focus has shifted.

Last week, ahead of his arrival, China hosted a forum for 500 Brazilian and Chinese business people that resulted in the signing of more than 20 cooperation agreements.

One of those was to allow business transactions between the two countries to be carried out in reais and yuan rather than US dollars. Bilateral trade between the two countries reached a record of more than \$150 billion in 2022.

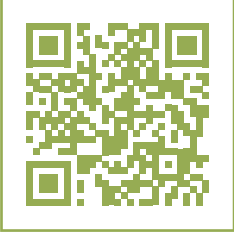
Brazil was also the main destination for Chinese investment in Latin America from 2007 to 2020, worth \$70 billion according to the Brazil-China Business Council. But this trip will be primarily political.

From Beijing, Lula will travel to Shanghai, where his domestic political ally Dilma Rousseff, who succeeded him as president in 2011, recently took over as head of the New Development Bank, also known as the BRICS bank.

During Lula’s last two terms, from 2003-10, Brazil joined Russia, India, China and South Africa in creating the BRICS group of emerging economies. On his way home, Lula will visit the United Arab Emirates.

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Masirah teams dominate in U21 beach volleyball

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 10

Masirah teams in men and women categories dominated in the Youth (U21) Beach Volleyball Championship which concluded in Suhar late on Sunday.

Masirah A team clinched the men's title after they defeated Al Khaleej team 2-0 late on Sunday at the sands court in the Suhar Puplic Park. Masirah's duo of Saud al Mahruqi and Qusai al Balushi blanked their opponents Abdulbasit al Balushi and Mohammed al Tubi 21-18 and 21-17 to lift the first edition title of the tournament.



Masirah B team players took the third place awards as they stunned Seeb 2-1 in the third and fourth play-off. The winners team was represented by Mazin al Shabibi and Ahed al Jabri while Seeb's team comprised of Saleh al Jalbobi and Tamim al Jabri. The first set ended in favour of Masirah 22-20 after tough competition while Seeb equalised in the following set to win it 21-17. In the deciding set, Masirah team pair confirmed their victory by winning the set by 15-9.

QURAYAT CLINCH WOMEN'S TITLE
In the women's category

competitions played in league format, Qurayat A team claimed the trophy and gold medals as they topped the league table order. Masirah B team ended as runners-up while Masirah A team finished in third place. Qurayat B team and Fanja came in the fourth and fifth positions respectively.

After the conclusion of the final match, chief guest Dawood bin Suleiman al Shizawi, Chairman of Suhar club, presented the awards and trophies to the top winners. The final ceremony of the tournament was attended by Eng Ibrahim al Maqbali, Chairman of Oman Volleyball Association (OVA),

along with a number of invitees. The four days event featured participation of 16 teams distributed into four groups as Group A featured Al Seeb, Al Batinah, Al Qaran and Qurayat C teams. Group B comprised Qurayat A, Suhar, Al Suwaiq and Al Kifaah teams. Masirah B headed Group C besides Al Khaleej, Masirah C and Al Kuhwairiah teams. Group D featured Qurayat B, Masirah A, Al Qalaa and Al Shabab teams. Besides that seven more women's teams are taking part in the tournament.

The objective of the tournament, run by the OVA,

was to explore for new faces and youth players who are born from 2003 and above to join the national teams and represent Oman in the external participation.

Northern Batinah city, Suhar, was the hosts for the international world class event represented by Oman Beach Pro Tour Future which was held under organisation of OVA in coordination with FIVB, the world governing body of volleyball in last November. It is expected that OVA will organise another mega volleyball event later this year and the details will be unveiled soon.

Jabeur targets Grand Slam success after Charleston crown

CHARLESTON: Ons Jabeur has set her sights on capturing a first Grand Slam title this year after the world number four beat Belinda Bencic 7-6(6) 6-4 at the Charleston Open on Sunday to win her first trophy of the season.

Jabeur came up short in two major finals in 2022, losing to Elena Rybakina at Wimbledon and Iga Swiatek at the US Open, but the Tunisian is rediscovering her best form again this year after minor knee surgery in February.

Victory against holder Bencic was Jabeur's 38th on clay since the start of the 2020 season - the most by any women's player in that period - and makes the 28-year-old a strong contender for the French Open starting next month.

"I'm glad that I'm finding my rhythm and I hope my body will allow me to play," Jabeur told Tennis Channel, looking ahead to the European claycourt swing.

"I'm excited to go to Stuttgart, Madrid, Rome. Clay is really amazing and I love it. I'm working on a lot of things and it's going my way, so for me: step by step, and I'm going for the Grand Slam this year."

Jabeur, who missed tournaments in Doha and Dubai earlier this year and made early exits in Indian Wells and Miami, said self-belief had helped her rise to the challenge of facing Olympic champion Bencic.

"If you want to do something, believe in it and only you can really manifest it," Jabeur added. "I was doing that, imagining myself holding the trophy."

"I was imagining myself in the photoshoot after, putting the image that I won that title already, and it happened."

"I'll manifest the big trophy sets, the Wimbledon one and other Grand Slams that I want to win." — Reuters



WAWRINKA SEALS COMEBACK VICTORY IN MONTE CARLO

MONTE CARLO: Former champion Stan Wawrinka rolled back the years to outlast Tallon Griekspoor 5-7, 6-3, 6-4 and reach the Monte Carlo Masters second round on Monday while Andy Murray's first appearance in the tournament since 2017 ended in a loss to Alex de Minaur.

Wawrinka looked in danger of falling in his opener for a second straight year after losing a tight opening set, but the 38-year-old found a way back into the match by dominating the second and grabbed an early break in the decider.

Griekspoor beat Wawrinka in their only previous meeting in 2018 and showed plenty of fight to level at 3-3 but surrendered his serve again to allow the Swiss veteran to surge ahead and close out the contest on his sixth matchpoint.

"It was really important to stay calm with myself," said



2014 champion Wawrinka, the oldest man in this year's field. "In the first round you need to find your game. The first match on clay is never easy against a good player. I'm happy to get through. It was important to fight until the end."

Up next for the three-times Grand Slam champion is world number 10 Taylor Fritz.

"He's an amazing player," Wawrinka said of the American. "He's top 10, been winning a lot of matches. Winning a lot of tournaments. He's very dangerous on many surfaces." — Reuters

Markande, Tripathi lead Hyderabad to first win



HYDERABAD, India: Indian spinner Mayank Markande's 4-15 and an unbeaten 74 by Rahul Tripathi gave Sunrisers Hyderabad their first IPL win this season as they thrashed Punjab Kings by eight wickets on Sunday.

Skipper Shikhar Dhawan hit an unbeaten 99 off 66 balls in Punjab's 143-9 after Markande got the key wickets, including big-money signing Sam Curran for 22, in

Hyderabad.

Tripathi led the chase and put on an unbeaten 100-run stand with skipper Aiden Markram (34) after former champions Hyderabad lost their openers, with Harry Brook out for 13. Markram smashed three successive boundaries before Tripathi hit the winning runs as Hyderabad bounced back from their opening two losses.

Hyderabad's bowlers set up the

victory after Bhuvneshwar Kumar struck with the first ball of the match and left-arm quick Marco Jansen followed up with two more strikes. Express bowler Umran Malik also took two wickets, but was hammered for two sixes and a four in his final over by Dhawan.

Markande ruled with his leg spin to mark a memorable debut for Hyderabad.

The left-handed Dhawan

reached his second successive IPL fifty but received little support from the rest of his team.

Punjab fell to 88-9 in 15 overs before Dhawan put on a final-wicket stand of 55 with Mohit Rathee, who faced just two balls.

Dhawan started the final over on 91 but T Natarajan denied the opener a hundred as the batsman fell one short after a six off the final ball. — AFP

Atletico beat Rayo to close in on Real Madrid

BARCELONA: Atletico Madrid cut the gap on second place Real Madrid to just two points with a 2-1 win over 10-man Rayo Vallecano on Sunday in La Liga.

Valencia fell to a damaging 2-1 defeat at Almeria which leaves them in the relegation zone, while nine-man Real Betis lost 2-0 at home against Cadiz, denting their bid for Champions League football.

Defenders Nahuel Molina and Mario Hermoso struck first-half goals two minutes apart to put Atletico into a dominant position at Vallecas.

Rayo had defender Florian Lejeune sent off in the second half for a professional foul on Alvaro Morata, allowing Atletico to stroll, but Fran Garcia's powerful drive gave the hosts some hope in the final stages. Atletico held on to keep up the pressure on their rivals, champions Real Madrid, who lost 3-2 at home against Villarreal on Saturday.

Diego Simeone's side have been in superb form in 2023, unbeaten in their last 12 league games, winning nine of those matches. "The first thing we did was take stock of what we weren't doing well," Hermoso told DAZN, when asked about his side's form.

"We wanted to turn around the situation, which wasn't nice, and we know what Atletico's shirt

means, what it demands."

The Rojiblancos took the lead after a slick break, with Yannick Carrasco and Antoine Griezmann combining well, before the latter played a fine pass to Morata.

The striker nudged the ball on to Molina, racing up on the right, who swept the ball home to net his first goal for the club.

Molina dedicated his strike to team-mate Angel Correa, absent from the squad after his mother died this week, raising the Argentine's No 10 shirt into the air. "We know what 'Angelito' means to us, how hard it must be to go through a moment like this, and the team dedicates this win, with all the love in the world, to his family, to his people," added Hermoso.

Atletico soon grabbed their second with Hermoso heading home from Carrasco's corner for his fourth goal of the season.

Nine-man Real Betis fell to a shock home defeat by Cadiz, leaving Manuel Pellegrini's side sixth in La Liga.

After Villarreal's win on Saturday they leapfrogged Betis, who could not go back ahead of Quique Setien's side as they stumbled in an Andalusian derby.

Vedat Muriqi hit a brace, including a stoppage-time penalty, to rescue Real Mallorca a 3-3 draw at Real Valladolid. — AFP



Atletico Madrid's Spanish midfielder Pablo Barrios (L) fights for the ball with Rayo Vallecano's Argentinian midfielder Oscar Trejo during the Spanish league match between Rayo Vallecano de Madrid and Club Atletico de Madrid at the Vallecas stadium in Madrid. — AFP

Delhi aim to bounce back at home against Mumbai



Its day 12 of this wonderful tournament and haven't we got a complete roller-coaster ride? That match between Gujarat and Kolkata was extremely special and Rinku Singh is suddenly going to have a lot of name and fame on the back of this special innings. Dhawan's one man show 99 and Rahane's blistering knock with surely make a case for them ahead of the youngsters for the ICC World Cup 2023, although, both these seniors will have to continue their form through the IPL. Sad news for Chennai as, Deepak Chahar is going to be out of action for a while for his hamstring concerns, while Ben Stokes is going to take a week to recover from the toe injury. CSK would be glad to have the services of Moeen Ali back by the next game, he was out due to food poisoning.

MI VS DC AT DELHI

- **TEAM INFO:** In the recent times, Delhi have been a certain

thorn for the Mumbai Indians. Out of the last four games between the two, Delhi have managed to bag three of them. This season, Mumbai have lost both their encounters and that's certainly something that they didn't want after an extremely poor IPL 2022. On the other hand, Delhi have been absolutely crushed by their opponents in all of the three games this season. But above all, the intent of Delhi's captain has been under a big question mark, with him playing without any positive intent of trying to win a game. So, both these win-less sides will be looking to get to winning ways with this match and both will be counting on the poor form of the other side to come to an advantage for them.

- **Head-to-Head** — Played — 32; Won by DC — 15; Won by MI — 17
- **DC possible XI** – Prithvi Shaw (Im Pl), David Warner (c), Manish Pandey, Rilee Rossouw, Lalit Yadav, Axar Patel, Rovman Powell, Abhishek Porell, Kuldeep Yadav, Anrich Nortje, Mukesh Kumar, Khaleel Ahmed (Im Pl).
- **MI possible XI** – Rohit Sharma (c), Ishan Kishan (wk),



Suryakumar Yadav, Tilak Verma, Tim David (Im Pl), Cameron Green, Tristian Stubbs, Arshad Khan, Hrithik Shokeen, Piyush Chawla, Jason Behrendorff, Kumar Karthikeya (Im Pl)

- **Pitch & Weather Report** – The pitch at the Arun Jaitley Stadium, also known as Ferozeshah Kotla, is typically slower in nature. However, the boundaries are not large and the outfield is often quick. Therefore, the team batting first will be eager to score around 170 runs and challenge the chasing side. Spin bowlers may also benefit from

the pitch's slower nature. Delhi is just starting to get hot with temperatures around 37-degree Celsius, scattered clouds and with a humidity of 19%, it will be good conditions for a good game of cricket.

- **Match Prediction** – Both these teams are in a situation, where the panic button is either pressed or about to be pressed. One advantage that Mumbai has is that, they have already gone through such negative phases previously and have also managed to come out of it on multiple occasions. Rohit Sharma has also looked

hungry and he will do everything possible to get back to winning ways. Hence, even though my heart says Delhi, I am going to be picking Mumbai to win.

FAN COMMENTS

"I personally feel for Delhi this season. Pant's accident has left a big gap in the team and they haven't been able to fill it. But now its time that, they play for Pant and make all their fans happy. Let's do it for Pant this season!" – Dileepa Srilal Wanasinghe, 42, Marketing Executive/cricketer, Srilanka.

"Your column is concise and yet comprehensive. For the upcoming matches – no need to read anything else. Love the fan comments section too. Thanks Pranav!" – Shabbir Boxwala, 62, Businessman, Indian.

"Rohit Sharma is a legend and he needs to regroup himself and come back strong. Swinging the bat is Ishan Kishan's job. Rohit needs to play there for at least 15 overs and get a knock of 65 or 70 to his name at the least and automatically the team will do good. – Jibran Yousuf, 37, Managing Director (IT Works

LLC), Pakistani.

"I have been a big fan of Mumbai Indians since the start, but ever since their talents have got distributed to other teams due to auctions, their back has broken. Injuries has also been a big matter of concern for them. But this gives a chance to the young and new talents to make the most of this opportunity and shine bright. Common, wake up Mumbai Indians!!" – Hussain al Lawati, 38, Ramp Offices/Ex-Oman junior national cricketer, Omani.

"There is no better feeling than supporting the underdogs and then when they win. Delhi has been way behind, but they have the resources. All they need to do is to regroup and come back strong. I love Delhi the UNDERDOGS. – Rafiq Mohd, 39, Wifi Technician, Ex-Oman junior cricket team captain, Omani.

"IPL is helping further promote cricket in Oman as a popular sport. We should be playing it more in school. Wish few IPL matches could come to Oman as well. Howzaaaaaaat!" – Rhys & Dylan Williams, Students Royal Flight School, 9 & 11 years, British.

Spain’s Rahm follows Ballesteros with Masters glory

AUGUSTA, UNITED STATES: Jon Rahm was nearly in tears after winning an emotional triumph at the Masters on Sunday, what would have been the 66th birthday of his idol Seve Ballesteros.

Rahm overcame a four-stroke deficit at the start of a marathon 40-hole final day at Augusta National to defeat Americans Brooks Koepka and Phil Mickelson by four shots for his second major title, a victory that returns him to world number one.

“This one was for Seve,” Rahm said. “He was up there helping, and help he did.”

The 28-year-old Spaniard said he felt bolstered by the spirit of the late Ballesteros, who won his second Masters title 40 years ago.

“For me to get it done on the 40th anniversary of his win, his birthday, on Easter Sunday, it’s incredibly meaningful,” Rahm said.

Rahm achieved what he called a “true honour” in becoming the fourth Spaniard to grab the green jacket after Sergio Garcia, Jose Maria Olazabal and Ballesteros, who died of brain cancer in 2011 at age 54.

“Rest in peace Seve,” Rahm said to close his victory ceremony.

Rahm won the green jacket and took a record top prize of \$3.24 million from a record \$18 million purse.

Olazabal greeted Rahm with an emotional embrace just off the 18th green moments after the triumph was complete.

“He said he hopes it’s the first of many more,” Rahm said. “We both mentioned something about Seve, and if he had given us 10 more seconds, I think we would have both ended up crying.”

Rahm’s methodical precision shotmaking down the bogey-free back nine delivered the triumph, a contrast to his emotional mood after the victory.

“I might have looked calm, but I was definitely nervous out there,” Rahm said. “I never panicked. I felt comfortable with my game. I never got frustrated. I never felt like anything was out of control. But there was tension out there.”

Rahm rescued a poor shot off



Spain’s Jon Rahm celebrates with his green jacket and the trophy after winning The Masters. – REUTERS

the 18th tee for a closing par in much the same manner Ballesteros was known for doing.

“To finish it off the way I did — an unusual par, very much a Seve par — it was in a non-purposeful way a testament to him,” Rahm said. “He was pulling for me.”

Rahm held firm with a final-round three-under par 69 to finish on 12-under par 276 with four-time major winner Koepka and six-time major winner Mickelson sharing second on 280 and fellow Americans Jordan Spieth, Patrick Reed and Russell Henley on 281.

Rahm, who also won the 2021 US Open, became the first European golfer to own that title and a Masters.

“To be the first to do something like that, it’s a very humbling feeling,” Rahm said.

Rahm, who won three prior

MASTERS FINAL SCORES (PAR 72):

276 - Jon Rahm (ESP) 65-69-73-69
280 - Phil Mickelson (USA) 71-69-75-65, Brooks Koepka (USA) 65-67-73-75
281 - Jordan Spieth (USA) 69-70-76-66, Russell Henley (USA) 73-67-71-70, Patrick Reed (USA) 71-70-72-68
282 - Cameron Young (USA) 67-72-75-68, Viktor Hovland (NOR) 65-73-70-74
283 - Sahith Theegala (USA) 73-70-73-67
284 - Scottie Scheffler (USA) 68-75-71-70, Xander Schauffele (USA) 68-74-71-71, Collin Morikawa (USA) 69-69-74-72, Matthew Fitzpatrick (ENG) 70-72-72-70
285 - Gary Woodland (USA) 68-72-73-72, Patrick Cantlay (USA) 71-71-68-75
286 - Sam Bennett (USA) 68-68-76-74, Hideki Matsuyama (JPN) 71-70-70-75, Im Sung-Jae (KOR) 71-76-67-72, Joohyung Kim (KOR) 70-72-74-70, Joaquin Niemann (CHI) 71-69-74-72, Shane Lowry (IRL) 68-72-73-73, Justin Rose (ENG) 69-71-73-73
287 - Lee Kyung-Hoon (KOR) 74-67-74-72, Chris Kirk (USA) 70-74-72-71, Keegan Bradley (USA) 70-72-74-71
288 - Tony Finau (USA) 69-74-73-72, Scott Stallings (USA) 70-77-69-72, Ryan Fox (NZL) 70-71-74-73
289 - Harold Varner III (USA) 72-71-76-70, Kim Si-Woo (KOR) 73-72-72-72, Mackenzie Hughes (CAN) 76-69-74-70, Sam Burns (USA) 68-71-78-72
291 - Tommy Fleetwood (ENG) 72-71-74-74
292 - Tyrrell Hatton (ENG) 71-73-72-76, Zach Johnson (USA) 75-70-74-73, Talor Gooch (USA) 72-74-73-73, Cameron Smith (AUS) 70-72-75-75, JT Poston (USA) 74-72-76-70
293 - Taylor Moore (USA) 73-72-70-78, Abraham Ancer (MEX) 72-71-74-76, Adam Scott (AUS) 68-74-77-74, Jason Day (AUS) 67-72-74-80
294 - Guillermo Pereira (CHI) 74-70-77-73, Harris English (USA) 71-71-77-75, Max Homa (USA) 71-73-72-78
295 - Seamus Power (IRL) 73-72-73-77, Sepp Straka (AUT) 70-73-74-78
296 - Thomas Pieters (BEL) 74-73-72-77, Dustin Johnson (USA) 71-72-78-75
297 - Fred Couples (USA) 71-74-76-76, Charl Schwartzel (RSA) 74-73-73-77
300 - Billy Horschel (USA) 73-74-74-79
302 - Keith Mitchell (USA) 75-71-77-79

PGA Tour titles this year, overtook 2022 Masters champion Scottie Scheffler atop the rankings after the American shared 10th on 284.

Koepka, whose lead was trimmed from four shots to two just after the third-round restart on Sunday morning, fired a closing 75. He surrendered the lead to Rahm with a bogey at the sixth — part of a 6-over 19-hole stretch — and never recovered.

“Some days you have it, some days you don’t, and today wasn’t one of those,” Koepka said. “Tried to give it a run there at the end, but just wasn’t good enough.”

Rahm’s five-foot birdie at the par-5 13th, four-foot birdie at 14 and four closing pars foiled 52-year-old Mickelson’s bid to

break his own mark as the oldest major champion.

Mickelson encouraged Three-time Masters champion Mickelson birdied five of the last seven holes to shoot 65, the lowest Masters round ever for a player over 50.

“Unfortunately it wasn’t enough, but it was really a lot of fun for me to play at this level again,” said Mickelson. “It’s encouraging for me going forward the rest of the year.”

He had a chance to match the greatest last-round comeback in major history — Paul Lawrie’s 1999 British Open rally from 10 adrift.

But the US left-hander settled for being the oldest player to finish in the top-five at a Masters. — AFP



Liverpool’s Ibrahima Konate shoots at goal using his chest before Arsenal’s Aaron Ramsdale makes a save. – REUTERS



Liverpool’s Roberto Firmino scores their second goal. – REUTERS

Arsenal show Premier League title strain

LIVERPOOL: Arsenal’s failure to end their Anfield hoodoo by throwing away a 2-0 lead to draw 2-2 away to Liverpool on Sunday has opened the door for Manchester City to snatch the Premier League title away from the Gunners.

Mikel Arteta’s men still lead by six points at the top of the table, but for the first time in nearly two months City have the destiny of the title back in their own hands.

City have nine league games remaining to Arsenal’s eight and home advantage when the two sides meet at the Etihad on April 26. Since losing to City in mid-February, Arsenal have belied their relative lack of experience in a title tussle. A run of seven consecutive league victories contained the mixture of late winners and routine wins sprinkled with dazzling football that champions are made of. However, they finally came unstuck when put under the pressure of an Anfield crowd baying for blood after a difficult season for Liverpool.

Arteta warned ahead of the

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS ON SUNDAY:

Leeds 1 (Bamford 21) Crystal Palace 5 (Guehi 45, Ayew 53, 77, Eze 55, Edouard 69)

Liverpool 2 (Salah 42, Firmino 87) Arsenal 2 (Martinelli 8, Jesus 28)

PLAYED SATURDAY

Aston Villa 2 (Traore 48, Watkins 90+5) Nottingham Forest 0

Brentford 1 (Toney 45-pen) Newcastle 2 (Raya 54-og, Isak 61)

Fulham 0 West Ham 1 (Reed 23-og)

Leicester 0 Bournemouth 1 (Billing 40)

Manchester United 2 (McTominay 36, Martial 71) Everton 0

Southampton 1 (Mara 72) Manchester City 4 (Haaland 45, 68, Grealish 58, Alvarez 75-pen)

Tottenham 2 (Son 10, Kane 79) Brighton 1 (Dunk 34)

Wolves 1 (Nunes 32) Chelsea 0

MANCHESTER UNITED

game he expected to face a “jungle” of an atmosphere at a stadium where Arsenal have still not won in the league since their manager was patrolling the midfield in 2012.

Yet for 35 minutes, the visitors showed why Liverpool’s league position of eighth in the table does not lie.

Arsenal scored twice through Gabriel Martinelli and Gabriel Jesus and could have had more but for wayward finishing by Jesus and a fine save from Alisson Becker to deny Oleksandr Zinchenko.

“We started the game exceptionally well, dominated it, and took the game where we wanted,” said Arteta.

“Scored the first one, and continued to play the way we wanted. We scored the second one and that was a moment to kill the game. And yet, before half-time, we gave them hope.”

Mohamed Salah’s strike just before the break flipped the momentum of the game and despite the Egyptian then missing a penalty early in the second-half,

Arsenal were incapable of turning the tide.

Wave upon wave of Liverpool attack after the break was finally rewarded when Roberto Firmino headed in three minutes from time.

The drama did not end there as Aaron Ramsdale produced miracles in the Arsenal goal just to salvage a point.

“We gave every single ball away, especially in very dangerous areas when you allow open spaces in big transition moments against the best team in the world doing that,” added Arteta.

“When that happens, it’s chaos. It’s a lot of balls in your box, it’s difficult to get out of those situations and then you have to suffer.”

Arsenal’s second-half retreat does not bode well for more tough tests to come on the road in the coming weeks.

As well as their trip to City, Arsenal also have to travel to third-placed Newcastle.

Avoid defeat at the Etihad in 17 days’ time and the title is very much still Arsenal’s to lose. — AFP



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OIA-backed National Pharma receives USFDA certification



HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, APRIL 10

Oman Investment Authority (OIA) has announced that its subsidiary, National Pharmaceutical Industries Company (NPI), has received the prestigious United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) certification.

Chairman of NPI, Dr Waleed al Zadjali, shared the following in a statement: “Over the past few years, NPI has been expanding its production capacities, adding new product offerings, developing newer markets, and constantly upgrading its quality management system and partnering with various multinationals. This USFDA approval is a result of the overall strategic thrust of the company.”

The certification, which was received in January this year, will allow the company, which currently holds a portfolio of over 150 medications, to enter the US market, in addition to positioning the Sultanate of Oman as a “world-class, reliable drug manufacturer and supplier”.

The company has previously received the European Union’s Good Manufacturing Practice accreditation from the Europe Medicinal Authority and product approvals from the United Kingdom’s Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.

The company’s products are currently sold in over 60 countries worldwide.

NPI was first established in 2002. It currently operates four plants, two in the Rusayl Industrial City in Oman, one in the United Arab Emirates and another in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The company has an annual production capacity of 1.5 billion tablets, 100 million pill boxes, 20 million syrups and 400 million capsules.

Japanese firms to set up low-carbon iron metallics project in Oman

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 10

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Kobe Steel, a leading Japanese steelmaker, and Mitsui & Co, Ltd, a global trading investment company, to develop a low CO2 iron metallics project in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

At the same time, Kobe Steel and Mitsui signed a land reservation agreement with Port of Duqm Company and inked another MoU with the Centralised Utilities Company (Marafiq), to supply the project with power and water.

The MoUs were signed by Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman — OPAZ, Masahiro Motoyuki, Executive Officer and Head of Engineering Business at Kobe Steel, and Tetsuya Fukuda, Executive Managing Officer and Chief Operating Officer of Mineral and Metal Resources Business Unit at Mitsui & Co.

The land reservation agreement was signed by Reggy Vermeulen, CEO — Duqm Port, while the MoU with Marafiq was signed by Eng Abdullah al Hashimi, Managing Director of Marafiq.

The event was attended by Ibtisam bint Ahmed al Faroojiyah, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion, Jota Yamamoto, Ambassador of Japan in Muscat, representatives of companies and other dignitaries.

The project is expected to




The project is a great addition to the steelmaking industry in the Sultanate of Oman, as well as it will enhance In-Country Value (ICV) by supporting local Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and by offering job openings

DR ALI AL SUNAIDY
Chairman, OPAZ

produce five million tonnes of Direct Reduced Iron (DRI) annually through the Midrex Process.

By using a technically and commercially proven production method, Kobe Steel and Mitsui aim to provide a near-term decarbonisation

solution to the steelmaking industry.

In the long run, the project will aim for further decarbonisation through measures such as replacement of natural gas with hydrogen and carbon capture, utilisation and storage, with a goal to expand production capacity as well.

Further, Kobe Steel and Mitsui will conduct the detailed business study, with an aim to commence low CO2 iron metallics production by 2027. The product will be supplied to businesses in Asian markets including Kobe Steel and other global markets such as Europe.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman — OPAZ, stated: “Bringing this unique project to the Special Economic Zone at Duqm marks a valuable addition to the already under development list of remarkable international metal and mineral projects and green energy projects in the Zone and will attract other related and supporting industries and businesses.”

Dr Al Sunaidy added: “The project is a great addition to the steelmaking industry in the Sultanate of Oman, as well as it will enhance In-Country Value (ICV) by supporting local Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and by offering job openings.”

Tetsuya Fukuda, Chief Operating Officer of Mineral and Metal Resources Business Unit at Mitsui, said: “Oman is a country rich in natural gas reserves necessary for producing DRI and is also one of the globally outstanding locations for renewable energy, making it a highly suitable area for competitive green hydrogen.

Mitsui also has a trusting relationship with the Sultanate of Oman through existing businesses including oil and gas upstream investments, LNG projects, and IPP businesses.”

12 per cent rise in public revenues during Jan-Feb 2023

MUSCAT: The state’s public revenue by the end of February 2023 amounted to RO 2.148 billion, which was up 12 per cent compared to revenue of RO 1.918 billion registered over the same period in 2022, according to the Fiscal Performance bulletin of the Ministry of Finance.

This is mainly attributed to an increase in oil and gas revenues, representing 78 per cent of total public revenue, and an increase of current revenue by 51 per cent.

Net oil revenue as of February-end 2023 amounted to RO 1.153 billion, up by 5 per cent compared to RO 1.094 billion achieved over the same period in 2022.

This is driven by higher oil prices of \$86 per barrel, as well as an increase in oil production to 1,064,000 barrels per day. Furthermore, gas revenue increased to RO 521 million, up



by 2 per cent when compared to the same period in 2022.

Current revenue at the end of February 2023 increased by RO 160 million, amounting to RO 471 million compared to RO 311 million registered over the same period in 2022.

Public spending at the end of February 2023, amounted to RO 1,776 million, up by RO 68 million (or 4 per cent) when compared to the same period in 2022. This is mainly due to an increase in current expenditure and contributions and other

expenses by RO 108 million, while gas purchase and transport expenditure declined by RO 132 million as a result of transferring such expenditure to the Integrated Gas Company.

Development expenditure of ministries and government units

amounted to RO 50 million, representing 6 per cent of total development spending, i.e. RO 900 million, allocated for 2023.

Current expenditure of civil ministries at the end of February 2023 amounted to RO 643 million, up by RO 32 million, compared to RO 611 million registered over the same period in 2022.

Total contributions and other expenses at the end of February 2023 amounted to RO 133 million, up by 133 per cent, compared to RO 57 million registered over the same period in 2022.

Oil products subsidy and water sector subsidy amounted to RO 47 million and RO 17 million, respectively, by the end of February 2023.

Additionally, an amount of RO 66 million was transferred to

future debt obligations budget-item. At the end of February 2023, the budget achieved a surplus of RO 372 million compared to a surplus of RO 210 million registered over the same period in 2022.

During the first quarter of 2023, the government repaid RO 1.1 billion against public debt, reducing the total government debt to RO 16.6 billion at the end of March 2023.

Moreover, the most significant results of the Medium Term Fiscal Plan 2021-2024 (MTFP) include reducing the fiscal breakeven oil price to \$68 per barrel, increasing non-hydrocarbon revenue, reducing public debt, improving Oman’s credit ratings, developing social protection system and restructuring pension funds, as well as other direct and indirect results. — ONA

Bank Muscat extends support to Fak Kurba to resolve 211 humanitarian cases

MUSCAT: In line with its pioneering role in Corporate Social Responsibility and community service, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced its support for the Fak Kurba initiative, organised by the Omani Lawyers Association in coordination with the Ministry of Social Development and the Supreme Judicial Council.

Bank Muscat is keen to extend its support to this important initiative so as to contribute in reuniting citizens with their families on the occasion of Eid al Fitr. For this year, the bank supported 211 citizens who were convicted for failing to clear financial obligations.

Bank Muscat is participating for the 6th consecutive year to support the Fak Kurba initiative, which works under the motto, "Because we believe that people



deserve a second chance." The bank has helped secure the release of 1,297 cases till date. The Fak Kurba initiative is implemented through the voluntary efforts of the Omani Lawyers Association.

The initiative has contributed to resolving many cases and succeeded in bringing joy and happiness to many Omani families. It aims to enhance awareness of

the importance of community bonding and it is working since its start to transform this initiative into a sustainable project that runs throughout the year.

On this occasion, Dr Mohammed bin Ibrahim al Zadjali, the supervisor of Fak Kurba, expressed his happiness to start the 10th edition of the Fak Kurba initiative for this year, which was launched recently under the

auspices of Sayyid Mohammed bin Sultan al Busaidy, Chairman for the Supreme Judicial Council. He expressed his happiness as well for the continuous support Bank Muscat has extended to this initiative.

He said: "The bank has contributed this year to resolve 211 cases. The support of individuals and institutions is an essential pillar for the continuity of this noble initiative. This cooperation confirms the values of solidarity and cooperation to help those in need and relieve their distress. I would like to extend my appreciation to all contributors, who proved their eagerness to participate in this cause year after year."

Hamza bin Abbas al Ajmi, Deputy General Manager – Credit, Bank Muscat, expressed his thanks and appreciation to the Omani

Lawyers Association and all others involved with the project.

He said: "Bank Muscat pays great attention to participating and implementing different CSR initiatives. The Fak Kurba initiative is an important programme that extends help to reunite many citizens around the Sultanate of Oman with their families during the Holy Month.

We are pleased to participate in Fak Kurba for the 6th consecutive year. The bank has helped 1,297 cases till date and it will continue supporting such initiatives and programmes, for the greater good of the community. Bank Muscat is proud to be a leading institution in the field of social responsibility in the Sultanate of Oman and will continue to support the community in different endeavours. We wish all success to this initiative and the Oman Lawyers Association."

With EMI as low as RO 71, GMW's Wingle 7 pickup is an absolute steal this Ramadan



MUSCAT: Great Wall Motor's flagship pickup truck, Wingle 7, has never had it so good since it made its debut in Oman a couple of years ago.

With its uniquely striking design and powerful driveline, this powerhouse from the Haval lineup of China's biggest automaker is rapidly gaining traction in the domestic market, more so during Ramadan as customers cash in on an unmatched package of pricing offers and benefits.

For the duration of the Holy Month, EMIs on the Wingle 7 start at an unbeatable RO 71.

Bundled with this fabulous offer are the following exciting freebies: Insurance for the first year; Registration for the first year, and 50,000 km service warranty. To top it all, customers receive window tinting from the renowned 3M brand packaged with this incredible offer.

All told, these benefits represent a huge bargain on the Wingle 7, given its reputation as a workhorse, as well as a multi-tasker. Although a pickup truck in its categorisation, this versatile product from Haval can be easily adapted for family travel, urban transportation and various other purposes.

Powered by a 2.4L 4-cylinder petrol engine, the Wingle 7 comes in a 4-door configuration that is impressive in its outward demeanour as it is muscular in its performance – both on-road and off.

Exterior dimensions - 539.5cm length, 180cm width, 176cm height, 335cm wheelbase, and a weight of 2885kg – attest to the Wingle 7's imposing presence. Also unmistakable are the Wingle 7's outsized front bumper, enlarged hexagonal shaped grille and different headlights with integrated daytime running lights on the LED-matrix.

The sides feature 16-inch wheels, side steps, body-coloured door handles, and body-coloured side mirrors with turn signals. The rear is equally striking with LED taillights, spare tyre, cargo bed access, and exhaust system.

Available in a 4x4 configuration, Haval's flagship pickup truck features a 2.4L (2378cc) inline 4-cylinder petrol engine, offering a power output of 148hp (110kW) @5000-5500rpm, and max torque of 220Nm@4000-4400rpm.

OTE Group is the exclusive dealer for the diverse product line-up of vehicles from Great Wall Motor in the Sultanate of Oman. Backed by a nationwide service network, OTE Group offers excellent sales and after-sales service support on par with global standards. For more information please contact 800-50004.

Kalyan Jewellers celebrates Akshaya Tritiya festival with mega giveaways

MUSCAT: Kalyan Jewellers, one of the most trusted and leading jewellery brands, has announced the commencement of its Akshaya Tritiya celebrations with exciting offers for customers across the country.

To mark the auspicious occasion of Akshaya Tritiya, Kalyan Jewellers is providing customers with appealing discounts and valuable giveaways on their jewellery purchases.

With these one-of-its-kind offers, Kalyan Jewellers aims to ensure that customers get maximum value on their jewellery purchases, across categories – from gold and diamonds to uncut and precious stone jewellery.

Customers making gold jewellery purchases worth RO 500 will receive a ½ gramme gold coin, whereas those who purchase precious/uncut



jewellery worth RO 500 will get a 1-gramme gold coin. On purchase of diamond jewellery worth RO 500, customers will be rewarded with a 2-gramme gold coin.

These bumper offers are valid until May 30, 2023 across showrooms in Oman.

Talking about Akshaya Tritiya Offer announcement, Ramesh Kalyanaraman, Executive Director of Kalyan Jewellers, said, "Over the years, we have taken significant strides and accomplished major achievements towards creating a comprehensive ecosystem that elevates the overall customer shopping experience.

As we kick start our 2023 Akshaya Tritiya campaign, our aim is to ensure that patrons receive highest possible benefit from their jewellery purchases.

Our commitment to delivering the finest shopping experience to our valued customers remains steadfast, and we will always uphold the company's fundamental principles of trust and transparency in the future."

The jewellery retailed at Kalyan Jewellers goes through multiple purity tests and patrons also receive the Kalyan Jewellers 4-Level Assurance Certificate which guarantees purity, free lifetime maintenance of ornaments, detailed product information and transparent exchange and buy-back policies.

The certification is part of the brand's commitment to offering the very best to its loyalists.

Lincoln Navigator with exclusive wish list benefits



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

The Lincoln Navigator takes luxury to the next level with space, features, technology and more. The SUV that was pioneered the concept of large SUV for large families has always been a popular choice for many.

The Lincoln Navigator is powered with a twin-turbo V6, 3.5L engine with auto start-stop technology, that

produces 440 horsepower delivered through a 10-speed automatic transmission with SelectShift paddle activation. The Navigator has a bold look highlighted by adaptive pixel projector LED headlamps with signature lighting, predictive curve lighting and sign-based lighting.

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

Bank Nizwa hosts second edition of 'Nibras'

MUSCAT: Bank Nizwa, the leading Islamic bank in Oman, successfully held the second edition of its Nibras Programme at Rozna Restaurant. The event featured Nasser bin Khamis bin Ali al Jashmi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Finance and Supervisor of the National Programme for Fiscal Balance as the chief guest.

The evening was initiated by Shaikh Khalid al Khalili, Chairman of Bank Nizwa, with the aim of engaging with the bank's key stakeholders and positioning Bank Nizwa as a pioneer in Islamic banking.

This unique initiative provided a platform for Bank Nizwa to showcase its innovative products and services, whilst also allowing participants to engage with senior executives and experts in the field of Islamic finance.

The panel discussion, chaired by Bank Nizwa's Chairman



and featuring the chief guest, was a truly thought-provoking conversation. The conversation was particularly enriched by the insights shared by His Excellency, who spoke candidly about his own career and experience in the banking sector in Oman.

The challenges he faced during his academic and professional journey were also addressed, adding depth and nuance to the discussion. The conversation also

delted into the guest's current position and how he manages it. To gain a better understanding of his journey, the discussion looked into his childhood memories and characteristics.

Furthermore, the panellists focused on Oman's financial balance plan, which is to redirect the financial surplus towards paying off the financial deficit and revitalising various economic sectors. They emphasised

the importance of economic diversification and the strategies developed by Oman to promote financial growth and direct it towards sustainable development.

Additionally, the national programme for financial sustainability and the development of the financial sector were also addressed during the conversation, highlighting the initiative's main focuses, paths and potentials as well as the phases

and timeline adopted.

Shaikh Khalid al Khalili stated, "Bank Nizwa is regarded as one of the prominent financial institutions in the sector, and we are deeply committed to engaging in the dialogue of significant financial matters that dominate the field."

"As the global economy continues to evolve, we recognise that there is an increasing demand for ethical and sustainable financial solutions. Islamic finance, which emphasises principles such as social justice, fairness and transparency, is well-positioned to meet this demand.

Bank Nizwa is committed to customer-centricity and innovation and seeks to set the benchmark for Islamic banking in Oman. By promoting monetary practices that adhere to Islamic morals and transparency, the bank aims to foster a culture of financial inclusion."



Omani two-way trade soars to RO 40 billion in value

QASIM AL MAASHANI

MUSCAT, APRIL 10

The Sultanate of Oman's trade (imports and exports) with the rest of the world has surged 41 per cent to RO 40.117 billion in value as of December 31, 2022, which includes total merchandise exports worth RO 25.255 billion, according to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

Sharing details about the ministry's performance in 2022, officials pointed out that the contribution of key economic sectors, including services to the GDP grew by 9.7 per cent (at current prices) during 2022.

Moreover, the manufacturing



sector's contribution to the GDP (at current prices) stood at RO 3.511 billion as of September 30,

2022, with the industrial activity growth rate reaching around 28.6 per cent.

Transactions processed through the 'Invest Easy' soared to 989,960 transactions during

2022, representing a 23.1 per cent increase over 2021. Commercial registrations reached 393,021, which was up 15.3 per cent compared to 341,970 commercial registrations in 2021.

Applications for investor residence cards totalled 1,600 cards as of March 2023.

Meanwhile, 48 new initiatives have been unveiled for 2023 in the commercial and industrial sectors, competition protection, anti-monopoly, services and investment promotion, specifications and standards, including the development and approval of a trust mark for electronic stores in the Sultanate of Oman, the development of digitisation of

industrial licenses in the "Invest Easy" portal, and the project to upgrade factories to industrial revolution technologies.

Fourth, working to launch 50 new industrial investment opportunities, and other initiatives.

The initiatives also include applying the in-country value added to the manufacturing industries (the second phase), developing the Omani quality mark, and developing the matching system in the markets of the Sultanate of Oman.

Investor residence, business card preparation, in addition to developing a general framework for an overall index of competition in the Sultanate of Oman.

Labour Ministry to fund training of recruits for SME jobs

QASIM AL MAASHANI

MUSCAT, APRIL 10

In a bid to bolster the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) segment in the Sultanate of Oman, the Ministry of Labour has announced to fund a training initiative aimed at developing the country's workforce.

As part of the initiative, the ministry will cover the monthly training grant for trainees, enabling SMEs to take on new staff and provide them with valuable training.

The support provided by the ministry will cover a 12-month period from the contract signing and will include 100 per cent of the trainees' salary.

The monthly amount will vary depending on the level of education, with graduates holding a bachelor's degree receiving RO 500 per month and those with a general diploma receiving RO 300 per month.

The initiative is aimed at job seekers in various fields, with SMEs given the freedom to select trainees according to their specific requirements.

To be eligible, SMEs must complete an application form, be registered with the authority or hold a business card, possess



commercial registration, provide a bank statement for the last three months, and complete a service request form.

Additionally, the enterprise must submit a commitment letter stating its intention to employ trainees after the completion of the training programme.

This training initiative, supported by the Ministry of Labour, is expected to provide SMEs with the opportunity to develop their workforce and improve their competitiveness in the market. It is hoped that the initiative will not only benefit SMEs but also contribute to the overall economic growth of Oman.

Oman's be'ah mulls smart bins to optimise waste collection

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT, APRIL 10

State-owned Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be'ah) — part of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) — is looking to leverage Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Internet of Things (IoT), among other smart technology solutions, to optimise the waste collection operations of its service providers.

The goal, according to a key official, is to reduce the company's overall carbon footprint and support its sustainability objectives.

Dr Mohab bin Ali al Hinai (pictured), Vice President — Sustainability and Circular Economy at be'ah, said the company exploring options to enhance the energy efficiency of its 1,200-strong fleet of waste collection trucks with a view to reducing fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

This is sought to be achieved by reducing the number of waste collection trips through the



deployment of route optimisation techniques, he said.

"be'ah is exploring the use of AI and IoT to optimise the timing of waste collection. Smart bins equipped with sensors can notify the waste management company when they need to be emptied, which can reduce the frequency of collection and save fuel," said Dr Al Hinai.

"Additionally, AI-based computer vision can notify of bin hygiene violations when cameras are installed on collection trucks," he added in an interview to 'Energy Connects', a Dubai-based news platform. Further, in line with its circular economy objectives, be'ah is working

in partnership with businesses and industries to reduce waste generation and increase recycling and reuse practice, said Dr Al Hinai.

Notable is a planned Waste to Energy (WTE) project which will use municipal waste as feedstock for incineration and electricity generation. "be'ah is making significant strides in promoting sustainability and resource management through its waste-to-energy project, which is estimated to divert almost 4,500 tonnes of municipal solid waste away from landfills and generate approximately 130 -160 MW of electricity.

This will not only reduce the amount of waste going to landfills but also provide a sustainable source of energy for Oman," said Dr Al Hinai, adding that the project is due to come online by 2028.

In addition, be'ah is working on a tyre-derived fuel project for the cement industry. It is also looking at the potential for a biogas plant, which will convert organic waste into biogas, the official added.

Four Omani banks make Forbes list among 50 most valuable banks in the Middle East

JOMAR MENDOZA

MUSCAT, APRIL 10

Forbes Middle East has revealed its ranking of the Middle East's most valuable banks for 2023, recognising the region's biggest banking heavyweights. Four Omani banks make among the list of the 50 most valuable banks in the Middle East in terms of market capitalisation for 2023.

The list includes Bank Muscat in 22nd place, Sohar International Bank in 45th place, Bank Dhofar in 46th place and National Bank of Oman in 47th place. With a market value of \$5.7 billion, Bank Muscat is ranked 22nd in the region.

Established in 1982, Bank Muscat operates in six countries, with 173 branches in Oman, one branch each in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, and three representative offices in the UAE, Singapore, and Iran. The bank — headed by its CEO, Waleed Khamis al Hashar — is the largest in Oman by total assets, which stood at \$33.2 billion in 2022.



Waleed Khamis al Hashar



Ahmed al Musalmi



Abdul Hakeem al Ojaili



Abdullah Zahran al Hinai

It has 2.4 million customers. In October 2022, the bank sold its 27.29% stake in SICO Capital KSA (previously Muscat Capital) and acquired an additional 2.76% stake in SICO Bahrain, increasing its stake to 13.14%. Bank Muscat is listed on the Muscat, London, and Bahrain Stock Exchanges,

Forbes said.

Ranked 45th in the region, Sohar International Bank operates through a network of 30 commercial branches and nine Islamic branches in Oman.

The bank, with a market value of \$1.19 billion, is spearheaded by its CEO, Ahmed al Musalmi.

In November 2022, it established a branch in Riyadh, which is expected to be operational in 2023.

In February 2023, Sohar International Bank received approval from the Central Bank of Oman for its proposed merger with HSBC Oman, which is expected to complete in the second half of 2023. In June 2022, the bank confirmed its commitment to pursue a possible merger with Bank Nizwa, Forbes noted.

Meanwhile, ranked 46th in the region is BankDhofar, led by the CEO Abdul Hakeem al Ojaili. With a market values of \$1.18 billion, BankDhofar provides corporate, retail, and investment banking activities through a network of 75 branches, including 11 branches of its Islamic banking arm, Maisarah Islamic Banking Services.

In October 2022, it completed the issuance of \$300 million in additional tier 1 bonds by way of private placement to investors. The bank's net profits increased by 36% in 2022 to record \$91

million. It had total assets of \$11.5 billion as of the end of 2022.

The National Bank of Oman (NBO) also made it in the list at rank 47. NBO, with a market value of \$1.1 billion, is being headed by its CEO, Abdullah Zahran al Hinai. NBO was established in 1973 to provide conventional and Islamic banking services.

NBO serves over 500,000 retail customers and 25,000 corporate and SME customers through 66 branches. The bank has two overseas branches in the UAE. In November 2022, it completed the issuance of \$134.1 million in additional tier 1 capital securities.

The bank had total assets worth \$11.2 billion in 2022. The Commercial Bank of Qatar and the Omani Suhail Bahwan are among the bank's major shareholders, with 34.9% and 14.75% stakes, respectively.

To construct the list, Forbes Middle East gathered data from listed stock exchanges in the Arab world and ranked companies based on their reported market value as of February 28, 2023.

Japanese firms to set up low-carbon iron metalics project in Oman

FROM PAGE 13

Masahiro Motoyuki, Executive Officer and Head of Engineering Business at Kobe Steel stated, "With combination of our steelmaking experience, our key technologies such as Midrex Process, and the collective strength of Mitsui operating global business in the natural resources and energy fields, Kobe and Mitsui will continue to contribute to the reduction of GHG emission within the steelmaking industry with hopes of achieving a carbon-neutral society."

Reggy Vermeulen, CEO of Port of Duqm, stated, "We are delighted to have Mitsui & Co. and Kobe Steel developing a low CO2 iron metalics project at Port of Duqm.

Mitsui is a Japanese trading and investment company having global presence and their upcoming project at Port of Duqm immensely strengthens their position in Oman, while Kobe Steel is globally renowned for a Japanese leading steelmaking company and their Midrex technology for low carbon DRI process, which is widely considered to be the future of steel making.

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ramadhan



Squeeze these four desert adventures into your itinerary before the winter season ends

As Ramadhan is coming to a close and the weather still cool enough for a desert adventure, here are four reasons why you should squeeze in one more trip to the desert before the winter season ends.... **P20**



QURAN VERSE OF THE DAY

{Indeed, [O Muhammad], you do not guide whom you like, but Allah guides whom He wills. And He is most knowing of the rightly guided.}

[Surah Al Qasas, 65]

HADITH

A GUIDE FOR THE FAITHFUL

Jubayr Ibn Mu'tim reported that he heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, say, "The one who severs ties of kinship will not enter the Garden."

Sahih (Al Albani)

HEALTH TIPS

During Ramadhan, Muslims on long-term medication and wanting to fast may need to have their medicine dosage adjusted by their doctors. It is important to have a good understanding of your health condition. Make sure to talk to your doctors before embarking on a month of fasting.



STORIES FROM THE QURAN

Prophet Yunus

ALLAH THE ALMIGHTY SAYS :{ And [mention] the man of the fish, when he went off in anger and thought that We would not decree [anything] upon him. And he called out within the darknesses, "There is no deity except You; exalted are You. Indeed, I have

been of the wrongdoers."87 Surah Al Anbiya, {And indeed, Jonah was among the messengers. [Mention] when he ran away to the laden ship. And he drew lots[1302] and was among the losers. Then the fish swallowed him,

while he was blameworthy. And had he not been of those who exalt Allāh. He would have remained inside its belly until the Day they are resurrected. But We threw him onto the open shore while he was ill. And We sent him[1306] to [his people of] a hundred thousand or more. And they believed, so We gave them enjoyment [of life] for a time.[139-148 Surah As-Saaffat

PROPHET YUNUS WAS sent to preach to the people of Nineveh, a great city that had become a wicked

place filled with idol worshipping and sin. But the people of the city rejected him, just as many nations rejected the messengers before him. When he realised he had not managed to achieve what he had hoped for, he left disheartened. He then boarded a ship to set sail far away from the city. Once at sea, a massive storm grew stronger and stronger and started to sink. After drawing lots three times, Yunus was the one to leave the ship. In the water, something extraordinary happened, a whale was sent to swallow Yunus whole, and then

descended to the bottom of the sea. He asked for help from Allah. The whale swam to the surface and ejected Yunus onto the beach. Then with the help of Allah, a plant grew over him to cover the prophet with its shade. And after his recovery from the ordeal, he set to return to Nineveh to discover then that the city and its people had not been destroyed by the terrible storm, as they had all believed in Allah. And We caused to grow over him a gourd vine. And We sent him[1306] to [his people of] a hundred thousand or more.



In Mexican jungle, scientists prepare for future pandemics

AS NIGHT FELL in Mexico's Yucatan jungle, veterinarian Omar Garcia extracted blood and fluids from a bat as part of an investigation aimed at preventing the next potential pandemic.

The goal of the Franco-Mexican project is to detect diseases — known as zoonoses — transmitted from animals to humans in tropical climates.

Bats are under scrutiny from the international scientific community as a possible source of Coronavirus transmission.

The winged mammal remained immobile while bearing its fangs, before being released by Garcia, a vector-borne disease expert.

Scientists from France's Research Institute for Development (IRD) and the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) have been collaborating in the study since 2017, using a modern laboratory in Merida, the Yucatan state capital.

The aim is to discover how different viruses that circulate between animals such as mammals, birds and rodents, can potentially pass to humans, said Audrey Arnal, an infectious diseases expert at the IRD.

"This is zoonosis... understanding what the consequences of human contact with wildlife could be and then understanding what could be the next epidemic that can come out of nature," she said.

Scientists take samples of all kinds of animals from the rich ecosystem of the tropical rainforest, where they have identified 61 species of mosquitoes.

"We have many questions" to try to "complete the history of the transmission cycle" of viruses, said UNAM biologist Maria Jose Tolsa, who after a decade of research finally feels that the importance of her work is recognised.

"A pandemic has serious consequences for health and the economy," she said.

HIGH-RISK ZONE

The area was chosen for the research because rapid

deforestation has made it "a highly emblematic region in terms of zoonosis emergency risks," said Benjamin Roche, a specialist in ecology and evolutionary biology at the IRD.

It is estimated that between

Lopez Obrador's flagship tourist rail project, the Mayan Train, scheduled to start operating in December.

The government says that it is offsetting the loss with a tree-planting programme and the



500,000 and 800,000 viruses could affect humans, he added.

The risks grow with the expansion of agriculture and tourism, which increase contact between animals and humans, according to researchers.

Thousands of trees have been felled in the Yucatan Peninsula to build President Andres Manuel

creation of the second-largest tropical rainforest reserve in the world after the Amazon.

The key is to achieve a balance between humans and nature, Arnal said.

"The population have to live, eat and develop their economy," she added.

The research is being carried

out in 12 communities across the three states that make up the Yucatan Peninsula.

"In birds we've found species that have been identified as reservoirs for the West Nile virus or influenza," said Rosa Elena Sarmiento, from the virology laboratory of the UNAM Veterinary School.

GREAT REVEALER

Field work begins at dawn by placing a dozen fine nets to trap birds. At dusk it is the turn of bats and even owls.

Once caught, blood, fluid and ectoparasite samples — if they carry them — are taken.

Scientists identify the animal, measure it, record the data and check its condition before releasing it.

Later the material is analysed in the laboratory.

"DNA is a great revealer," Arnal said.

"With the blood of the mosquito we can determine which species or which animal was bitten," she added.

Blood samples will also be taken from local residents to determine if they carry any virus that came from an animal.

The project also includes consultations with communities to learn about their environmental and social problems, and encourage forms of coexistence with nature.

"There has to be a knowledge dialogue with the communities," said Erika Marce Santos, a member of the Mexican Association of Conservation Medicine who liaises with residents.

The Merida laboratory is connected with others in Africa, South Asia and other Latin American countries within the framework of an initiative called Preventing Zoonotic Disease Emergence.

Launched by France in 2022, it brings together 22 countries and 200 organisations.

"What we're looking for in the Yucatan is to devise a prevention strategy against zoonoses that can serve as an example to the whole world," Roche said. — AFP

FASHION

The Brides Wore '90s Dior. And '00s Margiela. And '80s Chanel.



ONE OF THE MOST INTIMATE questions you can ask eBay power users is to show you their negotiations — the private DMs they exchange with sellers bargaining over the price of an item. But Alexis Novak humoured me.

The item was a spring 2018 dress from the French luxury brand Céline, then under the creative direction of Phoebe Philo, a designer whose cult following is almost unparalleled in modern fashion. The gown, with long sleeves and a turtleneck and glazed in white sequins, was listed at \$8,000. Novak offered \$6,000. The seller politely declined.

Novak, 32, didn't push back. She knew her limits. As the founder of Tab Vintage in Los Angeles, she is among the generation of archival fashion collectors helping to change the way celebrities dress. Which means she is experienced in sourcing pieces from auctions, estate sales, resale websites and other dealers — pieces like the Thierry Mugler dresses worn last year by Kourtney Kardashian Barker to the Oscars, and Dua Lipa to her Ibiza birthday party.

But the Céline dress was different. Novak didn't intend to add it to her archive for someone else to wear on a red carpet. She collects Philo's work, and from the moment she had seen the white gown in runway photos in late 2017, she had thought: "That is my dream wedding dress. That is the chicest, coolest dress I've ever seen."

Five years later — and now engaged to James Valentine, the guitarist for Maroon 5 — that eBay listing was only the second time Novak had come across the dress on the resale market. Still, she knew her price, and she walked away.

"But I thought about it everyday," she said. "Should I, should I, should I?"

Then, after two months of silence, the eBay seller unexpectedly agreed to Novak's price. She bought the dress that day.

The truth was that Novak had long found weddings "kind of cheugy," she said. But since founding Tab in 2019, Novak, a former comedy writer, had increasingly fielded requests from clients and friends to help them hunt down archival bridal wear — pieces with "character," she said. "Wearing vintage on your wedding day, you're not just plucking it off a runway or a rack and wearing what someone told you to wear. You're infusing your own personality. It's an extension of you."

She knew of one brick-and-mortar boutique with this kind of inventory (Happy Isles in Los Angeles) but none with a strong online store. "I felt like, from a business standpoint, I was leaving money on the table," she said.

So on Monday, she introduced a collection of about 85 bridal and wedding guest pieces on the Tab Vintage website, furthering a push into the market that began earlier this year.

In January, she was a co-host in Los Angeles of a three-day bridal and evening wear event with Re-See, a resale company in Paris. All 72 shopping appointments were reserved weeks in advance. "It was madness," Novak said. A tearful altercation between two brides who wanted the same ruched strapless Loris Azzaro dress reminded Novak of a sign she once saw outside Amarcord Vintage Fashion in New York: "Nothing haunts you like the vintage you didn't buy."

Then in February, she teamed up with online luxury retailer Moda Operandi on a selection of wedding dresses, suits and separates, including a 2004 Balenciaga "puffball" gown (reissued from an original 1951 design) and a 2006 Alexander McQueen silk dress with a gold chain bodice. Both sold for around \$20,000.

That sale "didn't feel so bridal with a capital B," said Jamie Lenore McKillop, a brand consultant who bought a Martin Margiela couture dress from 2006, made from upcycled knits and silk. It was important to McKillop, 30, who lives in Los Angeles and is getting married in Sea Ranch, California, next summer, to find something singular.

"I'm not the girl who is embarrassed if she goes to a party and she sees someone else wearing the same thing," she said. "But with social media, certain weddings and dresses will go viral. And then it really becomes her dress — or people associate it with someone else — versus fully your own."

She's still looking for her actual wedding dress, however; the Margiela is for her rehearsal dinner. Because that's the thing about many modern weddings: They aren't just weddings. They are weekends full of welcome parties, after-parties, bridal-brunches-on-the-beach and après-ski-farewell lunches.

Novak herself also wore multiple looks to celebrate her wedding to Valentine on, yes, Valentine's Day. After the Céline gown, which had been tailored for a tight fit — its turtleneck was temporarily detached for the occasion — she changed into a more comfortable red jersey one-shoulder Halston dress from the 1970s. (In searching for her perfect slinky Halston, Novak acquired at least six; some have made their way into Tab's collection and onto the bodies of celebrities like Madelyn Cline at a Vanity Fair party.) Her veil was an upcycled pink embroidered Dries Van Noten cardigan, found on Vestiaire Collective.

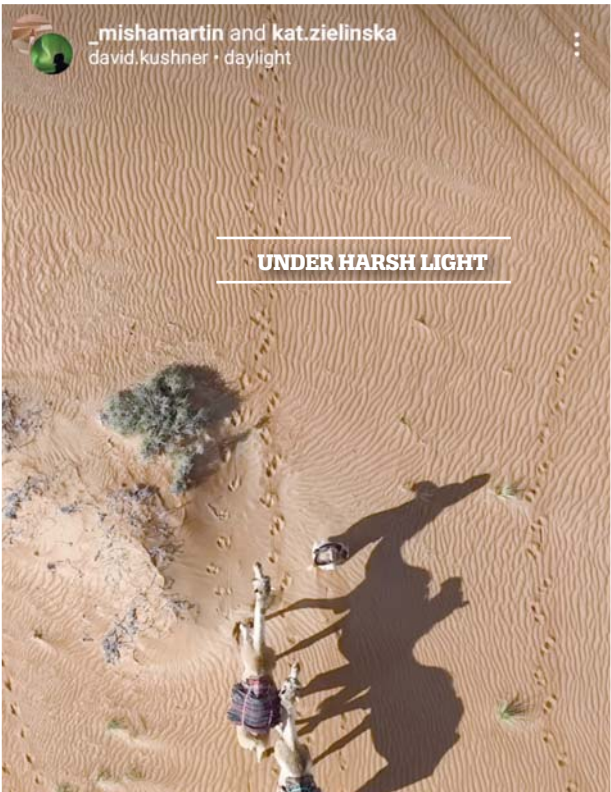
There was also the elopement dress she wore on February 5, when she legally married Valentine at their home in Los Angeles. The cream gown dated to the 1920s. She had her tailor turn its long sheer sleeves into a halter neckline to make it look "undone but still classic," she said.

Like some of the best vintage pieces, it had no designer label. — NYT



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AROUND THE WORLD

AUCTION

Rare manuscript that paved way for British monarchy's return up for auction



A RARE 17TH-CENTURY manuscript, which was key to the restoration of the British monarchy under King Charles II a decade after the execution of his father, will be auctioned next month, coinciding with the coronation of his current namesake. The Declaration of Breda was issued by Charles II from the Netherlands in 1660, offering reconciliation and a general pardon for crimes committed during the English Civil War which saw Charles I ousted and later executed, and Britain briefly become a republic under Oliver Cromwell. One of two surviving copies is to go under the hammer in May at London auction house Sotheby's, a couple of days before the current monarch King Charles III is crowned at London's Westminster Abbey.



"Alongside the Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights and the Act of Settlement, this is one of a small number of transformational royal documents that have changed royal power forever, and as such it is the most important of its kind to ever appear for public sale," said Gabriel Heaton, Sotheby's Manuscripts specialist. "It is through this declaration that in 1660 the monarchy was re-established and the terms by which they would rule agreed, which still apply today, 350 years later as Charles III ascends the throne." Sotheby's said five copies of the declaration were made, with the only other surviving one kept in the parliamentary archives. The copy up for auction, with an estimated price of between 400,000 and 600,000 pounds (\$500,000 and \$750,000), was sent to the navy where it was read to the fleet by famous diarist Samuel Pepys in his role as secretary to General at Sea Edward Montagu.

— Reuters

LIFESTYLE

Deinfluencing, or the art of negative reviews



LOOKING STRAIGHT INTO the camera, Valeria Fride holds up a tube of lip gloss. But instead of saying how amazing it is, the young brunette trashes it as "so sticky" and "really expensive," with not enough colour. "It just didn't do it for me," the 23-year-old concludes. Welcome to the art of deinfluencing, one of the latest trends on TikTok, in which influencers tell you what not to buy. As of early April, the hashtag had more than 430 million views on the wildly popular video-sharing app. "It's an honest version of what we see everyday on social media," Fride says. If you venture onto TikTok, you can find all kinds of videos about which soaps not to buy because they're too pricey, or which dumbbells not to buy if you're just a beginner with using weights. Some have cast deinfluencing as a response to soaring inflation, or even an anti-consumerist movement — basically, don't buy things that are not worth your money. "Do you really need 25 different perfumes? Are you really going to use them all?" said a TikTok user in a video with the hashtag. But others say influencers are doing the same thing as before, with a slightly more palatable name. Indeed, influencers are everywhere on social media. They make short, catchy videos promoting everything from mascara to tea to sneakers to video games — all for a tidy fee. In theory, criticising products would run counter to their

business model. Who would pay for that? Fride admits that at first, she was "really scared" how certain brands would respond to her new tactics. When one of her videos went viral, she says she told her mother: "I hope they don't hate me." But it ultimately led to offers of new partnerships with companies who appreciated her negative reviews for their rivals. For Fride, it's a sign that companies "want a more nuanced review." 56 PAIRS OF SHOES Jessica Clifton, a 26-year-old American influencer, explains that the deinfluencing trend rang true for her. A few years ago, she became aware of the impact her conspicuous consumption — new clothes virtually everyday in separate packaging, endless varieties of foundation make-up, a plethora of lipsticks — was having on the environment. "I don't even know how to use makeup," Clifton said, adding that she realised she owned 56 pairs of shoes. "I was like, 'Oh my God, how did I get here?'" Clifton opened a new TikTok account dedicated to responsible consumption. So she was thrilled when deinfluencing took off. She's even posted a few videos with the hashtag. But she says she's disappointed that the trend quickly became about "buy this, not that" instead of curbing overall consumption, and about

users simply trying to get new followers. AUTHENTICITY A quick glance at the latest videos posted on TikTok with the #deinfluencing hashtag shows that Clifton is not alone in her disappointment. But Lia Haberman, an expert on influencer marketing who lectures in the continuing education programme at University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), says seeing the deinfluencer trend as a rejection of consumer culture is misguided. "That's not how the trend originated," she said. According to Tubular Labs, a social media analytics firm, the trend — which really took off in January — first emerged in September 2022, thanks to one Maddie Wells. Wells is not exactly a campaigner; the influencer was simply using her experience working in cosmetics stores to explain why customers were unhappy with certain products. Her videos were not "really a judgment call," explains Haberman. For Americus Reed, a professor of marketing at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business, influencers are "no longer seen as authentic" by the public, which knows they are being paid to promote products. A deinfluencer, at least for now, is seen as more honest. "That's a way to stand out," Reed says, while admitting that in the end, "a deinfluencer is still an influencer." — AFP

CONSERVATION

India's tiger population rises above 3,000



INDIA'S WILD TIGER population — by far the largest in the world — has risen above 3,000, according to a census released on Sunday, boosting efforts to conserve the endangered species. The largest of all cats, tigers once roamed throughout central, eastern and southern Asia. But in the past 100 years the tiger has lost more than 93 per cent of its historic range and now only survives in scattered populations in 13 countries, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The Indian census estimated there were 3,167 tigers in the wild across the country, up from 2,967 reported in the last such exercise. Surveys are conducted every four years, using camera traps and computer programmes to individually identify each creature. The rate of increase has slowed to less than seven per cent over the period, down from more than 30 per cent in the previous four years. But Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the new figure was a "proud moment". "Our family is expanding," he said at a ceremony in the southern city of Mysuru. "This is a matter of pride not only for India but the entire world." Deforestation, poaching and human encroachment on habitats have devastated tiger populations across Asia but Modi said India had been able to increase its numbers thanks to "people's participation" and the country's "culture of conservation". India is now home to 75 per cent of the global tiger population and also the "largest tiger range country in the world", he added. In 1900, more than 100,000 tigers were estimated to roam the planet. But that fell to a record low of 3,200 in 2010. That year, India and 12 other countries with tiger populations signed an agreement to double their big cat numbers by 2022. India is believed to have had a tiger population of around 40,000 at the time of independence from Britain in 1947. That fell over subsequent decades to about 3,700 in 2002 and an all-time low of 1,411 four years later, but numbers have since risen steadily. Dipankar Ghose, director of the wildlife and habitats programme at the World Wide Fund for Nature-India said the latest increase in tiger numbers was encouraging. "On the other hand it also tells us that each of us now need to work harder to restore degraded habitats, ensure safe movement of tigers through corridors and promote coexistence," he added. — AFP



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Local Scene

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TUESDAY | APRIL 11 | 2023

Squeeze these four desert adventures into your itinerary before the winter season ends

Oman is a country that boasts some of the most magnificent desert landscapes in the world. For those who seek adventure and a taste of the nomadic lifestyle, Oman's deserts offer an unforgettable experience. From the golden Rimal Al Sharqiya to the rugged terrain of Rub Al Khali, Oman's deserts have something for everyone.

One of the most popular destinations in Oman's deserts is Rimal Al Sharqiya, located in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate in the Wilayat of Bidiya just two hours from the capital city of Muscat. This vast expanse of golden sand dunes is home to the Bedouin people, who have lived here for centuries.

For those who want a more challenging adventure, the Rub Al Khali, also known as the "Empty Quarter," is the world's largest continuous sand desert and stretches across four countries, including Oman. This rugged and remote landscape offers a true test of endurance and survival skills. As Ramadhan is coming to a close and the weather still cool enough for a desert adventure, here are four reasons why you should squeeze in one more trip to the desert before the winter season ends.

DUNE BASHING

Dune bashing, also known as desert driving or off-roading, has a long history in the Middle East. It originated with the Bedouin people, who used camels and horses to navigate the desert. With the arrival of motorised vehicles, dune bashing quickly became a popular pastime for locals and tourists alike.

In Oman, dune bashing has become an extreme adventure sport, with visitors from all over the world flocking to the country to experience the rush of driving over sand dunes. The technicalities of dune bashing are complex, requiring skilled drivers who are familiar with the terrain and the capabilities of their vehicles. The type of vehicle used for dune bashing is also important, with 4x4s being the most popular choice due to their ability to handle the rugged terrain.

If you're looking for an adrenaline-fuelled adventure, the endless expanse of sand dunes creates the perfect playground for dune bashing enthusiasts.

CAMEL RIDING

Camel riding has been a part of Oman's culture for centuries. These majestic creatures were used for transportation, food, and clothing, and they played a key role in the survival of the Bedouin people in the

harsh desert environment. With its rich history and cultural significance, camel riding is an experience that offers a glimpse into the traditional way of life in Oman.

Camel riding has become a popular tourist activity in the country, available throughout the land, with many offering a range of experiences, from short rides to multi-day treks. To make some memorable experiences this year, take a guided tour with an experienced Bedouin guide and learn more about their unique way of life and explore the desert's hidden oases.

SANDBOARDING

Sand boarding has a long history, with ancient cultures like the Egyptians and Native Americans using makeshift boards to slide down sand dunes for fun. But it wasn't until the 1970s that sand boarding began to gain popularity as an extreme sport. Today, it's a global phenomenon, with enthusiasts from all over the world seeking out the best sand dunes to ride.

This exciting activity involves riding down sand dunes on a board, taking on steep inclines and sharp turns at high speeds. And with Oman's vast desert landscapes, sand boarding has become one of the country's most popular extreme sports. Whether you're a seasoned pro or a first-time rider, add sandboarding to your itinerary. Always make sure to wear the appropriate safety gear, and it is important to respect the fragile desert environment and leave no trace behind.

CAMPING UNDER THE STARS

Camping has a special place in the heart of the Middle East and has been a big cultural pride for nomadic tribes across the region. It has evolved into a popular family activity, with many families in Oman spending weekends and holidays camping in the desert or near the coast.

Oman's deserts offer a unique opportunity to stargaze under the clear night sky. With little light pollution, visitors can witness the beauty of the Milky Way and the constellations in all their glory.

Before the winter season ends, use the remaining time to disconnect from the stresses of daily life and reconnect with nature. It's a chance to experience the simple pleasures of life, like sitting around a campfire and sharing stories with friends and family. It's important to bring plenty of water, sunscreen, and appropriate clothing, and always remember that temperatures can drop at night and be very hot during the mornings.