

Man drowns in Ras Madrakah

The search and rescue teams of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) in Al Wusta Governorate, in cooperation with the relevant authorities and with the participation of citizens, carried out a search and rescue operation for a citizen who drowned at sea in Ras Madrakah in the Wilayat of Al Duqm. The missing person was found dead on Sunday.

SUNRISE - 06:07 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR - 04:51 AM

DHUHR - 11:56 PM

ASR - 03:14 PM

MAGHRIB - 05:41 PM

ISHA - 06:52 PM



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OMAN OBSERVER

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OMAN LAUNCHES
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DEVELOPMENT
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THIS ARTIST BRINGS
JOY TO COMMUNITY
THROUGH
FACE PAINTING

MUSCAT

35 COUNTRIES ATTEND
DATES, HONEY EXPO

The second edition of the 'International Dates and Honey Exhibition' kicked off on Sunday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. The exhibition aims to introduce the latest products in the fields of dates and honey, expand commercial prospects and enlighten participating countries and exhibitors about the quality of dates and honey products available in the Sultanate of Oman. More than 35 countries are taking part in the week-long exhibition, which ends on October 26. The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources. **DETAILS ON P3**

JAKARTA

PRABOWO TAKES
OFFICE AS PRESIDENT



Former general Prabowo Subianto was sworn in on October 20, 2024, as president of Indonesia, seeking a more prominent position on the global stage for the world's fourth most populous nation. The 73-year-old took the oath at parliament to officially succeed outgoing leader Joko Widodo. **SEE ALSO P6**

BRASILIA

LULA CANCELS TRIP
TO BRICS SUMMIT

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on Sunday cancelled his trip to Russia for the BRICS summit, following medical advice to temporarily avoid long-haul flights after hurting his head in an accident at home. In a statement, the presidential office said Lula, who was initially scheduled to depart at 5 pm local time on Sunday, will now participate in the BRICS meeting via videoconference. The diplomatic forum founded 15 years ago by major emerging markets Brazil, Russia, India and China has since expanding to include South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates.

Duqm economic zone attracts RO 6 billion investments

MUSCAT: The 5th Duqm Forum reviewed the most important investment opportunities available in the blue economy, food security, logistics, tourism and renewable energy sectors in the Sultanate of Oman in general and Al Wusta Governorate in particular. The event, held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Sunday, was organised by the Oman Chamber of

Commerce and Industry (Al Wusta Governorate Branch), in partnership with the Foreign Ministry and the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones.

STRATEGIC LOCATION
The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Harib bin Thuwaini al Said, Assistant Secretary-General of the Council

of Ministers for Conferences. Speaking on the occasion, Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, said that Oman's ancient history linked to the sea and its strategic location on the open seas have enabled it to communicate and establish trade and cultural relations with many countries and peoples in the world throughout the ages. Therefore,

the government, said Al Harthy, is investing and strengthening this field by constructing modern ports and a network of expressways that provide distinguished logistical services in the field of distributing and transporting containers in the region, which qualifies it to be a major link in the global transportation network. On his turn, Shaikh Ahmed bin Musallam al Kathiri,

Governor of Al Wusta, said that the total investments in Duqm Special Economic Zone stood at more than RO 6 billion. In the field of renewable energy, the governorate is hosting five projects out of eight national projects offered at the level of Oman, with an investment value of (\$49 billion) in green hydrogen projects and the fields of solar energy, wind energy and related projects. **SEE ALSO P13**

TWO DIE AS BUILDING COLLAPSES IN SUR



An elderly couple lost their lives when their building collapsed after heavy rains in the Old Souq area of the Wilayat of Sur, Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, in the wee hours of Sunday morning, according to the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA). The CDAA spokesperson said that the Indian couple hailing from the state of Gujarat were trapped inside the debris of the old building in which they had been staying for many years. **DETAILS ON P2**

Israel blows up entire villages in Lebanon

BEIRUT: The Israeli army has almost completely destroyed several villages in southern Lebanon, razing their homes and mosques to the ground, according to local security sources.

The military blew up the town of Ramia near Bint Jbeil in the border area, among other places, it is learned from Lebanese security circles. There was initially no official confirmation of this. Soldiers from the international UN mission observed several Israeli units advancing from Israel across the demarcation line into Lebanon around a week ago.

A few days ago, a photo also circulated on social media showing Israeli soldiers apparently posing in front of the village's community building. Meanwhile, fighting raged on two fronts on Sunday as Israel targeted what it said was a Hezbollah "command centre" in the Lebanese capital, while in Gaza rescuers reported 73 people killed in a single air strike.

The strikes on Hezbollah's south Beirut stronghold came after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused the group of attempting to assassinate him by targeting his residence. Lebanon's official National News Agency (NNA) said Israel's strikes on the capital hit a residential building in south Beirut's Haret Hreik area near a mosque and a hospital. About 70 projectiles were fired from Lebanon on Sunday and crossed into Israel within a matter of minutes, the military said, adding it intercepted some of them.

Illustrating the intensity of the fighting, NNA later reported 14 Israeli strikes in

US looking into the leak reports

The United States is investigating the leak of a pair of highly classified intelligence documents describing Israel's preparations for a strike on Iran, House Speaker Mike Johnson said on Sunday. The documents appear to have been prepared by the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, describing US interpretations of Israeli Air Force and Navy planning based on satellite imagery from October 15 to 16.

They began circulating last week on the Telegram messaging app. Asked about the leak of the documents during an interview with CNN, Johnson, the US House of Representatives' top lawmaker, said an "investigation is under way and I'll get a briefing on that in a couple of hours." "We are following it closely," Johnson added.

the space of 15 minutes on a single border village, Khiam. Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant told troops on Sunday that the military was stepping up its strikes on Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The Lebanese army, which is not fighting in the war, said three of its soldiers were killed in an Israeli strike on their vehicle in southern Lebanon. In Gaza, the civil defence agency said an Israeli air strike on a residential area killed at least 73 Palestinians in Beit Lahia in the territory's north.

"Our civil defence crews recovered 73 martyrs and a large number of wounded as a result of the Israeli air force targeting a residential area... in Beit Lahia in northern Gaza," said agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal. **SEE ALSO P6**

Lot at stake as COP16 opens today in Cali

PARIS: The world's pledges to halt humankind's destruction of nature will be put to the test when the 16th UN conference on biodiversity opens on October 21, 2024, in Colombia. The COP16, held in the city of Cali through November 1, is the first meeting of the international community since the adoption two years ago of an unprecedented road map to achieve that goal. But putting that agreement into practice risks not moving fast enough to stop the destruction of land, oceans

and species by a 2030 target date. How will COP16 ensure countries achieve the 23 targets of the "Global Biodiversity Framework"? Can it unlock the billions of dollars needed? Can it guarantee the rights of Indigenous peoples? Creating protected areas, restoring depleted land, cutting the use of pesticides, increasing funding for nature — few of the targets humanity had previously set for 2020 have been reached. To avoid repeating that failure, countries agreed at COP15 to

create a monitoring mechanism, with common indicators to measure progress and a possible review procedure. But the details of this mechanism, crucial for holding countries to account, remain to be adopted. Carrying out this negotiation will be the top agenda item of COP16 and its host Colombia, which wants to establish itself as a leader in the global fight to safeguard nature. But parallel negotiations, notably financial, will also come into play. As of mid-October,

only 29 countries out of 196 had submitted national biodiversity strategies to reflect their share of global efforts. And 91 have submitted "national targets," or commitments on all or part of the targets, according to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. Several countries could publish their plan in Cali, and those of Colombia and Brazil are keenly awaited. Some 12,000 delegates, including seven heads of state, are expected to attend COP16. — **AFP**

SHORT TAKES



MEETING REVIEWS
DEVELOPMENT
PROJECTS IN DHOFAR

SALALAH: The Ministry of Economy on Sunday organised a joint meeting in the Wilayat of Salalah with the departments concerned to discuss the requirements of projects that use Dhofar Governorate's comparative and competitive advantages, among other matters and was attended by HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, and Eng Badr bin Salim al Maamari, Secretary-General of the Tender Board. The meeting dealt with ways to support the governorate's efforts in implementing vital projects in different sectors in line with national plans and programmes related to Oman Vision 2040. — **ONA**



MoL sets timeframe
to resolve employee's
grievance

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour (MoL) has issued decision 617/2024 that calls for having a system for employers to register their complaints and grievances. This decision is based on the Labour Law issued by Royal Decree 53/2023. Every employer who employs fifty workers or more is obligated to prepare a complaints and grievances system. This decision shall be published in the Official Gazette and shall be effective from the day following the date of its publication. The decision states that employees should submit the complaint or grievance first to the direct manager, and the direct manager is obligated to respond to the worker within two working days.



جهاز الضرائب
TAX AUTHORITY

Announcement

The Tax Authority invites all auditors who are legally licensed to practice the accounting and auditing profession in the Sultanate of Oman to apply no later than 31/12/2024 to register in the registration established for the purpose of the following:

- Register their data.
- Attach the license to practice the profession issued to them by the Financial Services Authority pursuant to

***Income Tax Law no. (28/2009).**
***Excise Tax Law no. (23/2019).**
***VAT Law no. (121/2020).**

For the importance, you have to adhere of the above, in order to ensure that the tax system accepts the audited accounts and to be able to exercise your duties towards the Tax Authority, starting from the first of January 2025.



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Elderly Indian couple dies in Sur building collapse

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

AN ELDERLY couple lost their lives when the building they were living in collapsed after heavy rains in the Old Souq area of the Wilayat of Sur, Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, in the early hours of Sunday morning, according to the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA).

The CDAA spokesperson stated that the Indian business couple, originally from the state of Gujarat, were trapped inside the debris of the old building where they had been living for many years.

The bodies of Purushottam Neera Nandu Kishandas, 88, and his wife Padmini Purushottam, 80, from Gujarat, were found under the debris of the collapsed building.

The couple had been living in Sur with their family and conducting business there since the middle of the 1940s.

The building was constructed with a mixture of mud and cement. Those injured were taken to the nearest government hospital.

The Hiranand Kishandas specialised in



Purushottam Neera Nandu

trading clothes and perfumes in the Old Souq area.

"We received a call at 1.14 am on Sunday requesting assistance after the building collapsed. Our brigades quickly responded and were able to recover the bodies after several hours. An investigation is ongoing," the CDAA spokesperson said.

Residents of the Old Souq area informed



Padmini Purushottam

the Observer that the couple's son and daughter-in-law, who lived nearby, were safe.

Neera Nandu, a member of the second generation of a Gujarati merchant clan, was well-liked in the local Omani community.

He had witnessed Oman's rapid progress during his years in the country.



UNSTABLE WEATHER CONDITIONS EXPECTED

MUSCAT: The latest weather maps and forecasts indicate that the Sultanate of Oman is expected to experience unstable weather conditions over the next few days. Starting from Monday evening, cloud cover will gradually increase over parts of the central governorates, leading to scattered rainfall.

This situation is likely to persist, with intermittent showers expected as cloud formations continue.

There is a potential for sporadic rainfall, sometimes heavy, starting on Tuesday and lasting until Thursday. Some areas may also experience occasional thunderstorms.

Rainfall could also extend to the Al Hajar Mountains, where localised storms are possible.

The National Early Warning Center is closely monitoring the situation and urges citizens and residents to stay updated by following official weather bulletins and reports.

ROP issues guidelines for biometric fingerprints

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Inspector General of Police and Customs issued Resolution 149/2024, issuing the executive regulations of the Biometrics Law based on Royal Decree 21/2024.

A new decision refers to the establishment of a database for biometric fingerprints in the competent department, in which data obtained from the biometric trace raised from the crime scene or any other place, the biometric trace raised from unknown bodies and remains, the reference biometric sample taken from the accused and those convicted of a crime, the reference biometric sample taken from the relatives of the missing or those who go missing after they appear or are found, the reference biometric sample, fingerprints, palm prints, face prints, eye prints, and any other biometric prints are stored.

The decision also allowed the addition of any other related data to the biometric database after the approval of the Inspector General or his delegate.

The decision stressed that it is not permissible to modify any of the database data unless an error is proven in the recorded data, taking into account the following: obtaining written permission from the director; the modification shall be made under the approved electronic systems; preparing a detailed report with a reason and submitting it to the competent director to approve the modification.

The decision stated that the col-



The decision stated that the collection, analysis, and preservation of biological traces and reference biological samples are done using scientific means

lection, analysis and preservation of biological traces and reference biological samples are done using scientific means such as oral swabs (saliva) or through a blood sample and any other means specified by a decision issued by the Inspector General. The decision allowed any person to voluntarily submit to the competent department to conduct a genetic fingerprint examination of the reference biological sample taken from him and include it in the database for use, as a genetic fingerprint examination may be conducted in cases such as suspicion of births in health institutions,

suspicion of test-tube babies, lost or mixed-up children due to accidents or disasters and it is difficult to identify them and cases of unidentified bodies.

The decision prohibited conducting a genetic fingerprint examination to prove or deny lineage. It also confirmed that it is not permissible to conduct a genetic fingerprint examination of reference biological samples except to determine the genetic characteristics of non-coding genetic sites in the chromosomal DNA.

It is also not permissible to conduct a genetic analysis of reference biological samples except in the implementation of a judicial order or ruling or if the samples are of unknown origin or taken from biological traces found at the crime scene or incident.

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SHORT TAKES



PANEL REVIEWS
PROGRESS ON CHILD
RIGHTS CONVENTION
IMPLEMENTATION

MUSCAT: The committee tasked with following up on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Sunday held its first meeting of 2024 under the chairmanship of Shaikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development.

The meeting reviewed the efforts exerted in following up on the comments and recommendations of the 5th and 6th national reports on the rights of the child. It also highlighted some terms mentioned in conventions and agreements related to human rights. — ONA



AGREEMENT FOR BUS
STATION IN NIZWA

MUSCAT: In the presence of Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, an investment contract will be signed for the Sultanate of Oman's first integrated public transport bus station in the Wilayat of Nizwa in partnership with the private sector.

The project will be implemented in cooperation with Mawasalat. Investment contracts will also be signed in the field of advertising and publicity in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. According to earlier reports, the integrated Nizwa station for public transport buses and taxis will be spread over 11,412 sqm.

The project includes a bus station for transportation within the city and inter-city, a waiting station for passengers, taxis with shaded parking, public parking, and various commercial activities that create job opportunities for the people of the governorate.

Speed up appointing Omani fuel station managers

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 20

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) has called on establishments to expedite the appointment of Omanis as fuel station managers or supervisors within a month from the date of the publication of the notice, which was published on Sunday.

The ministry said: "Establishments can benefit from the operational



Establishments can benefit from the operational initiatives provided by the Ministry of Labour

initiatives provided by the Ministry of Labour, and we commend the efforts of

establishments committed to appointing national workers and appreciate their constructive role in achieving job stability for the national workforce by contributing to the government's employment efforts."

The Ministry of Labour and Oman Society for Petroleum Services (Opal) had earlier launched an initiative to nationalise the job of Filling Station Manager.

The initiative was open for

holders of Higher Diplomas and Bachelor's degrees in business management and related fields, within the context of the efforts of the ministry and Opal to nationalise jobs and empower this sector by providing it with Omanis capable of managing this type of business.

The position was available in over 650 filling stations around the Sultanate of Oman.

Dates and honey expo
focuses on investment

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

WITH OVER 200 dates and honey manufacturers from the Sultanate of Oman, along with more than a hundred honey and dates dealers offering over 1,000 varieties of honey and dates from 27 countries, the Second International Dates and Honey Exhibition began under the auspices of Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Sunday.

The five-day international expo is expected to pave the way for numerous investment opportunities in areas such as beekeeping, propagation, sorting, quality control, packaging, production and export. It also aims to explore significant investment potential.

The annual event seeks to support the dates and honey sectors in Oman by raising awareness among beekeepers, date producers, and traders to improve their products and introduce modern technologies in production and the supply chain.

According to Ministry sources, the expo also aims to maximise returns through transformation industries and value-added products, enhancing Omani products while facilitating the exchange of experiences between local and international exhibitors.



The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources. — ONA

"On the sidelines, we have arranged several bilateral trade sessions between participants, traders, and those interested in this sector in a special corner for B2B deals, aiming to increase the volume of trade exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and the participating countries," a spokesperson from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources said.

The spokesperson added that the exhibition will be open from 10 am to 10 pm,

offering surprise gifts and prizes through daily draws for gold, jewellery, and electronic devices, as well as a grand draw for a Chery Tiggo 4 Pro car.

More than 35 countries are participating in the week-long exhibition, which ends on October 26. It features 167 local companies and 71 international companies, including honey and date producers, packaging companies, and food processing companies specialising in dates and honey products.

Al Nokheda programme for women, youth launched

MUSCAT: Duqm Refinery and Petrochemicals Industries Company (OQ8) and Oman Sail announced the launch of the fourth edition of the Al Nokheda programme, coinciding with two significant national events — Omani Women's Day on October 17 and Omani Youth Day on October 26. This initiative highlights OQ8's dedication to fostering the talents of Oman's women and youth, reinforcing its commitment to national progress in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The Al Nokheda programme aims to empower both educators and students in Al Wusta Governorate by focusing on the development of vital communication and leadership skills. It includes a series of comprehensive soft skills



The Al Nokheda programme aims to empower both educators and students.

workshops tailored to various groups, with a dedicated track specifically for female students.

"By launching the Al Nokheda programme, we are strategically investing in the future leaders of Oman. Equipping our youth and

educators with critical leadership, communication, and decision-making skills is at the core of our commitment to driving progress in the industry. This programme strengthens our vision of developing a talent pipeline that

will ensure Oman's continued leadership in the global energy sector," said Saif al Manji, Head of Value Creation.

Khamis al Anbouri, Oman Sail's Commercial Director, added, "We are excited to partner with OQ8 for yet another edition of the successful Al Nokheda initiative. Our leadership programmes have made a significant difference by empowering young people nationwide, equipping them with valuable skills that can be applied as they approach graduation. This initiative provides an excellent opportunity to cultivate a growth mindset and impart essential tools for thriving both academically and professionally."

OQ8 is hosting outdoor soft skills workshops from October 17 to 19 for male students in grades

10 and 11. These activities focus on enhancing leadership, decision-making, and environmental awareness among Oman's youth, helping prepare the next generation of leaders.

To promote female participation in the STEAM sector, a special Al Nokheda programme will take place from October 24-26 in Al Duqm, designed for female students in grades 10 and 11 from Al Wusta Governorate.

This outdoor workshop aims to develop leadership, communication, and teamwork skills while fostering an appreciation for Oman's natural and cultural heritage. By creating a space for young women to grow, OQ8 is actively contributing to the empowerment of future female leaders in Oman.

SPOTLIGHT

Work environment impacts performance

Negative colleagues can hinder success

Managing negative personalities is essential

Negative individuals create toxicity

Positive mindset fosters a healthy workplace

FOSTERING POSITIVITY AT WORK

AFRAH AL BALUSHI

THE WORK ENVIRONMENT significantly influences performance indicators and contributes to creating a positive atmosphere of creativity, friendship and team spirit.

However, the success of employees can be undermined by the character of their colleagues, especially those with negative personalities.

While the work environment can foster positivity, the presence of negative individuals can drain energy and impact morale, ultimately affecting overall productivity. It's essential to recognise that no workplace is ideal; every setting presents its challenges and pressures, which vary from one location to another. Problems at work can spill over into personal lives, affecting social interactions and behaviour.

Therefore, it's crucial to shield oneself from negative influences to maintain engagement and performance levels.

Although controlling others' behaviour is difficult, employees can adopt specific strategies to prevent negativity from affecting their work.

This may include setting boundaries with negative colleagues and focusing on positive interactions. Negative personalities can lead to serious health issues, including high blood pressure, anxiety and weakened immune systems.

Research shows that even brief exposure to anger can exhaust the body and lead to long-term health problems, including heart conditions.

Recognising the signs of negativity - such as emotional draining and chronic complaining - is essential. By understanding these behaviours, individuals can take proactive steps to minimise their exposure to toxic personalities.

Furthermore, studies indicate that stress can have lasting negative effects on cognitive function, impacting memory and decision-making abilities. Prolonged exposure to stress can lead to irreversible brain damage and physical health issues. There's no reason to sacrifice personal well-being to accommodate negative individuals.

Reducing the time spent with these individuals can help protect mental health and maintain focus on professional goals. While it's important to show empathy towards those struggling with negativity, it's equally important to maintain personal boundaries. Offering support without allowing their negativity to invade your space can foster a healthier work environment.

Ultimately, the psychological state of employees is crucial for productivity. A supportive work environment can significantly enhance mental health and overall job satisfaction.

By cultivating positivity and managing the influence of negativity, employees can enhance their productivity and well-being, leading to a more fulfilling work experience.

THE SUCCESS OF EMPLOYEES CAN BE UNDERMINED BY THE CHARACTER OF THEIR COLLEAGUES, ESPECIALLY THOSE WITH NEGATIVE PERSONALITIES

SHORTTAKES



During the meeting, the two sides discussed several military matters of mutual interest. — ONA

SAF CHIEF RECEIVES COMMANDER OF FRENCH FORCES

MUSCAT: Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Sunday the Commander of the French Forces in the Indian Ocean and the military delegation accompanying him. During the meeting, the two sides discussed several military matters of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by Brigadier Hamid bin Abdullah al Balushi, SAF Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations and Planning, senior COSAF officers and the military attaché to the Embassy of the French Republic in Muscat. — ONA



The officials toured the centre's facilities and viewed its latest equipment and technologies. — ONA

FRENCH MILITARY OFFICIAL VISITS MSC

MUSCAT: Rear Admiral Hugues Lainé of the French Navy and the military delegation accompanying him on Sunday visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC). Members of the delegation were greeted upon their arrival at the MSC by the Acting Head of the MSC. They were briefed on the tactical roles and tasks carried out by the centre in the safety of the Omani maritime environment. They also toured the centre's facilities and viewed its latest equipment and technologies used in carrying out its national duties. — ONA

MoH opens Al Awabi Health Centre expansion

AL AWABI: The Ministry of Health (MoH), represented by the Directorate General of Health Services in the Al Batinah South Governorate, celebrated the opening of the new expansion of the Al Awabi Health Centre in the Wilayat of Al Awabi on Sunday. The event was graced by the presence of Dr Said bin Harib al Lamki, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs, along with several other distinguished officials.



Dr Yousef bin Mohammed al Farsi, Director General of Health Services in Al Batinah South Governorate, emphasised that the expansion is part of the government's ongoing efforts to enhance healthcare services and address the needs of the local community. The newly expanded facilities include 8 additional clinics and advanced service facilities, equipped with cutting-edge medical technology to

ensure accurate diagnosis and effective treatment. He further highlighted that the expansion aligns with the government's commitment to sustainable health development, aiming to provide comprehensive and high-quality healthcare to all members of the community. The development is also a response to the growing population in the Wilayat and the increasing demand for essential medical services. — ONA

MoHERI, Gulf College host 2024 scientific symposium

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, OCT 20

THE Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI), in collaboration with Gulf College, hosted the 2024 Scientific Research Symposium at the university campus in Al Maabela. The event was held under the auspices of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. In her address, the minister emphasised the dedicated efforts of private higher education institutions in Oman to elevate the quality and diversity of their programmes, aligning with global advancements and the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. She highlighted the importance of linking academic programmes with scientific research and innovation to produce new knowledge, turning ideas into tangible realities that benefit society and the economy. She also underscored the multifaceted role of these institutions in serving and advancing society through events, conferences, and collaborative programmes. Their contributions include fostering partnerships with government bodies and civil society organisations, supporting community activities, and offering their facilities for broader use. The symposium delved into opportunities for advancing scientific research in Oman, featuring sessions led by experts and



The scientific research symposium was held under the auspices of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

researchers. Key discussions included the current status of scientific journals, research citations, and the national infrastructure to support research. The sessions aimed to align with Oman Vision 2040, which envisions a knowledge-based economy driven by innovation and excellence. Among the key objectives of the symposium were: Reviewing efforts to support scientific publishing in the Sultanate of Oman. Highlighting the Shuaa platform as an open-source repository for scientific

production, exploring strategies for establishing peer-reviewed academic journals and evaluating scientific publishing indicators and their impact. Others included identifying opportunities and challenges in enhancing scientific publishing and discussing the potential need for a dedicated office or centre to support publishing efforts in Oman. The event also underscored the importance of fostering a culture of research excellence and enhancing the quality of scientific outputs in Oman.

Oman chapter of ‘Motta Global’ fights body shaming

MUSCAT: The Oman chapter of ‘Motta Global,’ an international organisation now active in over 20 countries, hosted its inaugural meetup at Darsait Beach on Friday. The gathering was not focused on the challenges of baldness, but rather on embracing it with pride and inspiring others to do the same. Their mission extends to supporting individuals facing body shaming, fostering a sense of community, and promoting empowerment and positivity. As part of the ‘Stop Body Shaming’ campaign, several bald individuals in Oman gathered for the first time, creating a valuable opportunity for like-minded people to connect and share their experiences. Although the initial meetup included just nine members, Bipin Konni, the Oman coordinator of Motta Global, is hopeful that more participants will join the organisation soon. Bipin, a prominent food vlogger in Oman, noted that “the chapter



First meet up of Oman chapter of body shaming awareness at Darsait beach

not only addresses the cause of bald heads but also tackles various other body-shaming issues like obesity, skin tone, and more. The campaign for stopping body shaming concluded at Kozhikode beach on Sunday, while the Oman chapter plans to network and draw up their next steps.” Other members of the Oman chapter include Bipin B Varghese from Majid Al Futtaim, Shiju Kadavil from Al Naba, Santhosh from IMD Wadi Kabir, Bibindas Puthenveettille, Kiran Kollannur

from Golden Arena United, Al Maabella, C K Suvish from Mustafa Sultan, Vinay from Zubair Automotive, Sumesh Hariharan from Texel Energy Services, Al Ghubra, and Vinod from Badr Al Sama. The Oman initiative follows a unique gathering that took place in August 2024 at Thekkinkadu Maidan in Thrissur, Kerala. Participants, dressed in blue jeans and white shirts, all shared a distinctive feature — bald heads. This event led to the creation of ‘Motta Global,’ the world's first international organisation for bald individuals. ‘Motta,’ which means bald in Malayalam, captures the spirit of this movement. Additionally, the Motta Global UAE Chapter, a global Malayalee association of shaved heads, also launched its body-shaming awareness campaign in Dubai. Similar groups across the world held placards and shared photos on social media, uniting against body shaming and promoting acceptance.



**P.O. Box: 147, Jawharat A' Shatti, PC 134, Sultanate of Oman,
Fax: 24698496, Website: [www.soharpower.com](#)**

Notice to reduce the share capital and legal reserve of Sohar Power Company SAOG

Based on the decision of the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of Sohar Power Company SAOG (the **Company**) held on 6 October 2024 and in accordance with the provisions of Article 142 of the Commercial Companies Law (Royal Decree 18/2019), the Company, a public joint stock company registered in the commercial register with commercial registration number 1761773, announces that it is in the process of reducing its capital and legal reserve as follows:

- Reduction of the paid-up capital of the Company from RO 22,101,000 (twenty-two million one hundred one thousand Omani Rials) to RO 2,000,000 (two million Omani Rials).
- Reduction of the legal reserve of the Company to one-third of the paid-up capital from RO 4,373,000 (Omani Rials four million three hundred seventy-three thousand) to RO 666,667 (Omani Rials six hundred sixty six thousand six hundred sixty seven).

Anyone who has any objections regarding this reduction should submit their reasons in writing to the following address:

Sohar Power Company SAOG, PO Box 147, PC 134, Jawharat Al Shatti, Muscat, Oman, sreenath.hebbar@soharpower.com for the attention of Sreenath Hebbar with a copy of the objection to be submitted to the Secretariat of the Commercial Register at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion within Fifteen (15) days from the date hereof.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Indonesia's new President Prabowo Subianto is sworn in during his presidential inauguration at the House of Representative building. — Reuters

PRABOWO TAKES UP INDONESIAN PRESIDENCY

JAKARTA: Indonesia's Prabowo Subianto on Sunday took over as president of the world's third-largest democracy, vowing to combat internal issues such as corruption that plague the country and to make it more self-sufficient. The 73-year-old has undergone a remarkable transformation, from being a former military commander facing unproven allegations of rights abuses to sweeping the polls and now leading the country of 280 million people. Prabowo officially became Indonesia's eighth president on Sunday morning after he was sworn in during a ceremony at Indonesia's parliament.

Prabowo , who unsuccessfully ran for the presidency twice before, said in a fiery speech to lawmakers he would be president for all Indonesians and challenged the nation to help him face down the country's problems. "We must always realise that a free nation is where the people are free," Prabowo said, at times raising his voice. — Reuters



Police use water cannons to disperse supporters of Rabi Lamichhane, in Pokhara. — AFP

NEPALIS CLASH WITH POLICE OVER POLITICIAN'S CHARGES

KATHMANDU: Nepali police fired tear gas on Sunday at thousands of protesters loyal to a former deputy premier once seen as a rising political star, as he appeared in court on charges his supporters say are politically motivated. Rabi Lamichhane faces charges of fraud and organised crime related to the alleged embezzlement of funds from a financial cooperative prior to his entry into politics, a case that has garnered national attention.

Lamichhane rejects the charges, which his angry supporters say were trumped up. Lamichhane is well known for his career as a television host in the Himalayan republic, making his name as an anti-corruption crusader through aggressive interviews with public officials. Police said thousands of people took part in the protests on Sunday, with baton-wielding officers blocking off areas around the district court and spraying crowds with water cannon and tear gas. — AFP

KENYA'S IMPEACHED DEPUTY PRESIDENT BLASTS BOSS

NAIROBI: Kenya's ousted Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua on Sunday lashed out at his boss William Ruto as "vicious" and cruel, warning that his life could be in danger. Gachagua was impeached by the Senate on five out of 11 charges levelled against him on Thursday, but a court order put his replacement process on hold. "I am shocked by how vicious a man I helped to be president, believed in and was persecuted when I supported could

be so vicious against me," he told reporters.

The embattled 59-year-old said his security had been withdrawn and his entire staff sent on compulsory leave. "If anything happens to me or my family, President William Ruto must be held to account," he said, claiming past attempts at his life. He was speaking after he was discharged from a hospital in the capital Nairobi where he was being treated for severe chest pains.

Gachagua fell ill on Thursday barely an hour before he was due to testify in the unprecedented two-day impeachment trial.

The upper house proceeded to vote on his removal from his office after his lawyers unsuccessfully bid to postpone the session. He was found guilty on charges including threatening judges and practising ethnically divisive politics, but cleared of corruption and money-laundering. — AFP



Civil defence members put out a fire at a damaged site, in the aftermath of Israeli strikes on Beirut's southern suburbs. — Reuters

ISRAEL ESCALATES BEIRUT BOMBING

BEIRUT: Fighting raged on two fronts on Sunday as Israel targeted what it said was a Hezbollah "command centre" in the Lebanese capital. The strikes on Hezbollah's south Beirut stronghold came after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused the group of attempting to assassinate him by targeting his residence. Lebanon's official National News Agency (NNA) said Israel's strikes on Beirut hit a residential building in Haret Hreik near a mosque and a hospital.

The Israeli military said it hit the "command centre of Hezbollah's intelligence headquarters" and underground weapons facility in Beirut and that it killed three gunmen in other strikes. It later said about 70 projectiles fired from Lebanon crossed into Israel within a matter of minutes, and that it intercepted some of them. — AFP

UN condemns Israeli airstrikes in Beit Lahiya

THE UN peace envoy for the Middle East on Sunday condemned continued attacks on civilians after Israeli air strikes in Gaza's Beit Lahiya killed dozens late on Saturday. "This follows weeks of intensified operations resulting in scores of civilian fatalities and near total lack of humanitarian aid reaching populations in the north," said Tor Wennesland, the UN Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. Israel's military said it intensified attacks in northern Gaza in early October to prevent Hamas group from regrouping.

A total of 87 people were killed or missing under the rubble after an Israeli attack on Saturday on Beit Lahiya in northern Gaza, the enclave's health ministry said on Sunday. The Israeli military has said it was investigating reports of the incident, which left one of the highest casualty tolls in months. Gaza's health ministry says the strikes have killed hundreds since the Israeli campaign escalated.

Gaza's health ministry said rescue operations were being hindered by communications problems and by the Israeli military operation still going on around the area, close to the border line with Israel, the ministry said. "Victims are still under the rubble and on the road and ambulance teams and civil emergency can't reach them," it said in a statement.

The strike, late on Saturday night, came two weeks into a major operation around the town of Jabalia, just to the south of Beit Lahiya, where Israeli troops backed with tanks have been trying to squeeze out remaining Hamas fighters. "Horrific scenes unfolding in Gaza, amidst conflict,



Palestinians gather at the site of Israeli strikes on residential buildings, in Beit Lahiya. — Reuters

relentless Israeli strikes & an ever-worsening humanitarian crisis. I condemn the continuing attacks on civilians," UN Middle East peace envoy Tor Wennesland posted on X. "Hostages must be freed, displacement of Palestinians must cease, & civilians must be protected," he added.

Evacuation orders, directing people south, have fuelled fears among many Palestinians that the operation is intended to clear them out of the northern part of Gaza in order to help ensure Israeli control

of the area after the war. Israel has denied any such plans, saying it is trying to protect civilians and separate them from groups' fighters.

Residents in Jabalia said Israeli forces raided shelters housing displaced families and detained dozens of men. More than 42,600 Palestinians have been killed during Israel's ground offensive, according to Palestinian health ministry figures, and thousands more are thought to be buried under the rubble. — Reuters

CHANGE COST

Protests cost garment industry \$400m



Bangladesh's vital garment industry lost \$400 million due to unrest following the student-led revolution that ousted the country's autocratic premier, industry leaders said on Sunday, insisting the situation was now "stable". The South Asian nation's 3,500 garment factories account for around 85 per cent of its \$55 billion in annual exports, but the unrest caused significant disruptions. Bangladesh is the world's second-biggest exporter of clothing by value after China. — AFP

FUEL LEAK

Singapore reports oil spill from pipeline



An oil pipeline belonging to British giant Shell began leaking into the sea on Sunday, Singaporean authorities said, adding that the spill was stopped and cleanup crews deployed. The spill started early on Sunday morning on a pipeline running between two islands, Bukom and Bukom Kecil, Singapore's Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) said in a statement. "The leak was reported to have stopped at source," the MPA said. — AFP

STATE HEAD

Vietnam to start selection of president



Vietnam's national assembly will start the process of choosing a president today, a senior official said. "The party central committee agreed to recommend personnel with appropriate conditions and will submit to the national assembly to approve the position of the state president of the socialist republic of Vietnam," Nguyen Thanh Hai, the head of the committee for deputy affairs, said at a press conference on Sunday. — AFP

PEOPLEDEMAND



Protesters carry a giant Spanish flag during a demonstration to protest against the ruling government, in Madrid. — AFP

THOUSANDS JOIN RALLY AGAINST SPANISH GOVT

MADRID: Thousands of people packed a Madrid square on Sunday to protest against Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's government and demand an early election, at a rally backed by right-wing parties. Waving red and yellow Spanish flags, protesters massed in the Plaza de Castilla, a large square in the heart of Madrid's financial district and called on Sanchez to resign.

The demonstration was supported by the main opposition conservative Popular Party (PP) and the extreme-right Vox. Speakers attacked the government for a string of policies and decisions, ranging from an amnesty for Catalan independence campaigners to its pacts with regional separatist parties, as well as for corruption probes affecting Socialist party figures and Sanchez's wife Begona Gomez.

Around 25,000 people took part, according to the central government's office in the region. — AFP



SEVEN-STOREY BUILDING COLLAPSE

Kenya police officers give instructions to bystanders to evacuate the area next to a collapsed residential building at Kahawa West residential area in Nairobi. Response teams were responding to a building collapse in Nairobi. — AFP

Harris, Trump duel over endurance as celebrities join campaign

LATROBE: Kamala Harris and Donald Trump invited star power to the campaign trail on Saturday, as they took shots at each other's endurance and urged early voting in battleground states key to the ever-tightening US presidential race. At rallies in Detroit and Atlanta, Harris brought out pop stars Lizzo and Usher respectively to warm up her crowds, while painting her rival Trump as exhausted and unhinged.

The Republican running for a second go in the White House countered those accusations with a marathon speech in Pennsylvania, as billionaire Elon Musk campaigned for him elsewhere in the state. Both candi-

dates are fighting on every front to seal up voters' support in a race that polls suggest is effectively tied with fewer than three weeks to Election Day.

Harris told voters in Detroit that her opponent's platform is "self-consuming" while repeating vows to invest in the working and middle classes. "We stand for the idea that the true measure of the strength of a leader is not based on who you beat down, it's on who you lift up," said Harris.

Later in Atlanta, Harris accused Trump of "ducking debates and cancelling interviews because of exhaustion". "When he does answer a question or speak at a rally -- have



Democratic presidential nominee US Vice-President Kamala Harris reacts as she speaks during a campaign event in Atlanta. — Reuters

you noticed he tends to go off script and ramble, and generally, for the life of him, cannot finish a thought?" she said. "He's called it the weave. But we here we will call it nonsense."

Trump began his more than 90-minute rally with a lengthy monologue on the late golfer Arnold Palmer, for whom the regional airport in Latrobe, where the Republican appeared, is named.

He then launched into his routine, meandering speech that includes attacking migrants, personally denigrating Harris and repeating false claims about the 2020 election.

At rally in Las Vegas, former US president Barack Obama took aim at

Trump, comparing him to a grandfather whose bizarre behaviour would spark worry after his rambling speeches and a strange dance party. "So you would be worried if your grandpa started acting like this. You would,... right? You'd like, call up your brother,... be like, have you seen grandpa lately? What we gonna do? "But this is coming from somebody who wants unchecked power, wants the most powerful office on Earth, with the nuclear codes and all that," said Obama.

Both candidates are spending their final campaign days in pivotal battleground states where early voting is already under way. — AFP

Ukraine drones target Russian explosive plant

UKRAINE said on Sunday it had targeted a crucial Russian explosives factory, located about 750 kilometres from the border, in an overnight drone attack. Kyiv has repeatedly launched drone attacks deep into Russian territory, seeking to hit energy and military sites that it says key to supplying Moscow's attacking army.

A source in the SBU security services said that its drones had struck the Sverdlov explosives factory in Dzerzhinsk, just outside the Russian city of Nizhny Novgorod.

Russian officials confirmed drones had targeted the area but said the attack had been foiled.

"Air defences and electronic warfare means repelled a drone attack on the territory of the Dzerzhinsk industrial zone," Nizhny Novgorod regional governor Gleb Nikitin said on Telegram. "Four employees of the fire station, located on the territory of the industrial enterprise, received light shrapnel wounds," he added.

Kyiv did not say what damage, if any, the attack inflicted on the plant's production capabilities. Moscow's defence ministry said earlier it had downed 110 Ukrainian drones that had been fired at its territory overnight, the largest attempted aerial barrage by Ukraine in two weeks.

Meanwhile, at least 17 people were wounded in an attack on the Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Rig, including a first responder, the state emergency services said. Russia also attacked an energy facility in the northeastern Sumy region, the regional power operator Sumyoblenergo said on Telegram, knocking out electricity for more than 37,000 consumers.

Ukraine is bracing for its toughest winter of the war yet. Russia has destroyed swathes of its generating capacity and continues to



Russian conscripts called up for military service walk with an officer as they depart for garrisons, in Bataysk in the Rostov region. — Reuters

strike energy sites, at a time when temperatures have dropped towards freezing across the country.

Separately, Russian aviation authorities temporarily closed the Kazan airport, around 1,000 kilometres from the Ukraine border, on Sunday morning, citing air safety concerns. The Rosaviatsia agency did not provide a reason for the suspension of flights, although

such restrictions are typically imposed when there are reports of Ukrainian drone attacks in the area.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is set to meet the leaders of China, Brazil and Türkiye in the city later this week for the BRICS summit, the biggest gathering of Moscow's allies and partners inside the country since it attacked Ukraine in February 2022. — AFP

Moldova votes in election, EU referendum

CHISINAU: Moldovans cast their ballots on Sunday in a presidential election and EU referendum at a pivotal moment that could reinforce the small agricultural economy's drive to join the European Union, after allegations of Russian election meddling. As the war in Ukraine rages to the east and turns the political and diplomatic spotlight on the former Soviet republic, it has accelerated its push to escape Moscow's orbit and embarked on the long process of EU accession talks.

Polls show pro-Western incumbent Maia Sandu has a comfortable lead over her 10 rivals on the ballot, though the race will go to a November 3 run-off if she fails to reach the 50% threshold to win outright. Polls show she is likely to face Alexandr Stoianoglo, a former prosecutor-general backed by the traditionally pro-Russian Party of Socialists, if the vote goes to a

Polls show pro-Western incumbent Maia Sandu has a comfortable lead over her 10 rivals on the ballot, though the race will go to a November 3 run-off if she fails to reach the 50% threshold to win outright

second round. Sandu hopes to see a resounding "yes" at the referendum, which will decide whether to insert a clause into the constitution defining EU accession as a goal. "Our vote at the referendum will define our fate for many decades to come," she said after casting her ballot, urging all Moldovans to vote and singling out the diaspora in particular.

Polls show a majority support joining the 27-nation bloc, though five of the candidates have told their supporters to vote "no" or boycott, saying the timing of the referendum is a ruse to boost Sandu's haul at the election. The referendum needs a turnout of at least a third of everyone listed on the electoral rolls to be valid, although the lists are outdated due to emigration.

As of 12:00 pm, turnout at the referendum stood at more than 16%, election officials said. Stoianoglo boycotted the referendum as he

voted, telling reporters the country needed a new government and that he stood for a "balanced" foreign policy that would develop ties with the EU, Russia, United States and China. A weak outcome for Sandu would set the tone for next summer's parliamentary election, where political analysts say her PAS party will face a challenge to retain its majority. Flanked by Romania and Ukraine, the nation of fewer than 3 million people has alternated between pro-Western and pro-Russian courses since the 1991 break-up of the Soviet Union.

Ties with Moscow have deteriorated since Sandu came to power in December 2020. Her government has condemned Russia's February 2022 war of Ukraine, accused Russia of plotting her overthrow and diversified energy supply after Russia reduced gas supplies. — Reuters

OPINION

‘Learning to learn’ is the new goal of education



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is Assoc Prof, Dept of English Language and Translation, SQU

WE are all familiar with the new challenge facing high school and university students: what are future jobs? What specialisation will be in demand for the next couple of decades? What careers will disappear in the age of Artificial Intelligence?

Research suggests that many of the traditional jobs that continue to be popular today may not even exist in the next decade.

The speed at which businesses like travel agencies, photo studios, and even physical stores have decreased points to a rapidly changing business environment. It is not only those changes are happening in today’s world, but also that the rate at which these changes are happening is faster than at any other time in history.

This has implications for educational institutions and everybody involved in academics, including students, parents and instructors. If the content being studied today is going to become irrelevant by the time a student actually joins the workforce, what exactly should be taught? More importantly, how can we train students to keep up with their education long after they have left school and college?

Learning to learn is a concept that addresses these emerging concerns in education.

The European Parliament and Education Council defined the concept in 2006 as “gaining, processing and assimilating new knowledge and skill as well as seeking and making use of guidance. Learning to learn engages learners to build on prior learning and life experiences to use and apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts”.

There are a number of reasons why emerging educational curricula should focus on this strategy of teaching and learning: it focuses on learning styles rather than imposing one specific format, it allows learners to adjust their learning processes, and it also ensures sustainable learning that is in-tune with the times, thus ensuring productivity while ensuring mental health.

LEARNING STYLE

Acknowledging one’s learning style is important as it will impact future action. Whether one is a visual or auditory learner, or one who learns by doing, will determine future efficiency. It will help a person to understand and fine tune the best strategies of learning a new skill or content in their own, personalised manner.

Learning to learn in a metacognitive activity. It is not enough to know a content area. It is more important to reflect on the learning

The only possible solution is to equip youngsters with the skills to negotiate this new world. Students should be made to reflect on how they are learning in addition to what they are leaning

process – what a lesson meant, how it connects to prior knowledge, what was new, and how it can be localised in the learner’s own world. Outside of schools, learning to learn requires self-awareness that schools should promote. This includes six important steps, according to researchers: find one’s unique interest, establish personalised learning strategies, exchange information with others with similar interests, apply new concepts and ideas to everyday activities, reflect on what was learnt and disseminate this information to the community.

Learning to Learn is another form of independent learning. While the latter can be done without training, the former is an acquired, lifelong skill that needs nurture and practice.

If the future unfolding before us is uncertain in terms of knowledge and career options, the only possible solution is to equip youngsters with the skills necessary to negotiate this new world. This does not mean that learning content is unnecessary as it may soon become redundant – it means that students should be made to reflect on how they are learning in addition to what they are leaning. This will increase their confidence in dealing with the challenges of the day after, whatever it may bring.

GAZA WAR, SETTLER ATTACKS RUIN OLIVE HARVEST

YOUSSEF HASSOUNA

After a year of relentless war, Gaza’s olive harvest is set to suffer, while in the occupied West Bank, Palestinian farmers fear to tend their groves due to settler attacks. For generations, olive harvests have been central to Palestinian life and culture. “We are happy that the olive season has started but we are afraid because we are in a state of war,” said Rami Abu Asad, who owns a farm in Deir Al Balah, central Gaza.

Workers picking the olives by hand stay alert, listening for drones or warplanes that could bomb without warning.

“But it is clearly evident (to Israeli forces) that we are workers and we do nothing else,” he said, noting a sweeping Israeli military operation in Jabalia, less than 20 kilometres to the north.

The ongoing war has reduced vast areas of Gaza to rubble, with about 68 per cent of the territory’s agricultural areas damaged by the conflict and farmers unable to fertilise or irrigate their land, the UN says. “The number of remaining olive trees is very small and the costs are very high,” Asad added.

Jamal Abou Shaouish, an agricultural engineer, expects this year’s harvest in Gaza to net just 15,000 tonnes, sharply down from around 40,000 tonnes in the years before the war.

Supply shortages and destruction caused by the war will also impact the quality of olives, while pressing prices have soared due to the lack of fuel needed to run the machinery required for sorting and pressing the oil.

In the West Bank, the harvest has been marred by perennial fears of attacks by Israeli settlers, who regularly prevent Palestinians from accessing their olive groves or outright destroy their orchards.

For Khaled Abdallah, he has made the tough decision not to harvest the olives this season on his land.

“I didn’t even consider going to these lands close to the colony, because the situation is very dangerous,” he said, saying he will instead focus on harvesting olives from a separate property in the village of Jifna, north of Ramallah.

Like other Palestinians who own olive groves near the settlements, Abdallah coordinated with Israeli advocacy organisations to obtain special permits for the crops.

“But there are no longer any rights organisations capable of protecting us from settler attacks, and there is no longer any coordination,” he lamented.

For many poor Palestinian families, the olive season provides a vital source of income.

Earlier this week, UN experts said Palestinian farmers in the occupied West Bank are facing “the most dangerous olive season ever”. — AFP



ASIM AL SHAIDI

The writer is Editor-in-Chief of Oman Arabic daily



Protesters rally to show support to Hezbollah and Palestinians. — Reuters

THE heart of the Arab world lies a deep contradiction that Israel has exploited, creating a rift in Arab consciousness. While many continue to fight for justice, others have been swayed by the complexities of modern politics and media influence. Israel’s joy at the division it has sown in Arab thought is likely greater than its celebration over the death of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar.

For Israel, this is not just a victory on the battlefield, but a profound triumph in the ideological war — one that has shaken a segment of the Arab world to its core.

The death of a resistance fighter like Sinwar, seen by many in the West as the ‘end’ of Hamas, reveals a dangerous misunderstanding of Islamic and Arab resilience.

For those who believe in the Palestinian cause, martyrdom is not the end, but the beginning. It’s a call for perseverance, rooted in centuries of struggle against oppression.

To many Palestinians, the fight against Israeli occupation is a basic right, not a personal vendetta tied to individual leaders. It’s a human cause, born from the desire to reclaim dignity, homeland and freedom — values enshrined in international law and ignored by much of the global community.

Since the events of October 2023, it is clear

that Hamas, the Palestinian resistance, and the wider Arab struggle have evolved.

The war has transformed them, but their resolve remains unbroken. The people of Gaza have endured a year of brutal siege, starvation and massacres — a testament to their resilience. Despite the scorched-earth tactics, their spirit persists, fuelled by a deep-rooted understanding of martyrdom in Islamic thought. This resistance is more than military might; it is about protecting land, honour and the soul of a nation.

Western media, in their celebrations of Sinwar’s death, often miss the point. Al Aqsa’s Flood — a reference to a recent wave of resistance — shocked not just Israel but the West as well. It brought back memories of historical conflicts between Islamic and Western civilisations, leading many to frame this ongoing struggle as a civilisational clash rather than a human rights issue.

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu’s rhetoric of a ‘civilisational war’ resonates with this narrative, framing the conflict as one between the forces of darkness and light. However, from the Arab perspective, this war is about defending basic human dignity on ancestral lands.

Optimism about the future remains strong among many Arabs. The belief that Palestinian sacrifices will soon bear fruit is buoyed by

the mounting global support for the Palestinian cause.

The Israeli narrative is crumbling in the minds of people worldwide, and future generations, including decision-makers, are expected to align with the just cause of Palestine. Yet, this optimism alone is insufficient. The harsh reality is that some Arab nations and factions continue to work against the Palestinian struggle, revealing the deep contradictions within Arab consciousness. These contradictions are not only religious or political but stem from a broader societal problem — an urgent need for educational reform and the development of critical thinking. To rebuild Arab societies and achieve lasting change, a collective shift in consciousness is necessary. Science, knowledge and intellectual growth must replace outdated ideas and illusions.

For the Arab world to truly rise, it must focus on producing scientists, thinkers and leaders capable of building an economic and industrial renaissance — not just accumulating wealth in foreign bank accounts. True progress demands societies that stand firm in their values and are willing to fight for them.

Despite its rightful cause, the Arab world remains plagued by internal disunity and contradictions that undermine its struggle for Palestine. The dream of liberation is difficult to realise when so many forces, both internal and external, are working against it. Some Arab masses have even joined in the enemy’s celebrations, contributing to the erosion of solidarity. However, history has shown that nations can change their destiny if they find the strength to unite and confront their challenges. Japan, China and Germany offer examples of countries that transformed their futures through resilience and reform.

The Arab world stands at a crossroads. It is inconceivable that the dream of liberation can be realised while internal divisions persist, and the collective consciousness remains superficial. The fragility of many Arab states makes the struggle even more challenging. Yet, Palestinians continue to fight, not only for their own freedom but also as part of the broader battle for justice in the Arab world.

Translated by Badr al Dhafari
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Keep your sleeves rolled up



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professional

WOMEN worldwide stand as the backbone of a society. They are the primary caretakers of children and the supervisors of the entire family. As mothers, they are responsible for childrearing and childbearing. A mother’s role extends to shaping her children’s habits of self-control, productivity, hard work, honesty, and integrity.

As a mother, she is often the first teacher a child encounters; it is from her that a child learns societal norms, moral codes, and the principles that govern behaviour. Thus, she plays a crucial role in maintaining discipline within the family. As a nurturing figure, she is also concerned about the physical and emotional welfare of every family member. May the Almighty Allah bless all mothers.

Generally, women act as humble managers of family affairs. For instance, a considerate woman takes on the responsibility of maximising returns on every penny spent. She aims to create a surplus budget rather than a deficit for her family. While spending money, she weighs potential losses against profits and wisely allocates income based on needs, luxuries, and comforts.

This kind of a woman serves as a true companion, partner, and friend to her partner. In addition to being an effective manager, she often sacrifices her personal happiness and comforts to relieve the stress and tension of her husband, thereby creating a positive living environment for

the entire family. In this way, she becomes a source of inspiration.

The growth of any society is often measured by the degree of cultural and social development of women and their contributions to cultural construction. A society that respects women and recognises them as integral members ensures their influential role in shaping and developing the community. To achieve this, outdated traditions that undermine the dignity of women must be wiped out while preserving values and ethics.

KEY PARTNERS

Of course, in today’s world, the importance of women in society is beyond doubt. With their intelligence, ambition, and strength, women have demonstrated that they are key partners in nation-building and capable leaders. The traditional and conservative view of women as merely wives and bearers of children is becoming obsolete. While some women excel as mothers and homemakers, many are also successful in various professional fields.

Today, women serve as army and police officers — roles that were historically restricted to men. They have proven their ability to be full members of society, influencing different aspects of life and being real partners for family and society.

Omani women have also shown dedication in contributing to national develop-

With their intelligence, ambition, and strength, women have demonstrated that they are key partners in nation-building and capable leaders

ment. Since the beginning of the Blessed Omani Renaissance in the 1970s, Omani women have been called upon to roll up their sleeves and share responsibilities with men in building new Oman. They have played a significant role since then.

When he came to the throne, the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos addressed Omani women throughout the country, saying: “We call upon Omani women everywhere, in the villages and cities, in both urban and Bedouin communities, in the hills and mountains, to roll up their sleeves and contribute to the process of economic and social development — everyone, according to their capabilities, experience, skills, and their position in life.” Since then, women in Oman have achieved great milestones that many women in other countries have yet to attain. They have significantly contributed to the well-being of their families, communities and the nation as a whole. Omani women are regarded as reliable partners alongside men in shaping the future of Oman.

The Omani woman has always been the cornerstone of society; she is a mother and caregiver, a wife who manages the household, a sister, and a daughter.

Additionally, she is a decision-maker dedicated to building a brighter future for generations to come. To all Omani women, keep your sleeves rolled up always!

KAMALA HARRIS TO MARK 60TH BIRTHDAY WITH ATLANTA CHURCH VISITS

ANDREA SHALAL
AND STEVE HOLLAND

Democrat Kamala Harris will kick off her 60th birthday on Sunday with two church visits in Georgia, where she plans to rally early voters, while her Republican rival, Donald Trump, spends time at a McDonald’s fast food place in Pennsylvania.

Harris and Trump, who are essentially tied in the race president in the most competitive states, have sharpened their attacks in recent days, while drumming up support for early votes by mail or in person with just 16 days left until the November 5 election.

After being joined on Saturday in Detroit by hometown rapper Lizzo and in Atlanta by pop icon Usher, Harris will get a birthday boost from another music legend, Stevie Wonder, on Sunday when he drops by one of the churches she plans to visit. Vice-President Harris and former President Trump, 78, are focusing on Pennsylvania, Michigan and a handful of other states likely to decide the election, where both parties have strong support and electoral results have been close in past cycles.

Harris and her running mate, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, will double down on Sunday on a “Souls to the Polls” initiative aimed at using gospel performances, national and state faith leaders, elected officials and others to mobilise voters. Harris, who was raised in the teachings of the Black church and sang in a church choir, will attend a service and speak at New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Stonecrest, Georgia, about 50 km east of Atlanta, the campaign said.

She will also speak at Divine Faith Ministries International in Jonesboro, just south of Atlanta, where she plans to encourage worshippers to exercise their voting rights. Wonder will attend and is slated to perform.

After her events, Harris will record an interview with civil rights leader Al Sharpton that will air on Sunday night on MSNBC. Walz will attend service in Saginaw, Michigan, while his wife, Gwen Walz, will visit a church in Las Vegas.

Harris will need strong results in the majority non-white cities of Detroit and Atlanta and their surrounding suburbs to repeat President Joe Biden’s 2020 wins in Michigan and Georgia. — Reuters

The harsh struggle for survival...

THE ISRAELI army has made political rather than military gains during the recent period of the conflict. The murder of some key figures from Hamas and others by sudden or secret attacks is often carried out for political reasons. The aim is clear.

Israel aims to restore confidence as well as faith and belief among its people that the government, army and intelligence services act in a right, proper, and effective way, after a yearlong state of absence of concrete progress on the ground.

However, the Israeli people know that their government, army and intelligence services have not achieved peace nor have they made achievement of mastery or success in the struggle against Palestinians in Gaza.

For a year, the Israelis have never seen peace as they live in disquieting and oppressive thoughts and emotions. Although they take every opportunity to celebrate every minute act they achieve on ground, war masters cannot make an appropriate and counterbalancing compensation for the loss of life of an Israeli soldier killed in fighting. The bereaved families receive nothing but condolences, words of sympathy expressed at an event made to hold up or play up for public notice that serves the propaganda of the military.

Everyday, Israeli soldiers are getting killed. They do not face an organised army, nor do they apply the rules of engagement which other armies deployed during the times of war. As the days pass in the battlefield, Israeli soldiers, as human beings, go through some feelings or show a state of self-conscious confusion and distress by the killing of civilians and unarmed people.

On the other side of the conflict, killing some key figures from Hamas does not mean that the conflict is over. Palestinians fight against Israel is based on an Islamic belief that Muslims, at an end of conflict, achieve either victory or martyrdom. Reaching such a state, there is nothing in between.



Palestinian children sit in the Kamal Adwan Hospital after an Israeli airstrike in Beit Lahia, in the northern Gaza Strip on Sunday. — AFP



**DR MUSALLAM
AL MAANI**

The writer is
Dean of Al Zahra
College for Women,
Sultanate of Oman

The Islamic culture is unique during the times of war. When Muslims pray on ordinary days, they ask Allah to grant them a good ending to their lives. But at the times of war, Muslims address Allah with adoration, confession, supplication, and thanksgiving. They pray at all times to Allah to grant them martyrdom in the battlefield. As Muslims believe in the afterlife, martyrs, as prescribed by Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) are placed in juxtaposition to prophets on the day of judgement.

ADOPT RESISTANCE

With such a way of thinking, non-muslims cannot gain the victory in such a contest. Palestinians, in addition, adopt resistance as a way of fighting. Hamas and Palestinians are akin to an ideological way of thinking, forming an underground organisation to engage in acts deemed as

legitimate fight against occupation forces and collaborators. Resistance does not involve one individual and cannot be solely attributed to one person, but rather an ideology that cannot be easily uprooted.

Palestinians know that the road to liberation or heaven is rough, characterised by harshness, violence, and use of force. They face a merciless enemy, devoid of pity, with no intention to have or show mercy, compassion and forbearance.

While the world stands with hands tied or helpless, the harsh struggle of Palestinians evidently shows a sense of inaction and powerlessness on the part of all countries in this situation. I wholeheartedly urge international players with wisdom and sound judgement to step forward and find a way out for this war that causes and entails suffering and privation. Is there not among you a wise man?

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



SRI LANKA A SECURE 42-RUN WIN OVER HONG KONG

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, OCT 20

Sri Lanka A secured a convincing 42-run win over Hong Kong in the ACC Men's T20 Emerging Teams Asia Cup at Al Amerat on Sunday. Batting first, Sri Lanka A put up an impressive 178-5 in their 20 overs.

Opener Yashoda Lanka, who was adjudged the player of the match, smashed 56 off 44 balls with three boundaries and two sixers. Nuwanidu Fernando (25 off 18), Ramesh Mendis (24 off 12), Pavan Rathnayake (23 off 21), and Sahan Arachchige (23 off 15) were the other main contributors.

For Hong Kong, Ateeq Iqbal took 2-26. In reply, Hong Kong made a disastrous start as they lost four wickets in the first powerplay. In 10 overs, Hong Kong were struggling at 62 for 5 wickets.

Yasim Murtaza hit a 31-ball 44 with four mighty sixers to energise the chase along with Babar Hayat (38 off 41), but the asking rate was too high to reach. Opener Zeeshan Ali (18 off 14) and Martin Coetzee (15 off 12) were the other notable scorers.

Sri Lanka A's bowlers applied consistent pressure with 42 dot balls, restricting Hong Kong's momentum. Nipun Ransika was the best in the business, taking 3 wickets for 17 runs in his 3 overs. Eshan Malinga took 2-20.

Sri Lanka A reached their 100 in 12.5 overs with their batters constructing some useful partnerships to keep up the momentum. Hong Kong lacked good partnerships as they reached 100 in 15.3 overs. This was the first win for Sri Lanka A after their opening loss to Afghanistan A. Hong Kong lost both of their two matches.



Oman eyes strong start in Asian Cup qualifiers



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 20

THE OMAN national under-17 football team is all set to kick off their AFC U-17 Asian Cup Qualifiers in Group J in Singapore, starting on Wednesday and running until Sunday.

Oman's boys aim for a strong start as they will take on hosts Singapore on Wednesday. Following that, they will face Guam on Friday, before concluding the group stage against Tajikistan on Sunday. All matches will be held at Bishan Stadium in Singapore, the venue for the qualifier matches.

Bishan Stadium, one of Singapore's main stadiums, hosts the national team's games and has a capacity of over 3,500 spectators. The stadium is located just 12 kilometres from the national team's accommodation at the hotel.

Oman's junior stars are aiming to revive their past glory, having won the Asian Cup titles twice in 1996 and 2000, and having qualified for the FIFA U-17 World Cup three times: in 1995 in Ecuador (finishing fourth), 1997 in Egypt, and 2001 in Trinidad and Tobago. The junior Red Warriors are participating in the Asian Cup for the 11th time, aiming for their 12th appearance in this prestigious continental event.



Upon their arrival on Saturday, under the guidance of national coach Anwar al Habsi, the team began their daily training sessions to adapt to the local weather conditions. The warm-up session, lasting an hour, started with a speech from the head coach, emphasising the significance of this Asian assignment. He urged the players to give their utmost effort to secure the team's goal of qualifying for the AFC U-17 Asian Cup finals in Saudi Arabia next year.

Following the warm-up, the players went through recovery exercises after the long journey and engaged in tactical drills on the pitch at Geylang Training Centre.

Training sessions will continue on Monday and Tuesday ahead of the opening game against Singapore on Wednesday.

Oman are placed in Group J alongside Tajikistan, Guam, and hosts Singapore. Oman's junior stars are working hard to secure a place in the finals, scheduled to be held in Saudi Arabia from April 3 to 20, 2025.

All 10 group winners, along with the five best-placed runners-up, will qualify for the 20th edition of the AFC U-17 Asian Cup. Saudi Arabia, two-time winners (1985, 1988), have already qualified as hosts of the finals for the second time, after 1992.

Huge turnout as India 'A' edge Pakistan Shaheens in thriller

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, OCT 20

Treating the capacity crowd to a blockbuster thriller at the Oman Cricket Academy, India A began their ACC Men's Emerging Teams Asia Cup T20 in Muscat with a narrow seven-run victory against Pakistan A (Shaheens) on Saturday night.

Chasing 184 for victory, Pakistan Shaheens ended their innings at 176-7 in 20 overs. Pacer Anshul Kamboj claimed 3-33, while Rasikh Salam (2-30) and Nishant Sandhu (2-15) impressed among the Indian bowlers. Kamboj was awarded man of the match for his crucial wickets. Pakistan Shaheens required 17 runs from the final over.

The first ball from Anshul Kamboj was hit by Abdul Samad straight to Abhishek Sharma, who made no mistake as Samad departed for 25 from 15 balls. The third ball went for a boundary past the wicketkeeper, leaving Pakistan needing 12 runs from 3 balls.

India A will next play against UAE at 5:30 pm, while Pakistan A will face Oman at 1 pm on Monday



The next ball was a dot, and the last delivery went for four past the wicketkeeper, leaving Pakistan Shaheens seven runs short. The full house at the OCA Stadium applauded the thrilling encounter. Among the attendees were Indian Ambassador Amit Narang and other officials.

Pakistan Shaheens started their chase of 184 in strong fashion, with captain Mohammed Harris hitting a six off the first ball from Indian

pacer Anshul Kamboj, but Kamboj responded by bowling Harris out with the next delivery.

Arafat Minhas was the Shaheens' top scorer, with a 29-ball 41, including five boundaries and one six. Qasim Akram contributed 27 off 21 balls.

India A, having won the toss and elected to bat first, posted 183 for eight wickets, with captain Tilak Varma leading from the front with a 35-

ball 44, including two fours and two sixes. Openers Prabhsimran Singh (36 off 19 balls) with three fours and three sixes, and Abhishek Sharma (35 off 22) with five fours and two sixes, gave India A a solid start at the Oman Cricket Academy grounds.

Nehal Wadhwa (25) and Ramandeep Singh (17) made useful contributions as the score reached 183. For Pakistan A, Sufiyan Muqem took two wickets for 28 runs.

There were numerous thrilling moments in the match, which captivated the audience as the Indian openers and captain hit several sixes into the crowd and out of the park. Pakistan's players also impressed with some stunning shots throughout the innings.

Ramandeep's one-handed diving catch near the boundary to dismiss the dangerous Yasir Khan was the highlight of the match, as India excelled in fielding.

India A will next play against UAE at 5:30 pm, while Pakistan A will face Oman at 1 pm on Monday.

SHORT TAKES



Norris races ahead of Colapinto during the qualify. — AFP

NORRIS ON POLE IN AUSTIN WITH VERSTAPPEN ALONGSIDE

AUSTIN: McLaren's Lando Norris hailed the best qualifying lap of his career after beating Red Bull rival and Formula One leader Max Verstappen to pole position at the US Grand Prix on Saturday.

Verstappen, 54 points clear of Norris in the standings after winning the earlier sprint at Austin's Circuit of the Americas, might have gone faster but George Russell crashed his Mercedes in the dying seconds and forced everyone to ease off. Russell was unhurt and climbed out of the car.

Norris had set a storming provisional pole time of one minute 32.330 seconds with his first flying lap and Verstappen was 0.031 slower.

Red Bull's triple world champion looked quicker on his second run but Russell's accident in the final sector brought out double yellow warning flags.

The pole was Norris's career sixth, as well as fourth in the last five races and first in the United States, and he was delighted.

"It just came together perfectly. It was a very, very good lap. I'd probably say quite comfortably the best of my career," said the 24-year-old.

"It's what we needed to do. We have been on the back foot pretty much the whole weekend. We haven't had the pace of the Ferraris or Red Bulls. So I had to do something and today I did that. A cool lap and a nice way to start the race tomorrow."

Team boss Andrea Stella agreed it was "pretty much perfect". Verstappen won in Austin last year and his sprint victory ended an eight-race losing run dating back to Austria in June, since when Norris has whittled away at the lead.

"On the first lap in Q3 (the final phase), I lost quite a bit of time," said the Dutch driver. "I knew we had another run but unfortunately I couldn't finish the lap. Otherwise, I think we had a really good shot."

Ferrari's Carlos Sainz, who finished second in the sprint with Norris third, and team-mate Charles Leclerc filled the second row.

"We've done a good step in the right direction. I was three-tenths up on my lap going into Turn 16 with only two corners left, but easy to say now," said the Spaniard. — Reuters

New Zealand crush India to end 36-year wait



New Zealand's Will Young plays a shot during the fifth and final day of the first Test cricket match between India and New Zealand at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru on Sunday. — Reuters

NEW ZEALAND SEALED their first test win in India since 1988 after chasing down a tricky target in hostile conditions to overcome the hosts by eight wickets on the final day of the first test on Sunday.

After dismissing India for their lowest home total of 46 and making 402 in reply, New Zealand bowled out Rohit Sharma's side for 462 in the second innings to lay the platform for a 1-0 lead in the three-match series. Will Young (48 not out) and Rachin Ravindra (39 not out) remained calm in the pressure storm after the loss of two early wickets to help New Zealand score the 107 needed, earning their team only a third win on Indian soil in 69 years.

That New Zealand achieved the famous result in the absence of injured batting mainstay Kane Williamson was credit to their belief, as they became only the third team after England and Australia to beat India at home since 2013.

Pace bowlers Matt Henry and Will O'Rourke claimed a combined 15 wickets in the match.

"It was extremely difficult," said new captain Tom Latham, who took the role permanently after Tim Southee stepped down following their 2-0 defeat in Sri Lanka last month. "There have been a lot of teams that have come here over a long period of time. It was 36 years ago that we last won here so it's a really special feeling to be in this position. "The work we did in the first and second innings with the ball and bat really set the game up for us. It's a proud moment for this group and one we'll celebrate."

New Zealand got off to a bad start when play began after a rain delay when Latham fell lbw to Jasprit Bumrah to the second ball of the day for a duck.

Bumrah and fellow pace bowler Mohammed Siraj made life difficult for the New Zealand batsmen, as India looked to do what no team have done in test history and win a match after conceding a first-innings lead of more than 350 runs.

The second Test begins on Thursday in Pune. The third is on November 1 in Mumbai. — Reuters

‘Don’t leave tennis’, Djokovic tells Nadal after ‘amazing rivalry’

RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA: Novak Djokovic implored long-time adversary Rafael Nadal to put off his planned retirement after defeating the Spaniard Saturday in what was likely to be the final chapter of their “amazing rivalry”.

“Don’t leave tennis, man,” Djokovic said in an on-court interview after beating Nadal in straight sets 6-2, 7-6 (7/5) at the “Six Kings Slam” exhibition in Saudi Arabia.

He added that their battles over the years had been “very intense” and told Nadal he hoped they could one day “sit on a beach somewhere” and have a drink.

Nadal, 38, announced on October 10 that he would retire from tennis after the Davis Cup Finals in Malaga next month.

Organisers of the Saudi event billed Saturday’s match as perhaps Nadal’s last singles contest as a professional.

Nadal said on Thursday he was unsure whether he would be fit enough to play singles in Malaga.

Djokovic and Nadal — two of the

sport’s famed “Big Three” along with Roger Federer — had faced each other 60 times on the main tour prior to Saturday’s exhibition match, with Djokovic holding a narrow 31-29 edge.

Their last encounter came during the Paris Olympics on the same Roland Garros courts where Nadal won 14 French Open titles, though Djokovic triumphed easily 6-1, 6-4.

Djokovic has racked up 24 Grand Slam titles in his career, two more than Nadal.

Saturday’s match was mostly one-sided, with Nadal spraying errors and Djokovic wrapping up the first set in just 31 minutes.

Feeding off the support of the partisan crowd who openly cheered Djokovic’s double-faults, Nadal rallied to push the second set to a tie-break, reeling off winners and even treating fans to one last iconic fist pump before succumbing to Djokovic.

“It’s great to see him still fighting even though he’s had injuries and struggles,” Djokovic, 37, told a post-



Serbia's Djokovic and Spain's Nadal pose after their third place match. — Reuters

match press conference.

It was “a very emotional day, special day” because it was the “last time I play my biggest rival, Nadal,” he added.

“I’ve witnessed Andy Murray retiring this year, Roger (Federer) a few years ago as well. And now Rafa, you know. It’s tough in some way to see them go, because all of my career, basically, I’ve played with them.”

After being presented with a golden tennis racket, Nadal in turn thanked Djokovic for the “amazing rivalry” and “for all the moments that we shared on court”.

In the exhibition final on Satur-

day, Australian Open and US Open winner Jannik Sinner outlasted French Open and Wimbledon champion Carlos Alcaraz, avenging his loss in Beijing earlier this month.

“I wake up in the morning trying to understand the ways how to beat him,” Sinner said in an on-court interview after winning the match 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 6-3, adding that he hoped their rivalry would last “as long as possible”.

Alcaraz has a 6-4 edge in head-to-head tour contests.

Saudi Arabia’s push into tennis took off last year with its first ATP Tour event — the Next Gen ATP Finals in Jeddah — and exhibition matches pitting Djokovic against Alcaraz and Aryna Sabalenka against Ons Jabeur.

The Women’s Tennis Association (WTA) announced in April that Riyadh would host the next three editions of the Tour Finals, featuring the top eight singles players and doubles teams.

The 2024 showpiece will be staged from November 2-9. — AFP

ARSENAL SUFFER SHOCK FIRST DEFEAT OF SEASON



Bournemouth's Ryan celebrates scoring their first goal. — Reuters



Bournemouth's Ryan celebrates scoring their first goal with Kluivert and Antoine.



Bournemouth's Kluivert celebrates scoring their second goal. — Reuters

ANDY JALIL
Bournemouth, Oct 20

WITH TWO second-half goals in a space of nine minutes, Bournemouth ended Arsenal's unbeaten run of seven Premier League matches this season with a 2-nil defeat. It was the Gunner's second league defeat of 2024 and their first away loss this calendar year.

Arsenal manager, Mikel Arteta, whose side had to play over an hour of the match with 10 men after the sending-off of William Saliba, said: "We are very disappointed and gutted we had to play in that context again. It was even more difficult than the previous two that we have faced this season. To do it for 65 or 68 minutes with 10 men at this level, it's just impossible".

He added: "I cannot fault the team for their effort and their commitment. There was a big moment at 0-0 when we had a one-v-one with the keeper and we don't score. Then at the other end we do that (foul). We need to play

“We are very disappointed and gutted we had to play in that context again. It was even more difficult than the previous two that we have faced this season. To do it for 65 or 68 minutes with 10 men at this level, it's just impossible

MIKEL ARTETA
Arsenal manager

11 with 11. We got away with it twice (when they salvaged a point) but we have to accept it, move on.”

Just around the half hour came the decisive moment when Saliba was first shown the yellow card for bringing down Evanilson from behind just near the centre circle when a scoring opportunity was developing for Bournemouth. But then VAR got involved and Robert Jones, the referee, brought out the red card.

Bournemouth were a well organised side and put pressure on Arsenal throughout the first half. It was a well designed win although the decisions, fair as they were, did help the win. Arsenal were poor in defence on occasions and their midfield was overrun. They seemed to miss Bukayo Saka who is out with a hamstring injury and Raheem Sterling on the right wing was not as effective.

Bournemouth missed chances to take the lead before the break. Antoine Semenyo and Marcus Tavernier wasted good openings after David Raya, in the Arsenal goal, fumbled while Mikel Merino, for the visitors, shot wide from just ten yards, it was a bad miss for the Gunners. Another chance was missed by them when Gabriel Martinelli shot straight at Kepa Arrizabalaga on a one-on-one situation.

With 20 minutes remaining, Bournemouth went into the lead from a short corner taken by Lewis Cook from which Kluivert gave a short pass to the unmarked substitute Ryan Christie who drove the ball powerfully into the net.

The second goal followed in the 79th minute when Jakub Kiwior lost control of the ball which went to Evanilson who was brought down by Raya when he seemed likely to score and the obvious penalty was converted by Kluivert.

This was Bournemouth's only second ever Premier League win against Arsenal and first in over six years — since January 2018. Their delighted manager, Andoni Iraola, said: "It was quite a mature win because it is tricky playing against ten. We had to control the game, attack, but don't lose our minds, as they can be a threat still."

BUSINESS



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OMAN LAUNCHES 72ND GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT BONDS



The bonds will have a maturity period of five years and an annual coupon rate of 4.75 per cent.

MUSCAT: The Government of the Sultanate of Oman, through the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank of Oman, has announced the 72nd issue of Government Development Bonds, offering RO 75 million with an option to increase.

The bonds will have a maturity period of five years and an annual coupon rate of 4.75 per cent. Public subscription for these bonds will

The bonds will be issued on November 5, 2024, with semi-annual interest payments on May 5 and November 5 until maturity on November 5, 2029.

open on October 27, 2024, and close on October 31, 2024, with the auction set for November 3, 2024.

The bonds will be issued on November 5, 2024, with semi-annual interest payments on May 5 and November 5 until maturity on November 5, 2029.

The bonds are available to both local and international investors, with subscriptions through competitive bids made via com-

mercial banks operating in Oman. Non-banking institutions and individuals may also participate with bids of RO 1 million or more, subject to approval by commercial banks.

The Government of Oman guarantees these bonds, which can be traded on the Muscat Stock Exchange and borrowed against at licensed local banks. Bondholder information will be maintained by Muscat Clearing and Depository Company, ensuring transparency and proper record-keeping. — **ONA**

Al Wusta a vital regional hub for maritime logistics

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 20

THE 5th Duqm Forum, held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, focused on the vast investment opportunities available in Al Wusta Governorate, emphasising the blue economy, food security, logistics, tourism and renewable energy sectors.

The event was organised by the Al Wusta Governorate branch of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in collaboration with the Foreign Ministry and the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones.

Shaikh Ahmed bin Musallam al Kathiri, Governor of Al Wusta, highlighted the governorate's role as a key national economic centre, integral to Oman Vision 2040.

Rich in natural resources, Al Wusta has attracted significant investments, particularly in oil and gas. Efforts to improve infrastructure and public services in the governorate are valued at RO 7.5 million, while tourism and entertainment development projects have secured RO 13 million.

The governorate's strategic location in the Wilayat of Duqm positions it as a vital regional hub for maritime logistics, with proximity to global ports and industrial zones, contributing to Oman's broader goals of economic diversification and job creation.

Al Kathiri announced that the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZD) attracted over RO 6 billion in total investments by the third quarter of 2024. He also underscored the importance of the Duqm Refinery, a project valued at over \$8 billion with a production capacity of 230,000 barrels per day.

In renewable energy, Al Wusta is home to five of the eight national projects for



Shaikh Ahmed bin Musallam al Kathiri, Governor of Al Wusta

In renewable energy, Al Wusta is home to five of the eight national projects for green hydrogen, solar and wind energy, part of a broader \$49 billion investment in sustainable energy. These projects are positioning Oman as a global competitor in the renewable energy market.

green hydrogen, solar, and wind energy, part of a broader \$49 billion investment in sustainable energy. These projects are positioning Oman as a global competitor in the renewable energy market.

In addition to energy, the governorate is advancing blue carbon initiatives, including a \$100 million project to establish artificial lakes for mangrove cultivation, aimed at reclaiming 20,000 hectares of

land to accommodate 100 million mangrove trees.

This project is expected to generate environmental and economic benefits, alongside fish wealth development, a sector that contributes 37 per cent of the governorate's GDP.

Current investments in the fisheries sector total RO 611.5 million, with high-impact projects like the Al Jazar shrimp farming project valued at RO 462 million, targeting an annual production capacity of 220,000 tonnes. Other key initiatives include RO 105 million in fish and food industries, and RO 102 million in marine fishing port projects across Duqm, Mahout, and Al Jazar.

The forum was inaugurated by His Highness Sayyid Harib bin Thuwaini al Said, Assistant Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers for Conferences.

SOHAR Port and Freezone a pioneer in clean energy and hydrogen trade

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, OCT 20

AS the world intensifies efforts to decarbonise, ports are increasingly crucial in developing clean energy trade corridors. These commercial hubs are transforming from traditional logistics centres into key players in the energy transition, focusing on the production, storage and export of clean energy.

In Oman, SOHAR Port and Freezone (SOHAR) is at the forefront of this transformation, becoming a leader in hydrogen production and green energy trade. In an interview with *Oman Observer*, Dr Abdullah bin Sulaiman al Abri, Vice-President Sustainability at SOHAR Port and Freezone, highlights the role of ports in driving clean energy innovation and supporting a low-carbon global economy.

BUILDING THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR CLEAN ENERGY

A port's success in clean energy relies heavily on its infrastructure.



We are setting new standards for the shipping industry, particularly through our LNG bunkering facility, which will reduce emissions from global shipping routes.

DR ABDULLAH BIN SULAIMAN AL ABRI
Vice-President Sustainability
SOHAR Port and Freezone



Innovative projects are key to solidifying SOHAR's role in clean energy.

With the rising demand for hydrogen, ports with advanced capabilities are emerging as leaders. "Ports today are not just about logistics; they are hubs of innovation, especially in clean energy," says Dr Al Abri.

SOHAR Port, with its integrated infrastructure, is well-positioned to become a major player in the clean energy transition.

SOHAR has developed a robust infrastructure for hydrogen production, aligning with global decarbonisation trends. "We have a diverse

portfolio of industries producing key commodities like ammonia and methanol, both of which rely heavily on hydrogen," explains Dr Al Abri.

This positions SOHAR as a crucial link in the hydrogen supply chain, connecting producers with consumers in Europe and Asia. In addition to hydrogen production, SOHAR leads in energy and resource efficiency, electrification, and carbon capture, utilisation, and storage (CCUS).

These initiatives enhance the port's competitiveness and set new

standards in clean energy trade.

INNOVATIVE PROJECTS AND DE-CARBONISATION INITIATIVES

Innovative projects are key to solidifying SOHAR's role in clean energy. A groundbreaking initiative is the construction of the MENA's first liquefied natural gas (LNG) bunkering facility, crucial for maritime decarbonisation.

"We are setting new standards for the shipping industry, particularly through our LNG bunkering facility, which will reduce emissions from global shipping routes," says Dr Al Abri.

This project supports global efforts to decarbonise the maritime sector, a significant carbon emitter. By offering cleaner fuels to ships, SOHAR contributes to making shipping more sustainable. The port is also repurposing existing assets to expedite the energy transition, enhancing its role as a key export hub for clean energy.

"Our focus is on leveraging what we already have while investing in future-ready solutions," Dr Al Abri notes.

ADVERTORIALS

NEW LEGEND



HEAD FOR AN OFF-ROAD ADVENTURE WITH 4X4 FORD BRONCO

MUSCAT: Fans of Ford SUVs can now own the powerful Bronco and enjoy exclusive benefits, 5 years/100,000 km of free service, a 5-year/100,000 km manufacturer's warranty, 5 years/100,000 km of roadside assistance and 1-year free registration. This limited-time offer is valid until November 7, 2024.

Step into the driver's seat of Ford's legendary Bronco and feel the thrill of adventure as it makes its iconic comeback. Built tough and packed with power, the all-new Bronco line-up — featuring the classic two-door, the first-ever four-door and the rugged Bronco Sport — invites you to explore without limits. Every Bronco model is engineered to deliver exhilarating off-road experiences, staying true to the spirit of the original 1966 Bronco and its rich racing heritage. With state-of-the-art technology and features tailored for today's explorers, it's a vehicle designed for those who seek thrilling adventures.

The Bronco brand offers much more than just a drive. Its heritage-inspired design, cutting-edge engineering and smart off-road technology make it the ultimate companion for outdoor enthusiasts looking to conquer uncharted territories.

Whether you're venturing deep into the wilderness or navigating your everyday commute, Bronco is all about unleashing your adventurous spirit.

Like its legendary predecessor, the new Bronco delivers ultimate 4x4 capability with confidence.

Equipped with the exclusive Terrain Management System featuring G.O.A.T. Modes (Go Over Any Terrain), it empowers drivers — beginners and experts alike — to tackle any landscape.

From Normal and Eco modes for daily driving, to Baja, Mud/Ruts and Rock Crawl for off-roading, Bronco ensures every journey is as thrilling as it is effortless.

At the heart of Bronco's off-road prowess lies its advanced 4x4 system, available in two configurations.

Lulu Oman hosts ‘Battle of the Bakers’ season 2

LULU Hypermarket Oman recently concluded the exhilarating ‘Battle of the Bakers Season 2’ contest, an electrifying competition held as part of its World Food Fest, powered by Dahabi Oman.

From October 2 to 4, 2024, Nujum Mall in Al Amerat became the battleground for some of Oman's most talented bakers, as they competed to earn the prestigious title of “Ultimate Baking Champions 2024”.

The event's star-studded judging panel included culinary heavyweights: Chef Abdullah al Hashmi, Development Chef of the MENAT Region; Chef Issa al Balushi, President of Oman Chef's Guild and Brand Ambassador for A'saffa Foods and Shahi Foods and Spices; and Chef Achyutananda Das, Executive Pastry Chef at Sheraton Hotels & Resorts.

The two-phase competition brought together six teams of five participants each, all passionate bakers and skilled cake decorators from across Oman.

Open to individuals aged 18 and above, the contest kicked off with a thrilling mystery box challenge, featuring Dahabi Patent Flour as the secret and key ingredient.

Teams were tasked with baking the perfect sponge at home using the mystery box ingredient before returning to face the next level.

Phase two had the contestants racing against time with a high-



The two-phase competition brought together six teams of five participants each, all passionate bakers and skilled cake decorators from across Oman.

speed trolley race to gather ingredients to be used while crafting final cake masterpieces. Contestants were judged on procedure, presentation and taste.

The final results were nothing short of spectacular, with the winning team's taking home a gift voucher worth RO 250, RO 150 and RO 100, respectively.

Commenting on the success of the event, Shabeer K A, Regional Director of Lulu Hypermarkets Oman, said, “I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the winners of the Battle of the Bakers Season 2.

This contest was an exciting journey filled with creativity, passion and enthusiasm. We are grateful to Dahabi Oman and Cake Talk for their invaluable partnership in making this event a resounding success.”

He continued, “From the mesmerising cake creations to the intense final moments of judging, every aspect of the contest was packed with thrill and excitement. This event wasn't just a showcase of talent, but also a chance for participants and spectators alike to enjoy an unforgettable experience.”

VOLKSWAGEN OMAN HOSTS TEST DRIVE OF ALL-NEW SUV TIGUAN

MUSCAT: Volkswagen Oman, represented by Premium Motors, recently hosted an exclusive media meet-and-greet at their showroom, where journalists had the opportunity to test drive the all-new Volkswagen Tiguan, now available in Oman.

The test drive took participants on a scenic route to the St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort, allowing them to experience firsthand the highly regarded SUV's cutting-edge features, advanced technology and refined design.

The all-new Volkswagen Tiguan is built on the Modular Transverse Matrix (MQB evo) platform, which allows for seamless integration of advanced technologies. Key features include the sleek Digital Cockpit Pro, which provides access to essential information and digital services through an intuitive operating system.

Front seat pneumatic massage functions, IQ.LIGHT HD Matrix headlights, and adaptive chassis control pro enhance both



driver comfort and safety. The vehicle also includes park assist, simplifying parking in tight spaces.

From the outside, the all-new Tiguan boasts a completely reimagined design with flat LED headlights, an illuminated front strip, and a redesigned grille, lending it a sleek, modern appearance.

At the rear, a horizontal light bar and new wheel designs improve both aesthetics and aerodynamics. The vehicle is available in three striking colours — cypress green,

oyster silver, and persimmon red.

Stepping into Inside, the Tiguan offers a premium experience with a next-generation cockpit and infotainment system. A 15-inch infotainment screen, redesigned menu structure, and high-quality materials give the interior a sophisticated feel.

The digital cockpit pro and head-up display project key information directly onto the windshield, while the new touch control dial allows for easy customisation of ambient lighting, temperature and drive modes.

Christian Nehme, General Manager of Premium Motors Oman, commented on the success of the event, saying: “We were delighted to host members of the media and provide them with an exclusive test drive of the all-new Volkswagen Tiguan.

“This model exemplifies Volkswagen's commitment to combining advanced technology with a stylish, modern design, offering an unmatched driving experience.”

Bank Muscat promotes credit cards at Mall of Oman and City Centre Muscat

MUSCAT: To enhance its pioneering role in providing the best banking services catering to the needs of various customers, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, continues the launch of its promotional campaign for the bank's range of credit cards and the associated benefits as well as offers available to customers.

The launch of the current campaign, which will run from October 13, 2024 until November 11, 2024, came after the success of the campaign launched during the past period to promote the bank's credit cards.

To ensure ease of access for enquiring about credit card benefits and to be able to apply for them at a time convenient for its customers, the bank is setting up dedicated booths at the Mall of Oman and City Centre Muscat which will be open to

The launch of the current campaign, which will run from October 13, 2024 until November 11, 2024, came after the success of the campaign launched during the past period to promote the bank's credit cards.



all visitors every day including weekends from 10 am to 10 pm.

To facilitate access to these benefits, customers can apply for the Bank Muscat Oman Air Visa Platinum Credit Card or the Lulu Bank Muscat Titanium Mastercard Credit Card

without the need for salary transfer provided that they hold an active account in Bank Muscat. For more information on the eligibility criteria, customers may visit <https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/bm-cards/Pages/OmanAir-Lulu-CreditCards.aspx>.

On this occasion, Abdulnasir al Raisi, General Manager - Personal Banking, Bank Muscat, remarked: “We are committed to periodically offering value-added banking services and products that meet the various needs of our customers, in translation of the bank's vision “To serve you better, every day.”

“Bank Muscat's credit cards witness significant popularity and appeal to customers who may enjoy a suite of benefits and advantages when using these cards. The bank is dedicated to enhancing its credit cards and introduce customers to the various benefits and offerings, aiming to elevate their banking experience.”

Al Raisi further added: “The bank periodically launches promotional campaigns aiming to familiarise customers with the offers provided to them through its credit cards.”

SOHAR PORT AND FREEZONE A PIONEER IN CLEAN ENERGY AND HYDROGEN TRADE

FROM PAGE 13

“By repurposing assets, we are able to stay competitive and offer our partners innovative, sustainable solutions.”

HYDROGEN: THE FUEL OF THE FUTURE

Hydrogen is increasingly viewed as a cornerstone of the global energy transition, and ports like SOHAR are vital in its supply chain. “The hydrogen economy is set for rapid expansion, becoming a cornerstone of the global energy transition in the next decade,” explains Dr al Abri. Ports are uniquely positioned to support the production and export of hydrogen as countries aim for net-zero targets.

Europe, Japan, and South Korea are key markets for hydrogen imports, with the European Union targeting 10 million tonnes of renewable hydrogen by 2030. This presents significant opportunities for ports in hydrogen-producing nations like Oman.

“With our advanced infrastructure and global connectivity, SOHAR is well-positioned to supply clean hydrogen to key markets, supporting both local and global net-zero goals,” Dr Al Abri emphasises.

SUPPORTING ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION AND OMAN VISION 2040

SOHAR’s clean energy efforts align with Oman’s national goals. Oman’s Vision 2040 aims to diversify the economy by reducing reliance on hydrocarbons, and SOHAR plays a central role in this mission.

“We are driving non-hydrocarbon growth by developing a clean energy tech manufacturing cluster, which aligns with Oman’s Vision 2040,” explains Dr Al Abri. This cluster includes industries such as photovoltaic manufacturing, polysilicon production, and wafer technology, all critical to solar energy systems. SOHAR is also exploring advanced battery production and carbon capture technologies, further diversifying its clean energy portfolio.

“By creating an integrated and high-tech environment, we are contributing to both Oman’s energy transition and its economic diversification,” says Dr al Abri. The clean energy cluster is expected to attract significant foreign investment and create high-skilled jobs, positioning Oman as a leader in renewable energy manufacturing.

COLLABORATION FOR GLOBAL ENERGY SECURITY

Dr Al Abri underscores the importance of international collaboration in advancing the global energy transition, especially in the hydrogen market. “Energy transition, particularly the cross-border trade of clean and renewable hydrogen, requires deep collaboration between nations and industries,” he explains.

This collaboration is crucial to overcoming challenges in the global hydrogen market, including regulatory standardisation and financing for large-scale projects. SOHAR’s global connectivity and partnerships with international players ensure it remains at the forefront of these discussions, facilitating the development of a unified global hydrogen market.

OMAN CLIMATE WEEK TO SHOWCASE INNOVATIVE CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

MUSCAT: Under the auspices of Oman’s Environment Authority, Oman Climate Week is set to take place from February 21-28, 2025, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), Muscat.

This week-long event will feature conferences, panel discussions, masterclass workshops, Tech & Science Talks, a 3-day exhibition, and side events such as the Future Climate Leaders Awards, Women & Climate discussions, a gala dinner, field trips, and community activities.

Organised in collaboration with the Oman Environment Authority, UNEP, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research & Innovation, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), and other global partners, Oman Climate Week aims to unite international leaders to accelerate climate action. At the heart of Oman Climate Week is the Scientific Conference which will be hosted in the Expo area.

This conference offers scholars, researchers, and practitioners a unique platform to present cutting-edge research and innovative solutions addressing climate change. It invites original research papers, review articles, and case studies focused on critical areas such as climate mitigation, renewable energy, CCUS, climate finance and policy, sustainable agriculture, water and land management, and biodiversity.



The presentation covered strategic projects within the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

OPAZ DRIVES BLUE ECONOMY INVESTMENT

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) highlighted the importance of blue economy investments at the 5th Duqm Forum yesterday, positioning the sector as a key driver of Oman’s sustainable economic growth.

Saleh bin Hamoud al Hsani, Advisor to the Chairman and official spokesperson for OPAZ, presented a comprehensive paper focusing on investment opportunities in the blue economy.

The presentation covered strategic projects within the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), including the Al Wusta Fisheries project and Simak, one of the largest fish canning enterprises in the Middle East. Fish farming and other marine aquaculture initiatives were also discussed as part of Oman’s efforts to promote sustainable investments.

Sustainable financing for low-carbon projects

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 20

THE Sultanate of Oman is among a number of GCC countries that are set to benefit from sustainable finance pledged by Spanish-based multinational infrastructure and renewable energy conglomerate Acciona as part of its push to grow its portfolio of low-carbon initiatives in the Gulf region.

It follows last week’s announcement by the group that it has secured new sustainable financing to the tune of around \$325 million to fund the decarbonisation of existing projects, as well as new initiatives designed with a lower carbon footprint in the Gulf.

Structured as a green loan with local impact, the sustainable financing also aims to boost sustainable construction, notably by encouraging local suppliers of construction materials to develop and produce lower or zero-carbon building materials, such as cement, concrete and steel, according to Acciona.

Significantly, part of the proceeds are also earmarked for projects that will support climate change mitigation and environmental conservation, including renewa-



At Salalah International Airport, Acciona is targeting a 50% reduction in electricity consumption by replacing all lighting systems with energy efficient devices.

ble energy development, energy efficiency enhancement, sustainable mobility, and sustainable water management initiatives. Acciona’s presence in Oman, while relatively modest thus far, is sought to be ramped up, particularly in the renewable energy and sustainable development segments. Around a decade ago, a division of the group was tapped by the Omani government to provide international-class museography at the country’s signature National Museum in Old Muscat.

The company has since focused on project opportunities in the water treatment and facilities management sectors.

Of late, Acciona has begun actively exploring opportunities in the expanding ESCO model of delivering energy savings to large consumers, such as malls, industrial and commercial establishments, through the implementation of tailored energy efficiency strategies.

By complementing solar PV-based rooftop installation with energy efficiency initiatives in the form of upgrades of lighting systems, air-conditioning / heating, retrofitting of building exteriors, and so on, ESCOs ensure significant energy savings for their customers.

Under its business model for energy efficiency services, Acciona commits to covering all upfront investment costs incurred by a customer seeking to reduce its carbon footprint. It recoups these costs by entering into a long-term arrangement whereby savings earned as a result of the energy efficiency initiatives are shared between the two sides.

Salalah International Airport in Dhofar Governorate is a case in point. By replacing all of the interior and exterior lighting fixtures of the airport complex, Acciona saying it is targeting a 50 per cent reduction in electricity consumption through the adoption of energy efficiency initiatives.

5th Duqm Forum highlights blue economy investment opportunities

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, OCT 20

THE 5th Duqm Forum commenced at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre (OCEC), Muscat, on October 20, 2024, bringing together industry leaders, government officials, and experts to discuss investment opportunities in the blue economy.

The event, held under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Harib bin Thuwaini al Said, Assistant Secretary General of the Council of Ministers for Conferences, aims to showcase Oman as a prime destination for blue economy investments.

Addressing the forum, Dr Salim bin Sulayim al Junaibi, Majlis Ash’shura member and Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Al Wusta Governorate, drew attention in his

Oman’s government is building modern infrastructure, such as ports and highways, to enhance its position as a key logistical hub in the global transportation network



Dignitaries and guests at the opening of the 5th Duqm Forum on Sunday.

address to Al Wusta’s vast wealth of resources, from its oil and gas fields to its emerging alternative energy projects and rich marine life.

Dr Al Junaibi also underscored the governorate’s strategic location, its role as home to Oman’s first special economic zone, and its growing sig-

nificance as a commercial gateway between East and West.

Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Diplomatic Affairs, highlighted the strategic importance of Oman’s blue economy initiatives.

He emphasised Oman’s rich maritime history and its advantageous geographic location, which have long-facilitated trade and cultural exchange.

Al Harthy also pointed out that Oman’s government is building modern infrastructure, such as ports and highways, to enhance its position as a key logistical hub in the global transportation network. He underscored the need for sustainable investment in marine resources to ensure long-term economic benefits for future generations.

OPINION

Potential of bioenergy with carbon capture and storage



NAJAH AL RIYAMI

The author is a Media and Communication Master's graduate skilled in diverse writing formats, specialising in storytelling, branding, and in-depth journalism

WITH the global climate challenges we face, we are always looking for better ways to reduce our carbon footprint in our world. Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS), referring to a set of technologies designed to capture our CO2 emissions, has been a key step in our journey to net-zero.

Newer to the game, bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS) provides even more potential in accelerating this journey. Utilising organic biomass to generate bioenergy (such as heat, electricity or biofuels), and then capturing the CO2 emitted, just as is done in CSS, and storing it underground, preventing its release into the atmosphere.

Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS) is a step up from our CSS efforts, enabling not just the prevention of future emissions but actively removing CO2 from the atmosphere by using biomass (plant materials) to generate its energy and, since plants absorb CO2 during growth, this already makes BECCS a carbon negative project.

While standard CSS relies on fossil fuels, BECCS leverages renewable biomass, making it a more long-term sustainable solution.

This process can be scaled across different sectors and industries, for

example, Drax power station (UK) is an example of BECCS at work, traditionally a coal-fired plant, converting some of its units to using biomass instead; burning wooden pellets from sustainably sourced forests to generate electricity.

Similarly, the Stockholm Exergi in Sweden captures CO2 emissions using its forests to generate bioenergy as part of its broader plans to achieve carbon negativity by 2045.

The main difference between the two? BECCS offers the benefit of renewable energy generation and carbon removal, while CCS mainly reduces emissions from non-renewable sources.

No good thing comes without its challenges, and the key challenge of implementing BECCS is that bioenergy needs to be utilised in a sustainable manner for it to efficiently serve towards a low carbon energy future.

The large-scale implementation of BECCS requires a lot of land to grow bioenergy crops, which poses some challenges including competing with food production sources, deforestation, and increased use of water. This implies mindfully avoiding deforestation and competing with food production.

Some ideal crops for BECCS are those which have characteristics of high yield

Utilising organic biomass to generate bioenergy (such as heat, electricity or biofuels), and then capturing the CO2 emitted, just as is done in CSS, and storing it underground, preventing its release into the atmosphere.

alongside reduced impact on the natural ecosystem and food production. Examples include perennial grasses such as the fast-growing miscanthus, or the high yielding (and soil improving) switchgrass.

Additionally, there are short rotation woody crops, ranging from fast growing willow and high yield poplar trees to the rapidly growing eucalyptus suitable for warmer climates.

Oil crops such as drought tolerant Jatropha or carbon sequestering Pongamia also provide good options as bioenergy crops. Agricultural and forestry residues such as corn stover and wheat straw are also good options. Algae is emerging as another potential source of bioenergy with their flexibility of growing on water and also their carbon sequestering features.

Although there are not yet any large-scale operational BECCS projects in the Gulf, as we continue to develop an urban ecosystem that supports our decarbonisation targets, it is inevitable that BECCS will have a role to play in future energy projects as infrastructure and expertise continue to evolve for CCS and bioenergy systems, particularly in industries such as hydrogen production and waste-to-energy and more.

CHINA'S GROWTH REPRIEVE WILL BE SHORT-LIVED

ROBYN MAK

CHINA may be on track to hit its "around 5 per cent" economic Gross Domestic Product target for this year, but repeating the feat will get harder for policymakers.

Third quarter growth logged in at 4.6 per cent year-on-year, and that pace will need sustaining if the People's Republic is to achieve medium-level developed economy status by 2035.

Unless planners move their own goalposts, they'll have to contort themselves a lot more.

The print published on Friday for the July-September period was slightly better than expected, though a notch softer than the second quarter.

Blame stubbornly weak consumption and plunging property investment.

Data on Monday also showed exports slowed unexpectedly last month, dealing a blow to the economy's last major bright spot.

The People's Bank of China, Ministry of Finance and other departments have at least announced enough stimulus measures to convince economists this year's performance will be on-target.

Authorities recently drew attention to some 2.3 trillion yuan (\$323 billion) worth of special local government bonds left over from its annual quota, a higher amount than widely assumed

If that is fully deployed in the next two months, analysts at JPMorgan reckon China could add as much as 1.5 percentage points to quarter-on-quarter growth.

Still, five years ago Beijing adopted a formidable objective of doubling China's per capita Gross Domestic Product by 2035 from 2020 levels.

That will require the world's second largest economy to grow at an annual average pace of at least 4.7 per cent for the next decade, according to one influential Chinese think tank.

That will be a Herculean task. In August, the International Monetary Fund forecast real Gross Domestic Product growth will be 4.5 per cent next year and gradually slow to 3.3 per cent in 2029.

Nothing in the stimulus announced so far will meaningfully shift that trajectory.

If a spending package as reported by Caixin materialises, some 6 trillion yuan over three years, that might help.

Otherwise Chinese officials who are already busy setting the next five year plan may need to recalibrate expectations. — Reuters



BRAHMA CHELLANEY

The writer is Professor Emeritus of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Research and Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin



A man walks past the logo of BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia.

— Reuters

A new age of international relations is dawning. With the West accounting for a declining share of global GDP, and the world becoming increasingly multipolar, countries are jostling to establish their positions in the emerging order. This includes both the emerging economies that seek a leading role in writing the rules of the new order, and the smaller countries attempting to cultivate relationships that can safeguard their interests.

With the BRICS, what began as an asset class has become a symbol of the yearning for a more broadly representative global order, a hedge against Western-led institutions, and a means of navigating growing geopolitical uncertainty. All this has proved highly attractive.

Earlier this year, the BRICS expanded from five countries (Brazil, China, India, Russia, and South Africa) to nine (adding Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates).

And almost three dozen more countries – including NATO member Turkey, close US partners Thailand and Mexico, and Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim country – have applied to join.

While the diversity of the grouping's members (and applicants) highlights the broad appeal of the BRICS+, it also creates challenges.

These are countries with very different political systems, economies, and national goals. Some are even at odds with each other: China and India have been locked in a military standoff in the Himalayas for over four years, following China's stealth encroachments on Indian territory.

Translating shared interests into a common plan of action, and becoming a unified force on the global stage, was

difficult even when the BRICS had just five members. With nine – and possibly more – member countries, establishing a common identity and agenda will require sustained effort.

But other multilateral groupings that are not formal, charter-based institutions with permanent secretariats – such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the G20, and even the G7 – also struggle with internal divisions.

Moreover, the BRICS have demonstrated considerable resilience. Western analysts have been predicting from the start that the grouping would unravel or drift into irrelevance. Yet this month's BRICS+ summit in Kazan, Russia may well bring movement toward further enlargement, as it underscores the West's failure to isolate Russia following its 2022 attack on Ukraine.

This is not to underestimate the challenge of cohesion. The grouping's founding members do not even agree about its fundamental objectives: whereas China and Russia want to spearhead a direct challenge to the United States-led world order, Brazil and India seek reforms of existing international institutions and appear uneasy about any anti-Western orientation.

In this disagreement, however, the enlargement might tip the scales. Six of the group's nine members, including all four of the new additions, are formally part of the nonaligned movement, and two (Brazil and China) are observers.

This suggests that there will be considerable internal pressure for the BRICS+ to chart a middle ground, focusing on democratising the global order, rather than challenging the West. That said, when

it comes to fostering mutual trust with developing countries, the West has not been doing itself any favours lately. On the contrary, its weaponisation of finance and seizure of the interest earned on frozen Russian central-bank assets have caused deepening disquiet in the non-Western world.

As a result, a growing number of countries seem interested in exploring alternative arrangements, including new cross-border payment mechanisms, with some also reassessing their reliance on the US dollar in international transactions and reserve holdings.

All of this could aid the larger designs of Russia and China, two natural competitors that have become close strategic partners partly in response to US policy. China, in particular, stands to gain, such as from increased international use of the renminbi. Russia now generates much of its international export earnings in renminbi and stores them mostly in Chinese banks, thereby effectively giving China a share of the returns.

China's ultimate goal is to establish an alternative renminbi-based financial system. The BRICS are already engaged in institution-building, having established the New Development Bank – conceived by India and headquartered in Shanghai – in 2015.

The NDB is not only the world's first multilateral development bank created and led by emerging economies; it is also the only one whose founding members remain equal shareholders with equal voice, even as more countries join.

By contrast, the US is the dominant shareholder and holds veto power in the World Bank. The expanded BRICS+ boast formidable global clout.

The grouping dwarfs the G7, both demographically (with nearly 46% of the world's population, compared to the G7's 8.8%) and economically (accounting for 35% of global GDP compared to the G7's 30%). Its economies are also likely to be the most important source of future global growth.

Furthermore, with Iran and the UAE having joined their oil-producing counterparts Brazil and Russia as members, the BRICS+ now account for about 40% of crude-oil production and exports.

Yes, the group faces significant challenges, not least uniting to become a meaningful global force with defined (and realistic) political and economic objectives. But they also have the potential to serve as a catalyst for a long-overdue revamping of global governance so that it better reflects twenty-first-century realities.

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FASHIONTRENDS

Giorgio Armani takes fashionistas ‘on a journey’ at NY fashion show



Italian fashion designer Giorgio Armani brought his sleek, silky looks to New York last week, presenting his spring 2025 collection for his namesake brand as he opened a new building in the city.

The veteran designer, 90, called the line “In Viaggio” (On a Journey), paying tribute to “the city that embodies the collective dream”.

He opened the show, held at the Park Avenue Armory, with a female model wearing a short beige jacket and trousers tucked into dark boots, followed by a male model dressed as a porter and carrying suitcases.

A selection of outfits in beige and grey came after — shiny suits for men and loose jackets, blouses and trousers for women.

Armani also used darker greys, blues and browns for his designs, which nodded to the travel theme throughout with loose comfortable looks as well as wraps worn as tops. Long silky blouses were paired with matching trousers, while silk jackets and shorts were worn with sheer tops.

“New York, for me, has always been linked to the many films that have deeply shaped my imagination,” Armani said in a statement before the show. “Thinking of the city in the ‘30s and ‘40s never ceases to inspire me and I evoke that mood in the new... collection.”

Models also wore long dresses, short printed jackets and silky trousers in pink and peach. For the evening, there were sparkling embroidered frocks worn over slim trousers, sometimes with sequined jackets, mainly in soft pink and blue.

Accessories included boots, sandals, caps and woven belts.

Armani usually holds the catwalk shows for his Giorgio Armani and Emporio Armani lines during Milan Fashion Week.

But he opted for New York for his main line this season to coincide with the opening of his new building, containing private residences, Armani boutiques and a restaurant on Madison Avenue.

In an interview published on Sunday, Armani who founded brand in 1975 and has been tight-lipped about succession plans, said he planned to retire within the next two or three years. — Reuters

I N D U S T R Y F E A T U R E S



LIFESTYLE

A cosplayer attends New York Comic Con 2024 at the Jacob Javits Convention Center in New York City. — AFP

ENTERTAINMENT

English actor Eddie Redmayne arrives for the 4th Annual Academy Museum Gala at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles. —AFP



CULTURE

A reveller attends the Alebrijes parade — Mexican art sculpture representing fantasy creatures — in Mexico City. —AFP



This artist brings joy to the community through face painting



BY SIHAM AL SAIDI

TO DATE he has painted the faces of over 10,000 children at hundreds of events, where he has always been known as “the painter.” Ibrahim bin Mohammed al Rashdi took years before realising that he could actually make money from his passion. Despite holding an economics degree from Sultan Qaboos University, he was driven by his passion to pursue art, branching out into the more niche market of face painting.

Ibrahim’s story is emblematic of a dynamic intersection between art and entrepreneurship. Initially, he struggled for years to recognise that his passion for art could be a legitimate source of income. After finishing his degree, he charted an unconventional path, prioritising his love for creativity with a focus on the niche market he is in now.

In a country steeped in tradition, Ibrahim faced significant challenges, particularly regarding societal acceptance of his chosen profession. In Oman, the nature of society felt like there was less appreciation for artistic careers. Many still perceive art as a frivolous pursuit rather than a valid profession, leading to a lack of understanding regarding its value. Additionally, the high costs of artistic materials and the scarcity of resources pose challenges for many aspiring artists, complicating their entrepreneurial aspirations.

However, the evolution of Oman’s cultural landscape has created new opportunities for artistic expression. As the lifestyle and events industry expands, particularly in family-centric celebrations and children’s entertainment, the demand for face painting is growing. Ibrahim’s experience is indicative of this shift, as he capitalises on the changing market dynamics while simultaneously promoting the importance of artistry in enriching everyday life.

The global art industry has also undergone significant transformations over the years, with face painting evolving from a simple children’s activity into a multi-million dollar sector. Today, artists across the world leverage social media platforms to showcase their talents and expand their reach. Ibrahim, embracing this trend, has utilised his online presence to raise awareness about the substantial impact art can have on individuals and communities. His posts emphasise that art is an integral part of daily life, a message that resonates with audiences seeking joy and creativity amidst their routines.

Despite the challenges he faces, Ibrahim’s determination propels him forward. He offers unique and high-quality services, distinguishing himself in a competitive market where alternatives may be cheaper but lack artistic integrity. To overcome the scarcity of local supplies, he creatively sources materials from abroad, ensuring the standard of his work remains exemplary.

For Ibrahim, the act of transforming the faces of children with vibrant colours and imaginative designs serves a greater purpose. His art creates not only momentary joy, but also fosters confidence and ignites the imaginations of young minds. Each brushstroke carries the potential to uplift spirits and create lasting memories, as children experience the wonder of seeing themselves as characters in a fantastical world. This psychological impact reinforces his belief that art can be a powerful vehicle for happiness.

Ibrahim’s contributions have not gone unnoticed, with participation in esteemed exhibitions such as the “Small Paintings Exhibition” hosted by the Youth Studio and the “Three-Dimensional Dimensions Exhibition” organised by the Cultural Club. His active



involvement in the Fine Arts Group at Sultan Qaboos University has further solidified his position within the artistic community. Looking to the future, Ibrahim aspires to deepen the appreciation for art within Oman and extend his influence beyond its borders. Each mural painted and each face adorned reflects his vision of art as a transformative agent — a source of income, a pathway for change, and a means to spread joy. As for Ibrahim, the laughter and delight of children bring him a profound sense of fulfillment. In a rapidly changing world, he finds solace in creating a world of fantasy through his face painting, offering children a chance to revel in their youth and appreciate the beauty of life as they experience the magic of art.