

Sugar certainly tastes sweet, but the dangers that it entails is beyond imagination, hence the World Health Organisation has recommended reducing the consumption of added sugar to 10 per cent of the total energy consumed by an individual, which would help reduce the incidence of overweight, obesity, diabetes, heart and arterial disease, and tooth decay. Let alone the hereditary diabetic-prone individuals, the hidden sugar enters our system in different ways from various foods and drinks. **DETAILS ON P4**



P12

AHLI SIDAB
RETAIN
OHL
CROWN



P15

ELECTRIC CAR
DEMAND SET TO
STALL IN EUROPE'S
'VALLEY OF DEATH'



P20

LEARNING ITALIAN
COOKING WITH
A MICHELIN-
STARRED CHEF



53RD NATIONAL DAY HOLIDAY ANNOUNCED

MUSCAT: As per the Royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, it has been decided that Wednesday and Thursday (November 22-23), will be an official holiday for employees in units of the State's Administrative Apparatus (public sector), other legal entities and private sector establishments on the occasion of the 53rd Glorious National Day. In a statement issued on Monday, the Ministry of Labour said that employers may agree with their respective employees to continue working during the above-mentioned two days, if deemed necessary, provided the workers be compensated for that. — ONA

OPINION

P8



Hyesha Barrett

Regulate your emotions during stressful times

P9



Alex Brown

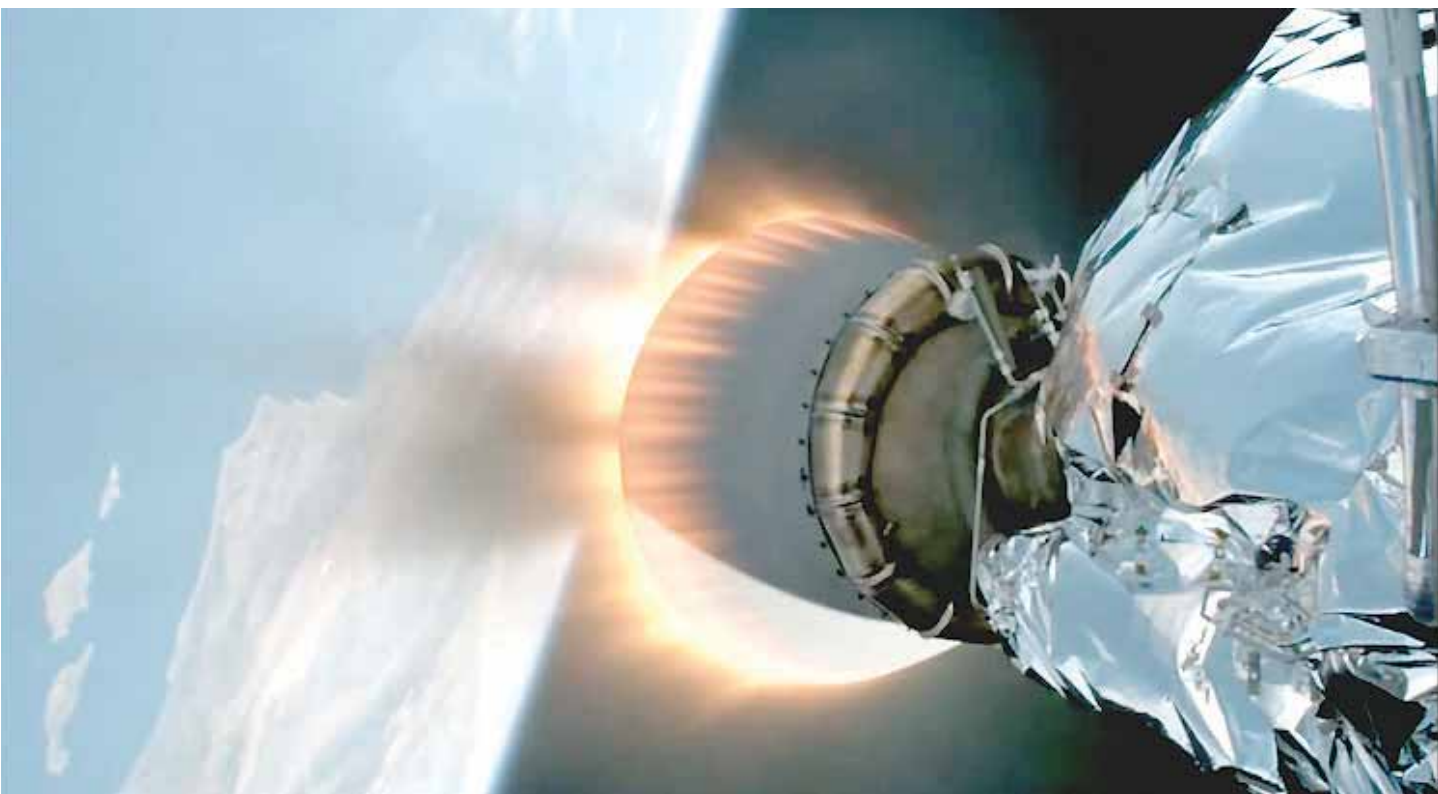
Boycott the boycotts!

LONDON

CAMERON MAKES
DRAMATIC RETURN TO
UK GOVERNMENT

David Cameron has made a dramatic return to the British government as foreign secretary in a reshuffle triggered by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's decision to sack Suella Braverman from the Home Office. The former prime minister replaced James Cleverly as foreign secretary and will be given a peerage, that is a seat in the upper chamber, the House of Lords. Cleverly takes on the job of home secretary after Sunak ended Braverman's controversial tenure in the job. Sacking one of the leading figures on the Conservative right could pose difficulties for the prime minister as he seeks to get his party united behind him and ready for a general election. **SEE P5**

OMAN'S FIRST SATELLITE TRIUMPHS



Oman's first satellite 'Aman-1' was launched successfully into space on November 11. According to a statement by Omani Space company ETCO Space, the satellite was successfully deployed into orbit onboard SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket, from a California-based launch base. The satellite was set to launch earlier this year in January, as part of a mission by Virgin Orbit - a small satellite launching service provider and subsidiary of the Virgin Group. 'Aman-1', is a collaborative effort between Oman's ETCO, data analysis and solutions provider TUATARA, and nanosatellite manufacturer SatRevolution. The nanosatellite, also known as a cube satellite or a CubeSat will collect images and data which will be transmuted to ETCO's ground station in Oman. **DETAILS ON P13**

ISRAELI TANKS OUTSIDE GAZA HOSPITAL, SAYS SURGEON

Someone should stop this

GAZA: Israeli tanks took up positions at the gates of Gaza City's main hospital on Monday, the primary target in their battle to seize control of the northern half of the Gaza Strip, where medics said patients including newborns were dying for lack of fuel. Gaza health ministry spokesperson Ashraf al Qidra, who was inside Al Shifa hospital, said 32 patients had died in the past three days, including three newborn babies, as a result of the siege of the hospital and lack of power. At least 650 patients were still inside, desperate to be evacuated to another medical facility by the Red Cross or some other neutral agency.

"The tanks are in front of the hospital. We are under full blockade. It's a totally civilian area. Only hospital facility, hospital patients, doctors and other civilians staying in the hospital. Someone should stop this," a surgeon at the hospital, Dr Ahmed El Mokhallalati, said by telephone.

"They bombed the (water) tanks, they bombed the water wells, they bombed the oxygen pump as well. They bombed everything in the hospital. So we are hardly surviving. We tell everyone, the hospital is no more a safe place for treating patients. We are harming patients by keeping them here." There was also fresh concern that the war could spread beyond Gaza, with an upsurge of



A Palestinian woman mourns while holding a child, near the bodies of Palestinians at a hospital in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip on Monday. — Reuters

Oman condemns attack on Qatar Committee for Gaza reconstruction

The Sultanate of Oman voiced its denunciation and condemnation of the targeting of the headquarters of the Qatar Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza by the Israeli occupation forces. In a statement, the Foreign Ministry expressed its solidarity with the sisterly State of Qatar, affirming that this attack is a new blatant violation of the international law and a continuation of the brutal Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people. — ONA

clashes on Israel's northern border with Lebanon, and the United States launching air strikes on militia targets in neighbouring Syria.

King Abdullah in neighbouring Jordan was quoted by state media on Monday as saying the root cause of the crisis was Israel's denial of Palestinians' "legitimate rights" and that there could be no military solution.

Since October 7 thousands of Gazans have been killed and two thirds of the population made homeless by a relentless Israeli military campaign. Israel has ordered the total evacuation of the northern half of Gaza.

SEE ALSO P6 & 7

Opening of
Rub-al-Khali
land port
boosted trade
network



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and Prince Faisal Farhan al Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, during the meeting.

MUSCAT: The Omani-Saudi Coordination Council, which held its first meeting in Muscat on Monday, reviewed the bilateral relations and expressed satisfaction with the positive results achieved. The meeting underscored the significance of developing coordination and shaping joint positions towards regional and international issues of common interest.

The meeting was jointly chaired by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign

Minister, and Prince Faisal Farhan al Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Speaking at the meeting, Sayyid Badr said that, over the past few years, Omani-Saudi relations saw steady growth in various fields, with investment initiatives forged and commercial activities expanded.

In this context, Sayyid Badr pointed out that the opening of the Rub-al-Khali land port between the two countries in 2022 added momentum to

land transport between the two countries. Sayyid Badr said that alternative energy projects and hydrogen production are at the forefront of the two countries' common interests. This is in addition to cooperation in the sectors of energy, logistics, maritime transport and infrastructure. Sayyid Badr stressed the need to maximise benefits from natural resources that abound in the two countries, as well as their prominent geographical locations. **RETURN TO P2**



■ DIPLOMATIC AFFAIRS UNDER-SECRETARY RECEIVES
CANADIAN AMBASSADOR



MUSCAT: Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, received on Monday a copy of credentials of Jean-Philippe Linteau, Ambassador-designate of Canada to the Sultanate of Oman. Shaikh Khalifa wished the ambassador success in carrying out his duties. The under-secretary also wished the relations between Oman and Canada further progress and prosperity. – ONA

Housing ministry outlines fisheries
investments in Al Mudhaibi, Sinaw

AL MUDHAIBI: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning outlined investment opportunities for fisheries projects in the Wilayat of Sinaw and the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi, the Governorate of Al Sharqiyah North.

The investment opportunities were listed on the Ministry's electronic platform 'Tatweer'.

By outlining these two investment opportunities, the Ministry aims to boost fisheries activities and to enhance services offered to citizens and residents.

Moreover, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning recently announced 40 investment opportunities in various governorates through the 'Tatweer' e-platform.

This was done in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

— ONA



The investment opportunities were listed on the Ministry's electronic platform 'Tatweer'. – ONA

Donate to Palestinian cause through OCO

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

While extending a helping hand to the people of Palestine, one should make sure it goes through the official channel which is the Oman Charitable Organisation (OCO) which is the only approved fund collector in Oman, according to the authorities.

“One can send money to the brothers and sisters in Gaza and West Bank through the Oman Charitable Organisation which is the only body which is entrusted with collection of funds for the charity initiative,” a source from the OCO said.

Due to regular site maintenance, one can also send through the Jood Charitable platform at jood.om as currently, only donations to Waqf and Zakat Committees are available on the site.

“We apologise for the temporary suspension of our donation service for charitable teams. We're in the process of transferring it to the jood.om which is created for the purpose and one will automatically be transferred to this site upon logging on the OCO website,” OCO official said.

The official said the most donated initiatives as of today is for

Palestinian causes which include sponsoring Palestinian orphans, Palestinian aid projects, assisting organisations and individuals in Palestine for rebuilding the city and to aid to the people of Gaza strip.

The number of donors who donated through the official organisation has risen to 5,790 for as many as 216,537 initiatives, the official said.

The Jood platform is an electronic platform created to serve charitable associations and teams in the Sultanate of Oman. The platform allows individuals and institutions to donate electronically through secure

payment channels.

The launch of the platform came within the framework of employing information and communications technology to serve Omani charitable associations and teams, and to facilitate donors' access to all volunteer charitable associations and teams in the Sultanate of Oman through a unified platform without the need to visit each association or team separately.

Collecting money from the public for any purpose is considered a violation of the law unless a permit is obtained from the Ministry of Social Development.

Rub-al-Khali land port boosted trade

FROM P1

They expressed confidence that joint initiatives for cooperation can be implemented within the framework of the Omani-Saudi Coordination Council, its subcommittees, its general secretariat and follow-up mechanisms endorsed.

Prince Faisal said that Saudi-Omani relations are witnessing steady growth under the patronage of the leaderships of the two countries. Steps have been made to consolidate cooperation and enhance the two countries' regional and international role in a manner that contributes to establishing security and stability in the region, besides achieving the aspirations of the two countries' peoples.

Prince Faisal added that the Council constitutes a podium for the two countries' joint action in maximising benefits from investment resources. He stressed that the consensus of views on all

issues demonstrates the importance of maintaining coordination on bilateral, regional and international issues and enhancing political consultation on all matters of common interest.

He added that the coordination council and its subcommittees (handling political, security, economic and investment affairs) provide an effective instrument for deepening cooperation in tackling various issues, including combating terrorism, protecting waterways and developing sources of renewable and clean energy.

The meeting saw the participation of heads of the council's subcommittees and its secretariat general.

The meeting was held in response to the two countries leaders' directives to enhance cooperation in a manner that consolidates the deep-rooted relations and meets the aspirations of their peoples.

— ONA

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‘Having world heritage sites a blessing’

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

World Heritage Sites of Oman are playing a major role of relevance as they become major tourism attractions these days. Currently, Oman has five inscriptions in Unesco list of world heritage sites. There are currently about 1199 sites across the globe.

Rehabilitation has been going on various sites in Oman including the lighting system, which allows people to enjoy the sites even after sunset. The sites also have path ways and car parking areas making it easy for people to explore.

The first site on World Heritage List was declared in 1987 and that was Bahla Fort and its Oasis, while the latest to be added to the list was City of Qalhat in 2018.

“The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is working on developing the world heritage sites. For example, we are going to have visitor centres in Qalhat. The designing process has already been completed and we will have visitors site in Bat as well,” said Ibtisam al Maamari, Director of World Heritage, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

She said that a local company

We should be proud of not just of our World Heritage Sites but also all the heritage sites. We should enjoy them and take care of them

IBTISAM AL MAAMARI
Director of World Heritage

has been approved to manage activities at the site. Once the company is ready there would be activities for visitors even in the evenings.

Salut is an ancient site that enjoys a visitor centre. Salut, however, is in the tentative list presently. It was updated in 2014 and the site has gone through the preliminary assessment. A distinct feature of Salut is its snake model.

“The snake models are mainly made of clay and iron. The site was opened in February and now one can visit the site and learn more from the centre. Salut is a site that dates back to Bronze and Iron Ages,” Ibtisam explained.



The five Omani archaeological sites inscribed on the World Heritage List contribute to enhance the tourism and heritage elements of the Sultanate of Oman

The Land of Frankincense consists of Al Baleed, Shisr/ Wubar, Wadi Dawkah and Khor Rori. Collectively titled as Land of Frankincense, it was added to the list in the year 2000.

“Wadi Dawkah has thousands of frankincense trees some of them very old, up to 1,230.

Khor Rori is highly significant as the port of frankincense trade,” she noted.

In 2006 the irrigation system, the Falaj of Oman came into the World Heritage Sites List. Another trade of the ancient world that is coming into focus is trade of copper.

“Also in the study are sites that were involved in the trade

of copper, and they found in various parts of Oman. We are looking at these sites as the ones with outstanding value because they played significant role in the history of trade in copper.”

Other potential sites that are also being focused on for example are distinct mosques as in the case of Jaalan and another distinct area of study is the rock art of Oman.

“We should be proud of not just of our World Heritage Sites but also all the heritage sites. We should enjoy them and take care of them and not just wait for the government to do so. Each one of us should take the responsibility to take care of the sites,” Ibtisam noted.



ICELAND EVACUEES BRACE FOR WORST VOLCANIC ERUPTION

COPENHAGEN: Some 900 earthquakes hit southern Iceland on Monday, authorities said, adding to tens of thousands of tremors that rattled the region in recent weeks as the country braces for what could become a significant volcanic eruption.

Almost 4,000 people were evacuated over the weekend as authorities feared that molten rock would rise to the surface of the earth and potentially hit a coastal town and a geothermal power station.

“We have this tremendous

uncertainty now; will there be an eruption and if so, what sort of damage will occur,” said Matthew James Roberts, director of the service and research division at the Icelandic Meteorological Office.

Inhabitants of the town of Grindavik described being whisked from their homes in the early hours of Saturday as the ground shook, roads cracked and buildings suffered structural damage.

Hans Vera, a Belgian-born 56-year-old who has lived in

Iceland since 1999, said there had been a constant shaking of his family’s house.

“You would never be steady, it was always shaking, so there was no way to get sleep,” said Vera, who is now staying at his sister-in-law’s home in a Reykjavik suburb.

“It’s not only the people in Grindavik who are shocked about this situation it’s the whole of Iceland,” he said.

Almost all of the town’s 3,800 inhabitants had been able to find accommodation with family members or friends, and only a



A view of cracks, emerged on a road due to volcanic activity, near Grindavik, Iceland. – Reuters

between 50 and 70 people were staying at evacuation centres, a rescue official said.

Some evacuees were briefly allowed back into the town on Sunday to collect belongings such as documents, medicines or pets, but were not allowed to drive themselves.

“You have to park your car five kilometres from town and there’s 20 cars, huge cars from the rescue team, 20 policemen, all blinking lights, it’s just unreal, it’s like a war zone or something, it’s really strange,” Vera said.

The Reykjanes peninsula is a volcanic and seismic hot spot southwest of the capital. In March 2021, lava fountains erupted spectacularly from a fissure in the ground measuring between 500 750 metres long in the region’s Fagradalsfjall volcanic system.

Volcanic activity in the area continued for six months that year, prompting thousands of Icelanders and tourists to visit the scene. In August 2022, a three-week eruption happened in the same area, followed by another in July of this year.

— Reuters

Indian rescuers battle to save 40 workers trapped in collapsed tunnel

DEHRADUN: Rescuers in northern India battled for a second day Monday to save 40 workers trapped underground after the road tunnel they were building collapsed, bringing down tonnes of debris.

Teams using heavy excavators have been working nonstop since the collapse early on Sunday morning to clear piles of concrete and earth, but with more debris falling as workers tried to clear a passage, a giant steel pipe was being prepared as an escape route.

“All the 40 workers trapped inside the tunnel are safe,” Karamveer Singh Bhandari, a senior commander in the National Disaster Response Force, said from the site in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand, adding that water and food had been sent.

Oxygen was being pumped into the blocked portion of the tunnel, with food sent through a water pipe.

Rathodi said excavators had removed about 20 metres of heavy debris, but the men were 40 metres beyond that point.

“Due to excess debris in the tunnel, we are facing some difficulty in the rescue, but our team is leaving no stone unturned,” Bhandari added here yesterday.

Teams plan to use a heavy machine to drive a steel pipe with a width of 90 centimetres, wide enough for the trapped men to squeeze through, the government’s highway and infrastructure company said.

“Water, food, oxygen, electricity all are available with the work force trapped inside the tunnel... All the stranded workers are safe as communicated by them,” the statement added.

Initial contact was made via a note on a scrap of paper, but later rescuers managed to connect using radio handsets.

“Some small food packets were sent in through a pipe which is also taking oxygen inside,” rescue official Durgesh Rathodi said from the site.

— AFP

Sunak brings back Cameron, sacks interior minister in new reset

LONDON: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak brought back former leader David Cameron as foreign minister on Monday in a reshuffle triggered by his firing of interior minister Suella Braverman after her criticism of police threatened his authority.

It was the latest reset for a prime minister whose party is badly lagging the Labour Party before an election expected next year. The return of Cameron suggested Sunak wanted to bring in a more centrist, experienced hand rather than appease the populist right of his party which supported Braverman.

It also reawakens divisive debate over Brexit: Cameron held the referendum on European Union membership in 2016 and was hated by many on the right of the party after he campaigned to remain. He quit hours after Britain voted to leave.

The ministerial reshuffle followed growing criticism of Braverman from opposition lawmakers and members of the governing Conservative Party, enabling Sunak to bring in allies



Former premier David Cameron.



Interior minister Suella Braverman

and remove ministers he felt were not performing.

His hand was forced when the ever-controversial Braverman defied him last week in an unauthorised article accusing police of “double standards” at protests, suggesting they were tough on right-wing demonstrators, but easy on pro-Palestinian marchers.

The opposition Labour Party said that inflamed tensions between a pro-Palestinian demonstration and a far-right counter protest on Saturday, when nearly 150 people were arrested.

While her removal was not a surprise, it was the appointment of Cameron which caused shock in the party, welcomed by more centrist lawmakers but loathed by some on the right who described it as the ultimate “Brexit surrender”.

Cameron said he was glad to take on his new role at a time of global change: “It has rarely been more important for this country to stand by our allies, strengthen our partnerships and make sure our voice is heard”.

“Though I may have disagreed with some individual decisions, it is clear to me that Rishi Sunak is a strong and capable prime minister, who is showing exemplary leadership at a difficult time,” he wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

Cameron has been out of politics since 2016 and will be able to return to government via

an appointment to the House of Lords upper house of parliament.

Lawmakers in the centrist wing of the party said Cameron’s appointment would bring international experience, and send a wider message to the country.

“It’s a sign to the Tory blue wall and moderate voters, we aren’t heading to the right,” one Conservative lawmaker said, using a phrase that is used to describe traditional Conservative-supporting areas in the south of England.

Some lawmakers had feared that Braverman was determined to remake the Conservatives as the “nasty party” with her headline focus on immigration and social issues, a moniker former Prime Minister Theresa May used in 2002 to try to persuade the party to shed its reputation of being uncaring.

But Cameron’s return compounded the anger felt by some on the right after her sacking. They backed her stance on protests and predicted she would remain a vocal force.

—Reuters

EU shifts to digital visas for Schengen area

BRUSSELS: People applying for visas to visit Europe’s Schengen area will soon do so via an online platform, under a change adopted by EU foreign ministers on Monday.

The shift towards digitalisation of the visa process will also do away with the need for applicants to get a sticker in their passport, meaning no more appointments at consulates or service providers’ offices.

The change, unveiled after a long legislative process, will take effect after technical work on the visa platform, expected to take months, then publication in the EU’s administrative gazette.

The online visa system “will simplify the application process for travellers,” said Spain’s Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska, whose country currently holds the EU presidency.

Once it is in place, people applying for short stays in the Schengen area will

People applying for short stays in the Schengen area will upload documents, data and electronic copies of their travel documents with biometric information, and pay fees, all through an online platform

upload documents, data and electronic copies of their travel documents with biometric information, and pay fees, all through an online platform.

If approved after database cross-checks, they will receive a cryptographically signed barcode to print off or store in a device.

But some first-time applicants or those with a new passport or changed biometric data may still need to attend an in-person appointment.

Some countries, such



The ambassadors of EU member states accepted the council’s negotiating mandate for a plan to digitise the visa application process.

as Australia, already have similar systems in place, where the online visa is linked to a person’s passport without the need for a sticker in it.

In most cases, citizens from more than 60 countries around the world, including Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand and the United States, do not need to apply for Schengen visas for short visits.

But they will still be required to apply online for pre-screened entry under a much-delayed European

Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS), similar to the ESTA system employed by the United States. ETIAS is now expected to be up and running in mid-2025.

All visitors entering the European Union — with visas or visa waivers — will find themselves going through an automated EU Entry/Exit System (EES), whose implementation has also been much delayed but expected to be in place at the end of 2024.

— AFP

Sultanate of Oman

Ministry of Defence

ENGINEERING SERVICES

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Defence invites Contractors specialized in the under mentioned works and registered with the Govt. Tender Board and Ministry of Defence to participate in the following tender.

Tender No.	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (RO)
037/2023	Building Works - MAM	First & above	23 Nov 2023	25 Dec 2023	145/- RO
040/2023	MEP Works - Jabel Al Akhader	First & above Specialized in MEP Works	23 Nov 2023	25 Dec 2023	105/- RO

*For more information about the above Tenders please visit gate number (14)

- Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Muaskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.
- The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 – 1300 Hours).
- The Bid to be accompanied by Tender Bond in the value of (1%) of the bid value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank and addressed to HE the Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Bids are to be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to HE the Chairman of Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and Name. Name of Bidder or any other marks should not be printed on the envelopes.
- Bids to be deposited in the Tender office at Gate No: 14 Muaskar Al Murtafa'a before 1300 hours on the assigned day for submission of the Tender.
- We would like to draw your attention to the importance of adherence to the submission date, request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer & that queries must be on electronic (Microsoft word).
- You are requested to submit the following Items within your tender submission. failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.
 - Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Labour (Updated Copy).
 - Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope of works and drawings.
 - Full set of stamped drawings and documents, Tender Form and Tender Bonds to be submitted as hard copy and others documentation shall be as **SOFT COPY (USB)** in two separate files:
 - Financial (**bill 1&2 separated file from bill3**)
 - Technical files.
 - Confirmation of site visit.
 - All addendums and circulars.
 - List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.
 - List of current and executed projects for the last Five years.
 - Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.
 - Financial Statement for the last Three years.



Say no to sugar



AVOIDING HIDDEN SUGAR

EAT FRUITS instead of drinking juice or prepare it at home without adding sugar.



DRINK WATER instead of juices when thirsty. It is preferable not to drink flavoured milk or sweetened yogurt and replace it with plain or prepare flavours from fresh fruit.



AVOID drinking sweetened coffee.



REPLACE sugar with healthy flavours such as dried fruits and cinnamon when preparing food.



REDUCE the consumption of ready-made sauces and soups as they contain hidden sugar.



PREPARE BREAD at home to ensure it does not contain added sugar.



AND ABOVE ALL, one should develop the ability to say 'no' to sugar although it is tempting.

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Sugar can certainly taste sweet but the dangers that it entails is beyond any imagination, hence the World Health Organisation (WHO) has recommended reducing the consumption of sugar by 10 per cent of the total energy consumed by an individual, which would help reduce the incidence of overweight, obesity, diabetes, heart and arterial disease, and tooth decay.

Let alone the hereditary diabetic-prone individuals, the hidden sugar enters the body system in different ways from various foods and drinks. A proper, balanced nutrition is one of the most important components of a healthy, disease-free life.

Contrary to the popular belief that sugar is found only in sweets, there are many foods and drinks that contain added hidden sugar, such as ketchup, ready-made soups, pasta sauces and salads, soft drinks, some fruit drinks, energy drinks, and coffee creamers, as well as snack foods such as biscuits and

various types of bread and baked items.

A range of non-sugar sweeteners have been developed as an alternative to sugars and are widely used both as an ingredient in pre-packaged foods and beverages and added to food and beverages directly by the consumer.

“A wide range of diseases is the result of such a reckless diet and they include diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and mortality in adults besides damaging other organs due to the consumption of sugar and sugary beverages,” says Manal al Shaqisia, Nutrition Technician at the Ministry of Health.

In keeping with the requirements of the times, the availability of fast food, sweets, and sweetened drinks has become easy and available to everyone with the click of a button, which has led to an increase in the spread of obesity, diabetes, and heart diseases among different groups in society.

Sugar plays a major role in improving the taste and quality of food. It is also one of the most important sources of energy, as it provides the body with 4 calories per gramme. It is found naturally in

all foods that contain carbohydrates, such as grains, fruits and vegetables, which contain fiber, essential minerals and antioxidants. Antioxidants and dairy products contain protein and calcium necessary for bone growth.

As far as hidden sugar is concerned, Dr Manal says that there is sugar under other names, such as corn syrup, cane syrup, barley syrup, fruit syrup, molasses, maple syrup, agave nectar, and words that end with ‘goose’ and others and careful attention should be made in choosing the foods without excess sugar.

Earlier, the World Health Organisation (WHO) advised not to use non-sugar sweeteners (NSS) for weight control in its newly released guideline which recommended a word of caution against the use of NSS to control body weight or reduce the risk of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).

The recommendation is based on the findings of a systematic review of the available evidence which suggests that use of NSS does not confer any long-term benefit in reducing body fat in adults or children.



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Indian rescuers battle to save 40 workers trapped in collapsed tunnel

DEHRADUN: Rescuers in northern India battled for a second day Monday to save 40 workers trapped underground after the road tunnel they were building collapsed, bringing down tonnes of debris.

Teams using heavy excavators have been working nonstop since the collapse early on Sunday morning to clear piles of concrete and earth, but with more debris falling as workers tried to clear a passage, a giant steel pipe was being prepared as an escape route.

“All the 40 workers trapped inside the tunnel are safe,” Karamveer Singh Bhandari, a senior commander in the National Disaster Response Force, said from the site in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand, adding that water and food had been sent.

Oxygen was being pumped into the blocked portion of the tunnel, with food sent through a water pipe.

Rathodi said excavators had removed about 20 metres of heavy debris, but the men were 40 metres beyond that point.

“Due to excess debris in the tunnel, we are facing some difficulty in the rescue, but our team is leaving no stone unturned,” Bhandari added here yesterday.

Teams plan to use a heavy machine to drive a steel pipe with a width of 90 centimetres, wide enough for the trapped men to squeeze through, the government’s highway and infrastructure company said.

“Water, food, oxygen, electricity all are available with the work force trapped inside the tunnel... All the stranded workers are safe as communicated by them,” the statement added.

Initial contact was made via a note on a scrap of paper, but later rescuers managed to connect using radio handsets.

“Some small food packets were sent in through a pipe which is also taking oxygen inside,” rescue official Durgesh Rathodi said from the site.

— AFP

Sunak brings back Cameron, sacks interior minister in new reset

LONDON: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak brought back former leader David Cameron as foreign minister on Monday in a reshuffle triggered by his firing of interior minister Suella Braverman after her criticism of police threatened his authority.

It was the latest reset for a prime minister whose party is badly lagging the Labour Party before an election expected next year. The return of Cameron suggested Sunak wanted to bring in a more centrist, experienced hand rather than appease the populist right of his party which supported Braverman.

It also reawakens divisive debate over Brexit: Cameron held the referendum on European Union membership in 2016 and was hated by many on the right of the party after he campaigned to remain. He quit hours after Britain voted to leave.

The ministerial reshuffle followed growing criticism of Braverman from opposition lawmakers and members of the governing Conservative Party, enabling Sunak to bring in allies



Former premier David Cameron.



Interior minister Suella Braverman

and remove ministers he felt were not performing.

His hand was forced when the ever-controversial Braverman defied him last week in an unauthorised article accusing police of “double standards” at protests, suggesting they were tough on right-wing demonstrators, but easy on pro-Palestinian marchers.

The opposition Labour Party said that inflamed tensions between a pro-Palestinian demonstration and a far-right counter protest on Saturday, when nearly 150 people were arrested.

While her removal was not a surprise, it was the appointment of Cameron which caused shock in the party, welcomed by more centrist lawmakers but loathed by some on the right who described it as the ultimate “Brexit surrender”.

Cameron said he was glad to take on his new role at a time of global change: “It has rarely been more important for this country to stand by our allies, strengthen our partnerships and make sure our voice is heard”.

“Though I may have disagreed with some individual decisions, it is clear to me that Rishi Sunak is a strong and capable prime minister, who is showing exemplary leadership at a difficult time,” he wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

Cameron has been out of politics since 2016 and will be able to return to government via

an appointment to the House of Lords upper house of parliament.

Lawmakers in the centrist wing of the party said Cameron’s appointment would bring international experience, and send a wider message to the country.

“It’s a sign to the Tory blue wall and moderate voters, we aren’t heading to the right,” one Conservative lawmaker said, using a phrase that is used to describe traditional Conservative-supporting areas in the south of England.

Some lawmakers had feared that Braverman was determined to remake the Conservatives as the “nasty party” with her headline focus on immigration and social issues, a moniker former Prime Minister Theresa May used in 2002 to try to persuade the party to shed its reputation of being uncaring.

But Cameron’s return compounded the anger felt by some on the right after her sacking. They backed her stance on protests and predicted she would remain a vocal force.

—Reuters

EU shifts to digital visas for Schengen area

BRUSSELS: People applying for visas to visit Europe’s Schengen area will soon do so via an online platform, under a change adopted by EU foreign ministers on Monday.

The shift towards digitalisation of the visa process will also do away with the need for applicants to get a sticker in their passport, meaning no more appointments at consulates or service providers’ offices.

The change, unveiled after a long legislative process, will take effect after technical work on the visa platform, expected to take months, then publication in the EU’s administrative gazette.

The online visa system “will simplify the application process for travellers,” said Spain’s Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska, whose country currently holds the EU presidency.

Once it is in place, people applying for short stays in the Schengen area will

People applying for short stays in the Schengen area will upload documents, data and electronic copies of their travel documents with biometric information, and pay fees, all through an online platform

upload documents, data and electronic copies of their travel documents with biometric information, and pay fees, all through an online platform.

If approved after database cross-checks, they will receive a cryptographically signed barcode to print off or store in a device.

But some first-time applicants or those with a new passport or changed biometric data may still need to attend an in-person appointment.

Some countries, such



The ambassadors of EU member states accepted the council’s negotiating mandate for a plan to digitise the visa application process.

as Australia, already have similar systems in place, where the online visa is linked to a person’s passport without the need for a sticker in it.

In most cases, citizens from more than 60 countries around the world, including Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand and the United States, do not need to apply for Schengen visas for short visits.

But they will still be required to apply online for pre-screened entry under a much-delayed European

Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS), similar to the ESTA system employed by the United States. ETIAS is now expected to be up and running in mid-2025.

All visitors entering the European Union — with visas or visa waivers — will find themselves going through an automated EU Entry/Exit System (EES), whose implementation has also been much delayed but expected to be in place at the end of 2024.

— AFP

Sultanate of Oman

Ministry of Defence

ENGINEERING SERVICES

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Defence invites Contractors specialized in the under mentioned works and registered with the Govt. Tender Board and Ministry of Defence to participate in the following tender.

Tender No.	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (RO)
037/2023	Building Works - MAM	First & above	23 Nov 2023	25 Dec 2023	145/- RO
040/2023	MEP Works - Jabel Al Akhader	First & above Specialized in MEP Works	23 Nov 2023	25 Dec 2023	105/- RO

*For more information about the above Tenders please visit gate number (14)

- Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Muaskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.
- The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 – 1300 Hours).
- The Bid to be accompanied by Tender Bond in the value of (1%) of the bid value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank and addressed to HE the Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Bids are to be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to HE the Chairman of Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and Name. Name of Bidder or any other marks should not be printed on the envelopes.
- Bids to be deposited in the Tender office at Gate No: 14 Muaskar Al Murtafa'a before 1300 hours on the assigned day for submission of the Tender.
- We would like to draw your attention to the importance of adherence to the submission date, request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer & that queries must be on electronic (Microsoft word).
- You are requested to submit the following Items within your tender submission. failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.
 - Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Labour (Updated Copy).
 - Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope of works and drawings.
 - Full set of stamped drawings and documents, Tender Form and Tender Bonds to be submitted as hard copy and others documentation shall be as **SOFT COPY (USB)** in two separate files:

A. Financial (**bill 1&2 separated file from bill3**)

B. Technical files.
 - Confirmation of site visit.
 - All addendums and circulars.
 - List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.
 - List of current and executed projects for the last Five years.
 - Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.
 - Financial Statement for the last Three years.



UN observes
minute’s
silence for
101 staff
killed



Flags fly at half-mast at the United Nations headquarters in New York. – AFP

GENEVA: United Nations workers observed a minute’s silence on Monday to honour the more than 100 employees killed in Gaza since war began last month, the largest toll of humanitarian workers in the organisation’s 78-year history.

Staff at UN offices in Geneva bowed their heads as a candle was lit in memory of the 101 employees of UN Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA killed in the Israeli assault on Gaza. UN flags across the world flew at half mast.

“This is the highest number of aid workers killed in the history of our organisation in such a short time,” said Tatiana Valovaya, Director-General of the UN office in Geneva.

“We are gathered here today, united in this very symbolic location, to pay respect to our brave colleagues who sacrificed their lives while serving under the United Nations flag.”

UNRWA has said that some staff members were killed while queuing for bread while others were killed along with their families in their homes in Israel’s aerial and ground war.

“UNRWA staff in Gaza appreciate the UN lowering the flag around the world,” Tom White, director of UNRWA in Gaza, said in a statement. “In Gaza however, we have to keep the UN flag flying high as a sign that we are still standing and serving the people of Gaza.”

“I would like to say that we are really facing very challenging times for multilateralism, for the world,” Valovaya said. “But the United Nations is more relevant than ever.”

Established in 1949 following the first Arab-Israeli war, UNRWA provides public services including schools, healthcare and aid. Many of UNRWA’s 5,000 staff working in Gaza are Palestinian refugees themselves. — Reuters

UNRWA warns of further shutdown as Gaza fuel depot is now empty



This picture shows a smoke plume erupting during Israeli bombardment on the Palestinian enclave. – AFP



Explosions erupt during Israeli bombardment in the northern Gaza Strip near a position along Israel’s southern border. – AFP

GENEVA: The UN Palestinian refugee agency’s fuel depot in Gaza has run dry and within a few days UNRWA will no longer be able to resupply hospitals, remove sewage and provide drinking water, its chief said on Monday.

UNRWA is sheltering nearly 800,000 people, or about half of the total population of Gazans who have fled their homes since an Israeli military campaign began over a month ago.

The agency chief, Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini, told donors on Monday

that it had been slowly emptying a fuel depot on the Israeli border containing strategic reserves.

A request to the Israeli military to replenish it had gone unanswered, he said.

“That reservoir is now empty,” Lazzarini said.

“If we project out a couple of days, by the 14th of November this will severely impact ambulances and major hospital operations. Some of them (hospitals) have a bit of solar but it is marginal, so those hospitals cease functioning,” he said.



Relatives of wounded members of the Palestinian Baraka family comfort each other at Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis. – AFP

Already, many hospitals have had to close in Gaza due to war damage or lack of fuel, including Al Quds, one of the major hospitals in the north of Gaza that has been the focus of Israel’s ground invasion.

Israel’s military has so far refused imports of fuel into Gaza.

UNRWA’s fuel is also used to remove hundreds of tonnes of solid waste from increasingly overcrowded camps in southern Gaza, and Lazzarini said these services would soon halt.

Without fuel, desalination



Smoke rises following an Israeli strike near the Indonesian Hospital that ran out of fuel. – Reuters

plants in the narrow, densely populated coastal strip used to provide drinking water to support at least 290,000 people will also stop on November 15, he added.

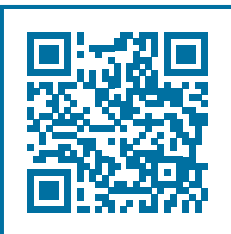
“So the situation is very dire now and it’s about to get much worse,” Lazzarini told donors.

Israeli forces reached the gates of Gaza City’s main hospital on Monday, the primary target in their battle to seize control of the northern half of the Gaza Strip, where medics said patients including newborn babies were dying for lack of fuel.

Gaza health ministry spokesperson Ashraf al Qidra, who was inside Al Shifa hospital, said 32 patients had died in the past three days, including three newborn babies, as a result of the siege of the hospital and the cut-off of its power.

At least 650 patients were still inside, desperate to be evacuated to another medical facility by the Red Cross or some other neutral agency.

“The tanks are in front of the hospital. We are under full blockade. It’s a totally civilian area.



downs
y



of fuel and electricity, in the northern Gaza

Only hospital facility, hospital patients, doctors and other civilians staying in the hospital. Someone should stop this,” a surgeon at the hospital, Dr Ahmed El Mokhallalati, said by telephone. “They bombed the (water) tanks, they bombed the water wells, they bombed the oxygen pump as well. They bombed everything in the hospital. So we are hardly surviving. We tell everyone, the hospital is no more a safe place for treating patients. We are harming patients by keeping them here.” — Reuters

Israel sharpens warning to Lebanon as cross-border hostilities spike

TEL AVIV: Israel said it was poised to impose quiet on the Lebanese front as hostilities spiked on Sunday, with wounded civilians in a cross-border missile attack and the Israeli air force bombing several sites.

At least 70 of fighters, along with several Lebanese civilians, having been killed in Israeli counter strikes, tactics have expanded to include rockets with 300kg-500kg warheads and kamikaze drones.

On Sunday, Lebanese fighters claimed responsibility for a guided missile attack that Israel said wounded at least two electrical company workers sent to carry out repairs at a border community.

A mortar attack wounded seven Israeli soldiers, the military said. A rocket set off sirens near the Israeli port city of Haifa, 27 km from the Lebanese border, but caused no casualties. A Lebanese wing took credit for the launch.

Israel said its air force and artillery struck targets in Lebanon in response, saying it was holding the group and the Beirut government responsible for all hostilities.

“The IDF (military) is focussed on Gaza but we are at a very high state of readiness in the north,” Hagari said.



Smoke rises over Lebanon, as seen from Israel-Lebanon border in northern Israel. — Reuters

“The IDF has operational plans for changing the security situation in the north. The security situation will not remain one in which northern residents do not feel secure in returning to their

homes,” he said in a televised briefing.

Residents of villages and towns on the Lebanese border have evacuated southward even as Gaza border communities hit emptied, making

for some 200,000 internally displaced Israelis, according to figures given by government officials. Many southern Lebanese have also fled northward for safety. — Reuters

EU calls for ‘meaningful’ pauses in the enclave

BRUSSELS: The EU’s humanitarian aid chief called on Monday for “meaningful” pauses in the fighting in Gaza and urgent deliveries of fuel to keep hospitals working in the territory.

“It is urgent to define and respect humanitarian pauses,” Janez Lenarcic, European Commissioner for Crisis Management, told a meeting of the bloc’s foreign ministers in Brussels.

“Fuel needs to get in. As you could see, more than half of the hospitals in the Gaza Strip stopped working, primarily because of lack of fuel, and fuel is desperately needed.”

The appeal went out as battles have raged around Gaza’s largest hospital, which has become the focus in the five-week-old war.

The Palestinian health ministry said on Monday the hospitals in the centre of the heaviest fighting in north Gaza have been forced out of service amid shortages and the fierce combat.

The EU’s 27 countries issued a statement on Sunday saying hospitals “must be protected”.

The bloc demanded “immediate humanitarian

pauses” to allow desperately needed aid into the besieged territory.

“These pauses have to be meaningful,” Lenarcic said.

“First of all, they have to be announced well in advance of the implementation so organisations can prepare to exploit them. Second, they have to be clearly defined time-wise.”

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell insisted that “Gaza needs more aid from any point of view”.

“Water, fuel, food. This aid is available, is in the border waiting to come in,” he said.

Borrell announced that he would travel to “Israel, Palestine, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Jordan this week to discuss humanitarian access and assistance and political issues with regional leaders”.

Luxembourg’s foreign minister, Jean Asselborn, said that hospitals in Gaza should not be turned into “battlefields”.

“Patients who are in intensive care units have no chance,” he said.

“There is no more oxygen, there is no more water, there are no more medicines. So these people are going to die.” — AFP



Palestinian children fill containers with water in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip. — AFP

Babies die at hospitals ‘out of service’ as fighting rages



Medical workers try to rescue Palestinian baby Mosab Sobieh, who is less than a year old and was injured in an Israeli strike on their home, in the northern Gaza Strip. — Reuters

GAZA: The hospitals in northern Gaza have been forced out of service amid fuel shortages and intense combat, with the death toll inside the territory’s largest facility rising, the Palestinian health ministry said on Monday.

UN agencies and doctors in the facility warned a lack of generator fuel was claiming lives, including infants.

Witnesses reported intense overnight air strikes, with tanks and armoured vehicles just metres from the gate of the sprawling Al Shifa compound at the heart of the Gaza City, now an urban war zone.

The Palestinian Deputy Health Minister Youssef Abu Rish said the death toll inside Al Shifa rose to 27 adult intensive care patients and seven babies since the weekend as the facility suffered fuel shortages.

Gaza has been reliant on generators for over a month after Israel cut off power supplies and the besieged territory’s only power plant ran out of fuel.

Abu Rish said that all hospitals in the north of the embattled

The death toll inside Al Shifa rose to 27 adult intensive care patients and seven babies since the weekend.

territory were “out of service”.

The World Health Organization in the Palestinian Territories said early on Monday that at least 2,300 people — patients, health workers and people fleeing fighting — were inside the crippled Al Shifa.

“There are dozens of dead and hundreds of wounded that no one can get to. Ambulances are at a standstill because they get shot at when they go out,” hospital director Muhammad Abu Selmiya said.

Israel is facing intense international pressure to minimise civilian suffering amid its massive air and ground operation, which Palestinian

authorities say have killed 11,180 people, including 4,609 children.

Israel said 44 of its troops have been killed in the Gaza offensive.

Netanyahu told US media that “there could be” a deal to free the hostages, but stopped short of providing any details, adding that “the less I say about it, the more I’ll increase the chances that it materialises”.

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told MSNBC there has been “active negotiation” on a potential deal but kept mum on any details.

A Palestinian official in Gaza speaking on condition of anonymity accused Israel of dragging its feet.

“Netanyahu is responsible for the delay and obstacles in reaching a preliminary agreement on the release of several prisoners,” the official said.

International attention has focused on the plight of Palestinians, and protests have been held worldwide in solidarity with the 2.4 million under bombardment and siege for more than five weeks. — AFP

Regulate your emotions during stressful times



Hyesha Barrett
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The writer is a life coach and NLP practitioner

In today’s fast-paced world, stress has become a prevalent part of our daily lives. From work pressures and commitments to personal challenges and strains, stress can take a toll on our physical and mental health.

If left unattended, it can wreak havoc on our nervous system.

Our nervous system plays a vital role in how we respond to stress.

It consists of two main components that are involved in the stress response: the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS).

The SNS is responsible for the “fight or flight” response, while the PNS is the “rest and digest” system, which helps us to relax and recover. To manage stress effectively, we need to find a balance between these two systems.

Deep breathing is the easiest and quickest way. During stressful times, we often shallow breathe and lose the resources necessary to feel relaxed.

During stress, our SNS goes into overdrive, which increases our heart rate and makes us feel anxious. Deep, slow breaths activate the PNS,

which calms our bodies.

Mindfulness and meditation are two great de-stressing techniques that go hand in hand to bring us out of the dwelling of the past and the guessing of the future.

When we practice being more mindful and tune sharply into our senses, we become grounded in the present moment, the now.

Strengthening your PNS through mindfulness and meditation will reduce the reactivity of your SNS. Meditation is a wonderful way to de-stress the body, mind, and soul, allowing you to connect with your inner self more.

GREAT WAY

Exercising through moderately strenuous body movements is a great way to combat the frenetic feelings that stress brings on.

The release of endorphins are natural mood boosters that help to balance your SNS and PNS. Incorporate a sport or activity you enjoy doing that will elevate your heartbeat and break a sweat.

Sleep is extremely important. Lack of it can activate the SNS, making you more susceptible to

MEDITATION IS A WONDERFUL WAY TO DE-STRESS THE BODY, MIND, AND SOUL, ALLOWING YOU TO CONNECT WITH YOUR INNER SELF MORE

stress. When our bodies and minds are well rested, this allows our PNS to lead during repose and recovery.

Set realistic goals that are achievable, both at work and in your personal life.

Don’t take on too much. Prioritise your tasks and lists. Effective time management can help reduce stress by avoiding last-minute rushes. Create to-do lists, set boundaries, and allocate time for relaxation and self-care.

Reach out and seek support from your loved ones who you know will understand your pain or have gone through similar experiences.

Human connection is a powerful stress reducer. Sharing your feelings will activate your PNS and create a sense of support and belonging. Find the time to laugh and listen to uplifting music.

Our nervous system needs to maintain a balance between the SNS and PNS activation. Regulating ourselves to a calmer state during stressful times is essential to conserve our emotional, mental, and physical well-being.

Here’s to living a happy and stress-free, regulated today and tomorrow.

Nations negotiate terms of plastics treaty in Nairobi

NICK PERRY

THE latest negotiations towards a global treaty to combat plastic pollution opened in Nairobi on Monday, with tensions expected as nations tussle over what should be included in the pact.

Some 175 countries agreed last year to conclude by 2024 a UN treaty to address the plastic blighting oceans, floating in the atmosphere, and infiltrating the bodies of animals and humans.

While there is broad consensus a treaty is needed, there are very different opinions about what should be in it.

As the talks formally opened, Peru’s Gustavo Meza-Cuadra Velasquez, chair of the forum’s intergovernmental negotiating committee, warned that plastic pollution posed “a direct threat to our environment, human health, and the delicate balance of our planet.”

“We have the collective power to change this trajectory,” he said.

Negotiators have met twice already but the November 13-19 talks are the first to consider a draft text of the treaty published in September and the policy options it contains.

Around 60 so-called “high ambition” nations have called for binding rules to reduce the use and production of plastic, which is made from fossil fuels, a measure supported by many environment groups.

It is not a position shared by many plastic-producing economies, including the United States, which have long preferred to focus on recycling, innovation and better waste management.

The draft presenting the various ways forward will form the basis for the high-stakes deliberations at the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) headquarters in Nairobi.

With more than 2,000 delegates registered, and advocates from environmental and plastic groups also in the room, the negotiations are expected to get heated as the details are hammered out.

Hundreds of climate campaigners, waving placards reading “Plastic crisis = climate crisis”, on Saturday marched in Nairobi calling for the talks to focus on cutting the amount of plastic produced.

Kenyan President William Ruto described plastic pollution as “an existential threat to life, to humanity and everything in between.”

“To deal with plastic pollution, humanity must change. We must change the way we consume, the way we produce, and how we dispose (of) our waste.” — AFP



Hannah Beech

The writer is the senior correspondent for Asia based in Bangkok

Fighting to govern Myanmar, from a teeny office in Washington

THREE blocks from the White House, at the end of a fluorescent-lit hallway on the sixth floor of a coworking space for “business nomads, freelancers and energetic entrepreneurs,” sits the American headquarters of the National Unity Government of Myanmar.

This pro-democracy government was formed after a military coup in Myanmar deposed civilian authorities in 2021. Although Western countries condemned the putsch — and the massacres and mass arrests that followed — no national government has formally recognised NUG as the legitimate leadership of Myanmar.

But Washington attracts political refugees from all over the world who hope proximity to power will draw attention to their national plights. Aye Chan Mon and Moe Zaw Oo of the unity government remain optimistic they can get the world to care about Myanmar, despite the destructive forces of apathy and ignorance.

“They don’t even know how to pronounce Myanmar,” said Aye Chan Mon of the reception she often receives in Washington. “It’s not Yemen,” she added.

Fortified by her mother’s curries — enlivened with roselle leaves and shrimp paste — Aye Chan Mon, 26, spends her days trying to arrange meetings with anyone willing to listen to her recount her homeland’s desperate present situation and its history of military tyranny and civil war. In September, she testified before Congress.

In December, President Joe Biden signed the Burma Act, which refers to Myanmar by a name discarded by military rulers. The legislation calls for sanctions on those who quashed Myanmar’s reforms and for nonlethal aid for pro-democracy forces. Its passage was a triumph for NUG’s Washington representatives. In late October, the United States announced targeted sanctions on Myanmar’s state-run oil and gas enterprise.

But any actual spending for Myanmar must be authorised though



An image of Myanmar’s civilian leaders, who were deposed in the 2021 coup, at the National Unity Government of Myanmar headquarters in Washington.

separate appropriation bills.

“After the Burma Act was enacted, the people of our country and the resistance movement had very high expectations,” said Moe Zaw Oo, who is the unity government’s deputy foreign minister. “But we have not seen any tangible results.”

Myanmar has never been a foreign

AT LEAST 1.7 MILLION PEOPLE ARE INTERNALLY DISPLACED, THE UNITED NATIONS SAYS, WITH ANOTHER MILLION OR SO HAVING FLED THE COUNTRY

policy priority for the United States.

During the Obama administration, the Southeast Asian nation of slightly more than 50 million people seemed to offer a hopeful narrative: a military rule peacefully giving way to an elected government. Barack Obama visited twice. That gauzy tale, though, proved a mirage. The military never relinquished true power. Its soldiers continued to persecute ethnic minorities.

Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel laureate-turned-civilian leader, declined to forcefully condemn the army’s brutality against Rohingyas. The United States soured on her and labelled anti-

Rohingya violence, which reached a frenzy in 2017, ethnic cleansing.

Now, she and nearly her entire Cabinet are imprisoned. Vast tracts of the country are at war, as civilians refuse to submit to the junta and armed ethnic groups expand their territory. At least 1.7 million people are internally displaced, the United Nations says, with another million or so having fled the country. The unity government’s Washington office opened a year ago, joining branches in six other countries, including the Czech Republic and Japan. Almost all its meetings are virtual.

“Sometimes, we joke that meetings online are good because we are not facing each other, so we can argue without the threat of a physical fight,” Moe Zaw Oo said.

The entire office is barely larger than a cubicle. There’s little else besides a sign proclaiming the government’s name — strategically placed as a backdrop for online meetings — plus four portraits of government leaders (two of whom are imprisoned in Myanmar) and three tables. Cappuccinos for visitors are sourced from a nearby cafe.

Those in exile from Myanmar have faced numerous hardships.

Kyaw Moe Tun was Myanmar’s envoy to the United Nations at the time of the coup. — **The New York Times**

The essence of Oman

Essence of Oman is difficult to derive because it is in the air, in the soil and the hearts of its people.

We are in the National Day week, and we have the flags flying proudly. We might not have the decorations of lights but we have the light within us to remind us of the love we have for this land.

This year November 18 falls on weekend, and we will have the military parade to mark the National Day of Oman. Where ever or which ever part of the world you are, the Sultanate of Oman television will provide coverage via the digital media.

The world has reasons to feel sorrow, but this is yet another beautiful occasion to express gratitude. This feeling is not just for people who are in Oman but for everyone who has been in this land at some point of time in their lives. There is something in Oman that grows in you and becomes part of you. For sure it is in its nature that reflects through its land and people. It is no wonder Oman has so many of its cultural elements recognised by Unesco. But the unique traits of the society is something that is to be recognised and noted.

Certain customs of hospitality is taught at young age. I was lucky to have observed it closely as I had the opportunity to travel wide in Oman and the warmth one receives while visiting homes was something poetic from the way halwa and kahwa were served to giving back the kahwa cup back, the signalling to the person who is serving the coffee whether you want more or not, the enthusiasm in serving food and cutting fruits... all indicate one thing and that is joy of your presence. Then it is the perfumes for you after the meals. Maybe there are variations but these moments of care stay with you forever.

Interestingly you can see how the sense of smell plays a significant role throughout. The fragrance of frankincense and bakhoor in the air, the flavours and smell of rose and saffron in the halwa, aroma of coffee and spices, and the food and fruits



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The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

THERE IS SOMETHING IN OMAN THAT GROWS IN YOU AND BECOMES PART OF YOU

and finally the perfume, which could range from oud, musk, sandalwood, rose to anything modern. It is a unique journey. And the taste for musk and rose has stayed with me. These distinct smells would always remind you of Oman like jasmines of Oman in summer packed in between tree leaves that used to be sold in Sidab.

The interesting part of the hospitality is that most of the time it is the young male members who serve and the seniors take over, which goes on to prove how in the traditional settings the young are taught life skills with efficiency. In the mosques too one can observe the young ones come to wish their father after the prayers. It is a mixture of respect and gratitude that will remain forever.

We can only enjoy a country to the fullest if you understand its culture and people.

Friend and adventurer, Lilianne Donders, puts it this way, “To understand different cultures, it is important not to observe from outside but from inside. We are all humans, and it really doesn’t make a difference where we come from, and sharing traditions makes the world a better place.”

Traditions are built for hundreds of years and there are meanings and stories behind them. And that is why Unesco lists World Heritage Sites and Oman has claimed five inscriptions on the Unesco World Heritage List.

The recent achievement is the New Omani Cultural Elements in the Unesco Programme of Historical Events and Globally Influential Figures. The Unesco programme that celebrated the fiftieth or centenary of important historical events and globally influential figures saw inclusion of the 350th anniversary of the establishment of Jibreen Fort, and the 150th anniversary of the death of the historian and poet Humaid bin Mohammed bin Ruzaiq. The forty-second session of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation — Unesco, is currently being held until November 22 at the organisation’s headquarters in Paris.

THE MOST POLLUTED CITY



Pigeons fly above the Sabz Burj tomb amid heavy smoggy conditions in New Delhi on Monday. The Indian capital regularly ranks among the most polluted major cities on the planet, with a melange of factory and vehicle emissions exacerbated by seasonal agricultural fires. – AFP

Boycott the boycotts!

Since October 7, I have had roughly 170 “discussions” with my wife, beginning the Hamas attacks on Israel.

The attack itself, the hideous response in Gaza and the vast scale of suffering for ordinary Palestinian people above all others have provided plenty of issues to argue about. I like to read mainstream, well-resourced news sources then investigate contentious facts and make a balance of probability assessment. She prefers activist Instagram accounts and people on the ground with broad individual followings. There are truths, absent truths and outright lies in all of them.

Leaving the conflict itself aside, there is one angle taken by activist and unofficial social media accounts, that reaches directly to all communities. The “boycott”. We have all seen posts, often from people we love and respect, and received WhatsApp forwards from supposedly authoritative sources that are unknown to us. Boycott this company or that. They are “supporting Israeli oppression”, or worse. Many of these companies are well-known international brands that we see every day.

The sense that we have limited power to end the suffering, and our desire to act in our own small way, make us vulnerable to malicious misinformation. Other than giving to respected charities like UNRWA, ICRC etc., we can’t do much directly. Most of all, there is no clear outlet



Alex Brown

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for protest – there is no Israeli government representation here. So, the idea of taking a direct economic step to express our anger is appealing.

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) is an organisation founded by two Palestinians that aims to define the conflict in the same terms as apartheid-era South Africa. The BDS movement calls for using those same three tools to isolate Israel culturally and economically, and put pressure on its leaders towards peace and justice. I have followed BDS for quite a while, and if you’re interested, they have a website - bdsmovement.net - and various social media outlets.

Unfortunately, social media and our endless WhatsApp groups are full of wrong information about legitimate targets for boycotts. Some of those posts are well-meaning and just wrongly informed. Others are promoted for ugly reasons. The person who sends them to you might mean well, but a lie is a lie. Back in 2005 after offensive cartoons were published in a Danish newspaper, someone added a dairy products manufacturer from New Zealand to a list of companies that should be boycotted. When I confronted someone who shared that list, they simply said “well there must

be a reason”. I find that attitude deeply immoral.

If you visit the BDS page, you will find a fairly short list of priority targets. Whether you use those products and/or would stop using them is your business. But what is important is to check the facts. Legitimate businesses that have nothing really to do with Israel have been targeted by social media for spurious reasons, but the BDS site makes clear that they are not considered targets.



A Palestinian boy stands near empty shells at a supermarket in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, on Monday. – AFP

One example is McDonald’s – a publicly traded company that has international franchises. The Omani franchise pays them a fee and agrees to uphold their brand standards. The Israeli franchise does the same. But neither are owned by McDonald’s, or by each other. There is no connection beyond the badge. On the contrary, McDonald’s in Oman is a 100 per cent Omani company, employing many Omanis and contributing to

the local economy. Boycotting Omani businesses is not an act of solidarity, let alone a sanction.

The other famous example is Starbucks – another public company. Yes, its founder was famously supportive of Israel but he does not control the company or own any significant share. Starbucks doesn’t even have an Israeli franchise. Again, no need to boycott and put Omani jobs and Omani suppliers at risk.

One way or another we are all invested in publicly traded companies around the world – pension and investment funds tend to hold shares in a wide spread of them. Unless they’re Israeli owned or playing a particular direct economic role, they make no sense as boycott targets. It is easy to find better choices if you simply check with the BDS campaign. BDS is an important political and economic tool, but it only works when it is targeted in a coherent and logical way. If you are not checking the facts and instead boycotting businesses, you are pulling on the wrong end of the rope. Being seen to do something and lash out at a soft target seems to make some people feel better and we all have our own strong feelings about what is happening, but spreading false accusations and hurting our own economy doesn’t help.

sport

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SEEB EDGE DHOFAR, AL RUSTAQ STUN AL NAHDA IN OFA CUP

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, NOV 13

Seeb edged Dhofar 2-1 in the second round of Group A matches of the Oman Football Association Cup. The match, held at the Al Saadah Sports Complex on Saturday, showcased Seeb dominance under the guidance of Brazilian coach Jorvan Vieira.

Seeb's victory was sealed with goals from Yazeed al Maashani and Marwan Taieb, while Abdullah al Musharfi netted Dhofar's lone goal.

In the same group, Oman Club secured a 1-0 victory against Al Nasr, with the goal coming from professional player Noha in the 64th minute.

With these results, defending champions Seeb continue their winning streak and currently lead Group A with six points. Dhofar remain in second place with three points, having won one match and suffered one defeat. Oman Club are level on points with Dhofar but hold a superior goal difference. Al Nasr find themselves at the bottom of the group with no points, following two consecutive defeats.

In Group B, Sohar claimed a 1-0 victory over Al Shabab on Sunday. Professional player William Frank struck the lone goal of the match.

QUSAI HITS HAT-TRICK
Meanwhile, Al Rustaq displayed a stellar performance in a 3-2 win against Al Nahda. Qusai al Maamari's hat-trick secured Al Rustaq's victory, overcoming two goals from Al Nahda's Mohammed Khasib.

With this result, Sohar jumped to the fourth point in second place behind Al Rustaq, who lead with four points and a goal difference ahead of Sohar. Al Nahda and Al Shabab share a single point in the third and fourth positions, respectively.

Bahla club continued the excitement in Group C with a 1-0 victory over Ibri on Sunday.

Mohammed Dhih al Omairi's goal in the 74th minute secured the win for Bahla.

In another match of the same group, Sur triumphed over Al Wahda 1-0. Jumaa al Farsi's goal in the 32nd minute of the first half secured the three points for Sur. Bahla and Sur both hold four points each, with Sur securing the first position in Group C. Ibri follow closely with three points, while Al Wahda sit at the bottom with no points.

The teams are divided into three groups, and the top team from each group along with the best second-placed team will advance to the quarterfinals. The matches in the group stage are played in a league format with two rounds (home and away).



Sur and Al Wahda players fight for the ball during the Group C match of the Oman Football Association Cup.



Sohar and Al Shabab players in action.



Sur and Al Wahda players during the match.

Oman raring to go against Chinese Taipei in opener



Oman national team players during a training session ahead of their Preliminary Joint Qualification Round 2 for World Cup 2026 and AFC Asian Cup.

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 13

The Oman national football team players raised up their latest technical preparations for the opening match against Chinese Taipei on Thursday at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex as part of the Preliminary Joint Qualification Round 2 for FIFA World Cup 2026 and AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027 besides 2024 AFC Asian Cup in Qatar campaign. The match will start at 7 pm.

The Red Warriors squad are fit and raring to go for the joint qualifiers matches. The following match will be against Kyrgyzstan in Bishkek city on November 21. The Oman team will aim for a historic show in this edition of the joint qualifiers as eight direct slots are available to Asia along with an inter-continental play-off slot in the expanded 48-team FIFA World Cup 2026.

The Red Warriors began their domestic camp since Tuesday with the full squad after joining of Jameel al Yahmadi and Fayez al Rushedi. The

medical situation of Salah al Yahyai will not allow him to take part in the opening match against Chinese Taipei. The coaching staff headed by Branko Ivankovic and his assisting team were very focused and keen during the previous training sessions to monitor the players physical and technical level and sharpen their technical and tactical skills ahead of the forthcoming matches in the joint qualifiers. Moreover, the head coach implemented several tactical plans to boost defending and attacking areas to score goals.

On the other side, the Chinese Taipei team arrived in Muscat and began their practice sessions in Muscat. The opponent team will undergo their latest training sessions at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex.

The Oman Football Association (OFA) announced in their social media accounts on Monday about the sale of tickets of the match. The tickets will be available in majority of Oman Oil stations in Muscat with RO 2 for the general tickets and RO 20 for the VIP ticket.

Regulate your emotions during stressful times



Hyesha Barrett
coach.hyesha@gmail.com

The writer is a life coach and NLP practitioner

In today’s fast-paced world, stress has become a prevalent part of our daily lives. From work pressures and commitments to personal challenges and strains, stress can take a toll on our physical and mental health.

If left unattended, it can wreak havoc on our nervous system.

Our nervous system plays a vital role in how we respond to stress.

It consists of two main components that are involved in the stress response: the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS).

The SNS is responsible for the “fight or flight” response, while the PNS is the “rest and digest” system, which helps us to relax and recover. To manage stress effectively, we need to find a balance between these two systems.

Deep breathing is the easiest and quickest way. During stressful times, we often shallow breathe and lose the resources necessary to feel relaxed.

During stress, our SNS goes into overdrive, which increases our heart rate and makes us feel anxious. Deep, slow breaths activate the PNS,

which calms our bodies.

Mindfulness and meditation are two great de-stressing techniques that go hand in hand to bring us out of the dwelling of the past and the guessing of the future.

When we practice being more mindful and tune sharply into our senses, we become grounded in the present moment, the now.

Strengthening your PNS through mindfulness and meditation will reduce the reactivity of your SNS. Meditation is a wonderful way to de-stress the body, mind, and soul, allowing you to connect with your inner self more.

GREAT WAY

Exercising through moderately strenuous body movements is a great way to combat the frenetic feelings that stress brings on.

The release of endorphins are natural mood boosters that help to balance your SNS and PNS. Incorporate a sport or activity you enjoy doing that will elevate your heartbeat and break a sweat.

Sleep is extremely important. Lack of it can activate the SNS, making you more susceptible to

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stress. When our bodies and minds are well rested, this allows our PNS to lead during repose and recovery.

Set realistic goals that are achievable, both at work and in your personal life.

Don’t take on too much. Prioritise your tasks and lists. Effective time management can help reduce stress by avoiding last-minute rushes. Create to-do lists, set boundaries, and allocate time for relaxation and self-care.

Reach out and seek support from your loved ones who you know will understand your pain or have gone through similar experiences.

Human connection is a powerful stress reducer. Sharing your feelings will activate your PNS and create a sense of support and belonging. Find the time to laugh and listen to uplifting music.

Our nervous system needs to maintain a balance between the SNS and PNS activation. Regulating ourselves to a calmer state during stressful times is essential to conserve our emotional, mental, and physical well-being.

Here’s to living a happy and stress-free, regulated today and tomorrow.

Nations negotiate terms of plastics treaty in Nairobi

NICK PERRY

THE latest negotiations towards a global treaty to combat plastic pollution opened in Nairobi on Monday, with tensions expected as nations tussle over what should be included in the pact.

Some 175 countries agreed last year to conclude by 2024 a UN treaty to address the plastic blighting oceans, floating in the atmosphere, and infiltrating the bodies of animals and humans.

While there is broad consensus a treaty is needed, there are very different opinions about what should be in it.

As the talks formally opened, Peru’s Gustavo Meza-Cuadra Velasquez, chair of the forum’s intergovernmental negotiating committee, warned that plastic pollution posed “a direct threat to our environment, human health, and the delicate balance of our planet.”

“We have the collective power to change this trajectory,” he said.

Negotiators have met twice already but the November 13-19 talks are the first to consider a draft text of the treaty published in September and the policy options it contains.

Around 60 so-called “high ambition” nations have called for binding rules to reduce the use and production of plastic, which is made from fossil fuels, a measure supported by many environment groups.

It is not a position shared by many plastic-producing economies, including the United States, which have long preferred to focus on recycling, innovation and better waste management.

The draft presenting the various ways forward will form the basis for the high-stakes deliberations at the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) headquarters in Nairobi.

With more than 2,000 delegates registered, and advocates from environmental and plastic groups also in the room, the negotiations are expected to get heated as the details are hammered out.

Hundreds of climate campaigners, waving placards reading “Plastic crisis = climate crisis”, on Saturday marched in Nairobi calling for the talks to focus on cutting the amount of plastic produced.

Kenyan President William Ruto described plastic pollution as “an existential threat to life, to humanity and everything in between.”

“To deal with plastic pollution, humanity must change. We must change the way we consume, the way we produce, and how we dispose (of) our waste.” — AFP

Fighting to govern Myanmar, from a teeny office in Washington



Hannah Beech

The writer is the senior correspondent for Asia based in Bangkok

THREE blocks from the White House, at the end of a fluorescent-lit hallway on the sixth floor of a coworking space for “business nomads, freelancers and energetic entrepreneurs,” sits the American headquarters of the National Unity Government of Myanmar.

This pro-democracy government was formed after a military coup in Myanmar deposed civilian authorities in 2021. Although Western countries condemned the putsch — and the massacres and mass arrests that followed — no national government has formally recognised NUG as the legitimate leadership of Myanmar.

But Washington attracts political refugees from all over the world who hope proximity to power will draw attention to their national plights. Aye Chan Mon and Moe Zaw Oo of the unity government remain optimistic they can get the world to care about Myanmar, despite the destructive forces of apathy and ignorance.

“They don’t even know how to pronounce Myanmar,” said Aye Chan Mon of the reception she often receives in Washington. “It’s not Yemen,” she added.

Fortified by her mother’s curries — enlivened with roselle leaves and shrimp paste — Aye Chan Mon, 26, spends her days trying to arrange meetings with anyone willing to listen to her recount her homeland’s desperate present situation and its history of military tyranny and civil war. In September, she testified before Congress.

In December, President Joe Biden signed the Burma Act, which refers to Myanmar by a name discarded by military rulers. The legislation calls for sanctions on those who quashed Myanmar’s reforms and for nonlethal aid for pro-democracy forces. Its passage was a triumph for NUG’s Washington representatives. In late October, the United States announced targeted sanctions on Myanmar’s state-run oil and gas enterprise.

But any actual spending for Myanmar must be authorised though



An image of Myanmar’s civilian leaders, who were deposed in the 2021 coup, at the National Unity Government of Myanmar headquarters in Washington.

separate appropriation bills.

“After the Burma Act was enacted, the people of our country and the resistance movement had very high expectations,” said Moe Zaw Oo, who is the unity government’s deputy foreign minister. “But we have not seen any tangible results.”

Myanmar has never been a foreign

AT LEAST 1.7 MILLION PEOPLE ARE INTERNALLY DISPLACED, THE UNITED NATIONS SAYS, WITH ANOTHER MILLION OR SO HAVING FLED THE COUNTRY

policy priority for the United States.

During the Obama administration, the Southeast Asian nation of slightly more than 50 million people seemed to offer a hopeful narrative: a military rule peacefully giving way to an elected government. Barack Obama visited twice. That gauzy tale, though, proved a mirage. The military never relinquished true power. Its soldiers continued to persecute ethnic minorities.

Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel laureate-turned-civilian leader, declined to forcefully condemn the army’s brutality against Rohingyas. The United States soured on her and labelled anti-

Rohingya violence, which reached a frenzy in 2017, ethnic cleansing.

Now, she and nearly her entire Cabinet are imprisoned. Vast tracts of the country are at war, as civilians refuse to submit to the junta and armed ethnic groups expand their territory. At least 1.7 million people are internally displaced, the United Nations says, with another million or so having fled the country. The unity government’s Washington office opened a year ago, joining branches in six other countries, including the Czech Republic and Japan. Almost all its meetings are virtual.

“Sometimes, we joke that meetings online are good because we are not facing each other, so we can argue without the threat of a physical fight,” Moe Zaw Oo said.

The entire office is barely larger than a cubicle. There’s little else besides a sign proclaiming the government’s name — strategically placed as a backdrop for online meetings — plus four portraits of government leaders (two of whom are imprisoned in Myanmar) and three tables. Cappuccinos for visitors are sourced from a nearby cafe.

Those in exile from Myanmar have faced numerous hardships.

Kyaw Moe Tun was Myanmar’s envoy to the United Nations at the time of the coup. — **The New York Times**

The essence of Oman

Essence of Oman is difficult to derive because it is in the air, in the soil and the hearts of its people.

We are in the National Day week, and we have the flags flying proudly. We might not have the decorations of lights but we have the light within us to remind us of the love we have for this land.

This year November 18 falls on weekend, and we will have the military parade to mark the National Day of Oman. Where ever or which ever part of the world you are, the Sultanate of Oman television will provide coverage via the digital media.

The world has reasons to feel sorrow, but this is yet another beautiful occasion to express gratitude. This feeling is not just for people who are in Oman but for everyone who has been in this land at some point of time in their lives. There is something in Oman that grows in you and becomes part of you. For sure it is in its nature that reflects through its land and people. It is no wonder Oman has so many of its cultural elements recognised by Unesco. But the unique traits of the society is something that is to be recognised and noted.

Certain customs of hospitality is taught at young age. I was lucky to have observed it closely as I had the opportunity to travel wide in Oman and the warmth one receives while visiting homes was something poetic from the way halwa and kahwa were served to giving back the kahwa cup back, the signalling to the person who is serving the coffee whether you want more or not, the enthusiasm in serving food and cutting fruits... all indicate one thing and that is joy of your presence. Then it is the perfumes for you after the meals. Maybe there are variations but these moments of care stay with you forever.

Interestingly you can see how the sense of smell plays a significant role throughout. The fragrance of frankincense and bakhoor in the air, the flavours and smell of rose and saffron in the halwa, aroma of coffee and spices, and the food and fruits



Lakshmi Kothaneth
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The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

THERE IS SOMETHING IN OMAN THAT GROWS IN YOU AND BECOMES PART OF YOU

and finally the perfume, which could range from oud, musk, sandalwood, rose to anything modern. It is a unique journey. And the taste for musk and rose has stayed with me. These distinct smells would always remind you of Oman like jasmines of Oman in summer packed in between tree leaves that used to be sold in Sidab.

The interesting part of the hospitality is that most of the time it is the young male members who serve and the seniors take over, which goes on to prove how in the traditional settings the young are taught life skills with efficiency. In the mosques too one can observe the young ones come to wish their father after the prayers. It is a mixture of respect and gratitude that will remain forever.

We can only enjoy a country to the fullest if you understand its culture and people.

Friend and adventurer, Lilianne Donders, puts it this way, “To understand different cultures, it is important not to observe from outside but from inside. We are all humans, and it really doesn’t make a difference where we come from, and sharing traditions makes the world a better place.”

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Late Chelsea goal draws level in thriller

ANDY JALIL
LONDON, NOV 13

This highly entertaining game had everything in it. There was excitement, tension, drama and a cluster of goals, the football was simply scintillating. It was perhaps, appropriate that honours were shared at 4-4. Gaining a point from the game, Manchester City continue to lead the Premier League while Chelsea remain unpredictable halfway up the table.

Chelsea manager, Mauricio Pochettino said: "Everyone is so proud to be involved. It shows why it's the best league in the world. The players deserve full credit because the performance was amazing. We faced a team that, for me, is the best in the world.

"We showed the character, showed that we have also tools against a team like Manchester City to go for the goal and to dominate and have the capacity to create chances. From (last) Monday (a 4-1 win at Tottenham), maybe it's point to start building our confidence and to believe in the way we are working. Now it's translating how we will compete in the future."

Pochettino very strongly protested to the fourth official at the final whistle and was booked for it. He felt the referee should have given a freekick a few seconds earlier for a foul. He said: "I felt Raheem (Stirling) could go through to score the fifth. I deserve to be booked because I crossed the limit. It's



Manchester City's Ederson saves from Chelsea's Cole Palmer.— Reuters

not a good image for me and for football."

In the heat of the moment, he forgot to shake hands with the City Manager, Pep Guardiola. He said: "I want to apologise to him also because in this moment I didn't see him". Guardiola responded: "No problem, it's fine. Emotions, it happens to me sometimes. It's fine."

While the game was full of life from the start, it wasn't quite as frenetic until the sequence

of the eight goals. City went into the lead in the 25th minute when Marc Cucurella appeared to pull Erling Haaland's shirt in the box as he met a shot from Bernardo Silva. A long VAR check awarded the penalty which Haaland converted

But four minutes later, Chelsea were level. A curling freekick from Reece James was superbly tipped over by Ederson for a corner. From a crowded box, Thiago Silva made a clever

move to the near post to meet the shot and a glancing header was in the net.

Chelsea took the lead in the 37th minute. Cole Palmer passed to James who went past Josko Gvardiol and put in a low cross for Stirling to tap in. But in the added time to the first half, Manuel Akanji found himself unmarked for a header to bring both sides level at halftime.

Two minutes after the restart, Haaland scored his

49th goal from 48 Premier League matches. Julian Alvarez, receiving a pass from Phil Foden, crossed low from the right which Haaland met and bizarrely bundled in sliding over the line on his backside along with the ball, 2-3.

The goal fest continued 20 minutes later. Moises Caicedo fed a short pass to Conor Gallagher whose powerful 25-yard shot rebounded from Ederson in the goal to Nicolas

Jackson who promptly drove in his shot, 3-3.

It seemed all over with just four minutes of normal time remaining when Rodri's shot was deflected into the Chelsea goal off Thiago Silva but the fight was still left in the London side. Armando Broja was recklessly tackled by Rubin Dias and the following spot kick was calmly, under pressure, converted by the cool Palmer. The fans couldn't have been better entertained.

Djokovic on top of world after sinking Rune

TURIN, ITALY: Novak Djokovic will finish the year as world number one for a record-extending eighth time after beating Holger Rune 7-6 (7/4), 6-7 (1/7), 6-3 in his opening match at the ATP Finals on Sunday.

The 24-time Grand Slam champion needed just one win or a defeat for young rival Carlos Alcaraz in order to secure top spot in the ATP rankings for 2023 and prevailed in a three-hour Green Group clash with spirited debutant Rune.

Djokovic, on a run of 19 straight wins, has had an age-defying year, winning three Slams to become the all-time record winner of major titles.

The 36-year-old came into the Finals in Turin off the back of his seventh triumph at the Paris Masters, his 40th victory at a Masters 100 event.

Those are two more records to add to a long and growing list for Djokovic, who is hunting a seventh Finals title which would take him one ahead of retired great Roger Federer. "It means a lot. You could see that there were a lot of emotions on the court," said Djokovic.

"I could feel it, I was very eager to win the match and get that monkey off my back... Obviously a big objective, a big goal has been achieved, everything else now is a bonus."

Djokovic looked on course for victory when he took a brutal opening set in decisive fashion, prevailing in the tie-break with a stunning cross-court return winner.

And the match looked to have turned decisively in the third game of the second set, when after Rune



Serbia's Novak Djokovic with the 2023 Year-End Number one trophy for the ATP tournament during a ceremony in Turin on Monday. — AFP

won the first two Djokovic broke back in a brilliant 11-point game eventually won at the third attempt.

Rune kept plugging away, however, and after the pair slugged each other with bigger and bigger hits Djokovic slipped in the tie-break, missing a simple volley to draw level on the second point and then collapsing to concede the set.

But after briefly losing it for allowing Rune to break back in game three of the third set, kicking his rackets in a rage, Djokovic composed himself and saw out a historic win.

"I found a way to win today against an opponent who played brilliantly... he had a lot of courage today," added Djokovic in Italian.

"If I want to keep up with these youngsters I'm going to have to work even harder!"

SINNER OFF THE MARK

Home hope Jannik Sinner got off to a near-perfect start by beating Stefanos Tsitsipas in straight sets, 6-4, 6-4, delighting the crowd in Italy's northwest.

Sinner has had the best season of his career to date, winning four tournaments and is set to become the first Italian ever to finish a season in the ATP top five.

The 22-year-old comfortably dealt with 2019 champion Tsitsipas in front of an enthusiastic crowd, not dropping a service game nor facing a break point in the whole match.

"The atmosphere was really, really nice. It's huge pleasure for me to play here in Turin, in Italy," Sinner told reporters.

"Obviously a little bit more pressure, but I managed it really well today, so I'm happy."

Afterwards Greek Tsitsipas denied he had any physical problems even though he looked way below his best, telling reporters "I'm healthy. I'm ready to compete."

The 25-year-old had to play down reports of an elbow injury which curtailed practice ahead of his tournament opener.

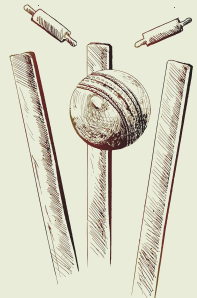
"I'm absolutely fine and I'm ready to play this tournament. Turin is one of the most important events of the year for me," he said.

On Monday, Alcaraz makes his ATP Finals debut in the Red Group against Alexander Zverev, the second seed Djokovic's closest challenger.— AFP

Can India get the monkey off the back?



ANIS SAJJAN



DIRECT HIT

Forty-five league games done and dusted and we are now at the business end of the World Cup. India Australia and England were expected to make it to the semifinals and the fourth team predicted by the pundits was either Pakistan or New Zealand. South Africa did make it to the last four playing some good cricket and New Zealand as they always do find a way to sneak past Pakistan and Afghanistan to make it to yet another semifinal.

The first semifinal is the rematch of the one which happened at Manchester four years ago over two days due to rain. India who had topped the group were outright favourites but were stunned by New Zealand to break the heart of

Indian fans who had already booked their tickets for the final in Lords. And India would definitely like to settle the score this time around. They have been on a roll and have been the team to beat having won all their nine games comprehensively. All their batters have scored big runs and their bowlers have been on fire.

But can they get the jinx of a knockout game out of their way? Before this World Cup, India had made it to the semifinals seven times and lost four times and most importantly lost twice in India once in 1987 to England and the other in 1996 to Sri Lanka. They got past Pakistan in 2011 at Mohali the last time the World Cup was played in India and went on to win their second World Cup. India have not won an ICC trophy since the 2013 Champions Trophy and since then lost the 2014 T20 final to Sri Lanka, 2015 ODI semifinal to Australia, 2016 T20 semifinal to West Indies, 2017 Champions trophy final to Pakistan, 2019 ODI semifinal to New Zealand and last the 2022 T20 World cup semifinal to England.

The Test Championship loss in the final to New Zealand in 2021 and this year to Australia.

This Indian team had so far played a brand of high-quality cricket which no other Indian team in the past has played and unless India have a bad day in the office, it looks unlikely India might miss the boat to make it to the final on 19th November.



Ahli Sidab players celebrate with the Oman Hockey League trophy at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. – PICS BY ABDULWAHID AL HAMADANI

Ahli Sidab emerge OHL champions

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, NOV 13

Oman hockey powerhouse Ahli Sidab added another title to their credentials as they beat Seeb 3-1 to emerge champions of the Oman Hockey League 2023-24 in Muscat on Sunday night.

In a keenly-fought final at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex, Seeb took lead in the 14th minute through a field goal by Qasim Moosa.

Defending champions Ahli Sidab made good efforts to find the equaliser in the second quarter but could not capitalise on two penalty corners in the 19th and 23rd minutes.

At the half-time, Seeb led 1-0.

Ahli Sidab came strong after the break and made early push into Seeb penalty box. Their reward came soon when Asaad al Qasmi hit the equaliser in the 32nd minute.

The goal reinvigoured Ahli Sidab ranks and they continued with some dangerous moves across the Seeb goalmouth.

In the 38th minute, Ahli Sidab took the lead when Asaad al Qasmi gave a nice pass to Laith al Wahaibi in front of the Seeb goalpost. Laith's quick response gave no chance to Seeb goalkeeper Saeed al Hasani as Ahli Sidab went 2-1 up.

Seeb recovered and organised quick attacks to Ahli Sidab penalty area but could not break the tight defence.

In the 51st minute, Seeb earned a penalty corner but could not capitalise on it as Ahli Sidab goalkeeper Ibrahim al Noufali

stood firm.

Even when Seeb pushed hard for an equaliser during the remaining minutes, Ahli Sidab also threatened with some quick counter-attacks.

During such a move, Asaad al Qasmi struck his second goal to put Ahli Sidab in pole position for the title with only three minutes to go.

Ahli Sidab controlled the remaining minutes of the game as they strolled to the title with a 3-1 score.

Earlier, in the third-place play-off, Sohar edged Al Nasr 2-1 to finish third in the OHL.

Al Nasr took an early lead through Basim Khater in the second minute and led 1-1 at the half-time break.

Sohar found the equaliser in the 33rd minute through Al Qader al Noufali and his brother Elyas al Noufali struck the winner in the 46th minute.

During the concluding ceremony, chief guest Mohammed bin Saeed al Balushi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information, gave away the trophies and medals in presence of Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and Dr Marwan bin Juma al Juma, Chairman of Oman Hockey Association.

Among the individual awards, Seeb's Fahad al Lawati was adjudged the best player of the tournament, Seeb's Ahmed bin Khamis al Balushi was the top-scorer, Sohar's Fahd bin Khamis al Noufali got the best goalkeeper award of the league and Ahli



Seeb and Ahli Sidab players in action during the Oman Hockey League final.

Sidab's Laith al Wahaibi became the most promising player of the league.

BEST GAME

Ahli Sidab's star player Asaad al Qasmi said he was happy to put in a top performance in the final.

"We conceded a goal in the first quarter. But we always believed that we can come back strongly. Our team did the same in the next quarters," Al Qasmi told Oman Daily Observer.

"It was a perfect day for me. I could score the first and third goals for our team and could give the pass for Laith to net our second goal as well," he said.

Ahli Sidab head coach Ayman al Khatiri said he was relieved after retaining the title.

"It was a brilliant effort from the boys. We kept our cool after

conceding a goal. Overall, we played to our strengths and kept the opponents away from the crucial moments," Al Khatiri said.

Seeb's player of the tournament Fahd al Lawati thanked his teammates for the brilliant support.

"I played an all-round game and we tried hard but missed out of the honours in the final. I would recall the match against Salalah in the last round as my best game," he said.

Seeb head coach Ahmed al Raisi said his team could not retain the initial tempo throughout the final.

"We started strongly but it was difficult to continue such control against strong opponents like Ahli Sidab. It was a decent effort but could not go through until the end," Al Raisi said.

"We will come back strong in the His Majesty's Cup," the Seeb coach added.



Sohar's Fahd bin Khamis al Naufali got the best goalkeeper award.



Fahd al Lawati, best player of the league.



Seeb's Ahmed al Balushi receives the top-scorer award.



Ahli Sidab's Laith al Wahaibi became the most promising player of the league.





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Oman’s first satellite ‘Aman-1’ successfully launched into space

The satellite, the first of its kind of Oman, serves as part of the Omani government’s recent space ambitions.

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, NOV 13

Oman’s first satellite “Aman-1” launched successfully into space last Saturday, November 11, after a failed attempt earlier this year.

According to a statement by Omani Space company ETCO Space, the satellite was successfully deployed into orbit onboard SpaceX’s Falcon 9 rocket, from a California-based launch base.

Chief Executive Officer of ETCO Space, Abdulaziz Jaafar, shared the following remarks, “The launch of ETCO Space’s first satellite into space is a novel step, but hopefully one of many.

We are not only excited about the data and images that Aman-1 will provide, but also committed to pushing the boundaries of our space programme in the coming



months and years.” The satellite was set to launch earlier this year in January, as part of a mission by Virgin Orbit — a small satellite launching service provider and subsidiary of the Virgin Group — but failed due to technical mishaps. Soon after in March, Virgin Orbit suspended operations and filed for bankruptcy after laying off 85 per cent of employees.

Oman’s ETCO labelled the launching failure as an anticipated potential risk of the space industry,

and reassured stakeholders of the mission’s comprehensive insurance plan. Additionally, the company activated a response plan to “ensure the continuity of the mission’s operations”. Satellite “Aman-1”, is a collaborative effort between Oman’s ETCO, data analysis and solutions provider TUATARA, and nanosatellite manufacturer SatRevolution.

The nanosatellite, also known as a cube satellite or a CubeSat will collect images and data which will

be transmitted to ETCO’s ground station in Oman. The satellite, the first of its kind of Oman, serves as part of the Omani Government’s recent space ambitions.

Earlier this year, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology unveiled the country’s executive space sector programme, which aims to “to position the Sultanate of Oman as a regional getaway for space applications,” according to a ministry official.

Oman sees domestic green hydrogen demand at 50,000 tonnes per year

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, NOV 13

Locally produced green hydrogen necessary to power Oman’s energy transition is projected to rise from around 50,000 tonnes per year (t/y) in 2030 to about 1.4 million t/y in 2050, according to a top official of Hydrom, the orchestrator and master-planner of Oman’s renewable hydrogen sector.

Eng Abdulaziz bin Said al Shidhani, Managing Director, said the zero-carbon fuel will be used as a primary energy resource in the production of green steel, direct reduced iron, green cement and other projects expected to emerge at the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Duqm when green hydrogen becomes commercially available by around 2030.

“We see that the domestic demand for green hydrogen in 2030 will reach about 5% of production, but this share will rise to about 17% by 2050, coinciding with the increase in the produced energy.

This means that domestic demand will be within 50,000 tonnes per year, but it will gradually increase to reach about 1.4 million tonnes by 2050, in conjunction with the increase in energy produced to 8 million tonnes per year,” he said.

Speaking to Duqm Economist, the newsletter of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), the official however stressed that any domestic requirement

of green hydrogen will take precedence over exports, given the strategic imperative of decarbonising the Omani economy.

“I would like to emphasise here that the priority will be for domestic consumption,” he said.

“We consider export as a good opportunity to increase revenues and direct surplus production, as we have taken into account in the agreements to increase the percentage allocated for domestic consumption if demand rises.”

Much of the initial demand for green hydrogen will be driven by a trio of mega-scale metallics ventures that have signed agreements to set up hydrogen-ready projects at the Duqm SEZ.

They comprise an integrated green steel complex of Vulcan Green Steel, a hot briquetting iron and green metallics project of Vale, and a direct reduction iron (DRI) venture by the partnership of Kobe Steel and Mitsui.

Markets for the low-carbon products of these projects will be predominantly climate-conscious Europe and the Far East.

But the Omani government also foresees the potential for investors to take advantage of the availability of cost-competitive green hydrogen to set up plants in Duqm for the manufacture of, among other things, metal frames for Electric Vehicles, wind turbine structures, and metal components for a range of white goods.

Tata Steel to scrap 800 jobs in the Netherlands

THE HAGUE: Indian-owned steelmaking giant Tata Steel announced on Monday it was scrapping 800 jobs at its under-pressure plant in the Netherlands to “improve market conditions and bring down costs.”

“The steel market has been in dire straits for some time. In order to remain structurally competitive and profitable now and in the future, Tata Steel

Netherlands is taking significant measures, including a reduction of 800 jobs in IJmuiden” near Amsterdam, the company said in a statement.

The cuts will affect some 500 full-time workers — mainly in management, staff and support functions — while another 300 temporary jobs were also to disappear.

“Forced redundancies cannot

be ruled out and the company will discuss a social plan with the unions,” said the firm.

The site employs more than 9,200 people. In all, 11,500 people work for Tata Steel in the Netherlands.

The Tata Steel plant has come under increasing fire from Dutch residents and health authorities, who accuse it of being the main source of air, soil and water

pollution in the area and of causing illness.

Tata Steel is facing several legal claims and Dutch prosecutors in February last year opened a criminal probe into possible “intentional and unlawful” pollution.

Dutch emission authorities have identified the Tata Steel site as one of the largest emitters of CO2 in the country. — **AFP**

Over 1,000 licenses issued for social media marketing, promotion

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, NOV 13

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) strongly emphasised the need to obtain a licence before engaging in marketing and promotional activities on websites and social media platforms.

This directive is in accordance with the regulations set forth in December 2022, under Ministerial Decision 619/2022. The regulations cover various electronic marketing and promotion methods, including writing, drawing, images, symbols, sound, or any other means on websites or social media.

The Department of Commercial Affairs and E-Commerce reports

that between March and October 2023, a total of 1,080 licenses were issued. The primary goal of these regulations is to oversee the marketing and promotion of products, goods, and services on social media, ensuring the protection of merchants and consumers while safeguarding e-commerce transactions and customer rights.

Hanan bint Humaid al Jabriyah, Head of the E-Commerce Department, emphasised the ministry’s commitment to regulating these activities due to their increasing prevalence and economic impact.

To maintain integrity and prevent misleading content, individuals interested in online promotion must obtain a licence before commencing any activity.



(MoCIIP) strongly emphasised the need to obtain a licence before engaging in marketing and promotional activities on websites and social media platforms. — (Picture courtesy: Reuters)

Exceptions are made for non-profit activities and merchants conducting activities for goods or services they sell themselves.

Continuous monitoring and follow-up by the ministry have led to action being taken against violators of the regulations.

The ministry has also issued alerts to practitioners who fail to display their licensed activity number on websites and social media accounts. Abdullah bin Salim al Ghafri, a keen social media marketer, noted that these regulations facilitate cooperation among merchants, consumers, and promoters, preventing potential violations and commercial fraud.

Obtaining a licence is seen as a regulatory measure that preserves rights and prevents fraudulent practices, he said.

Social media blogger Mervat bint Yusef al Nasryah acknowledged the positive impact of obtaining a licence, boosting self-confidence and ensuring the transparency of e-commerce methods.

The regulations, she said, protect the rights of merchants, consumers,

and promoters.

Basma bint Hussein al Lawatiyah, an online influencer, echoed these sentiments, noting that the regulations have brought organisation and legal clarity to electronic marketing and promotion businesses.

The evolving laws of the ministry aim to create a conducive environment for investment, both local and foreign, in the Sultanate of Oman.

The ministry’s regulations seek to create a regulated and transparent environment for electronic marketing and promotion activities, fostering a balance between the interests of merchants, consumers, and promoters while encouraging investment and growth in e-commerce.

NBO’s Muzn strengthens shari’a compliance at 3rd SSB meeting

MUSCAT: Muzn, the Islamic banking arm of the National Bank of Oman (NBO), held its 3rd Shari’a Supervisory Board (SSB) Meeting, a pivotal event that underscored Muzn’s steadfast dedication to Shari’a compliance in its financial offerings.

The meeting convened esteemed SSB members, including Shaikh Dr Muhammad Zubair Usmani, Chairman of the Muzn SSB, along with Shaikh Dr Abdulrahman bin Abdullah al Saadi, Shaikh Saleh al Kharusi, and His Highness Dr Adham al Said.

These esteemed members, leveraging their profound expertise, guide Muzn in upholding Islamic financial principles.

Salima al Marzooqi, Chief Islamic Banking Officer, emphasised, “Instilling Shari’a principles in our financial solutions is fundamental to Muzn’s mission.

Our 3rd SSB Meeting underscores our unwavering commitment to nurturing the growth of the Islamic finance sector in Oman.

Through collaboration with our esteemed Shari’a Board members, we actively shape the future of Islamic banking, ensuring our products and services adhere to the highest compliance standards.



The meeting convened esteemed SSB members

We remain devoted to delivering seamless, innovative solutions while consistently prioritising our customers’ values.”

Muzn stands at the forefront of the Islamic banking sector, offering innovative, competitive, and quality financial solutions aligned with Shari’a values.

Recent additions include the Islamic Personal Financing Facility and the Kids Wakala account, broadening customer

options. Additionally, Muzn customers can conveniently make cash deposits through a diverse network of Cash and Cheque Deposit Machines (CCDMs) operated by NBO.

The introduction of the Wallet Transfer feature enhances Muzn’s pioneering digital services, enabling customers to send and receive money locally and instantly through a mobile number, alongside the convenient

Scan & Pay feature using QR codes.

Muzn, at the intersection of Shari’a principles and modern banking innovation, remains committed to serving both existing and new customers according to the highest standards of Islamic finance.

For more information about Muzn Islamic Banking’s product range, please contact 24770001 or visit www.muzn.om.

Alizz Islamic Bank boosts Oman’s Islamic Banking Forum

MUSCAT: Alizz Islamic Bank, through its Shari’a Compliance and Audit Department, actively participated in the Oman Islamic Banking Forum organised by Al Roya.

The bank’s commitment to public education on Islamic finance and its vital role was evident, emphasising the significance of Islamic banks in fostering a sustainable economy.

The forum aimed to provide researchers and scholars with insights into Islamic economy at large and the local market, as part of the ‘Manar Alizz’ initiatives.

Mr Issa bin Salim al Riyami, Head of Shari’a Audit and Compliance at Alizz Islamic Bank, delivered a comprehensive



The bank’s commitment to public education on Islamic finance and its vital role was evident

presentation highlighting the bank’s decade-long journey and progress. Additionally, Mr Yassir bin Mohammed al Maawali,

Deputy CFO of the bank, actively participated in a panel discussion titled ‘Towards an Islamic Banking Sector that Meets the Priorities of the Future.’ The ‘Manar Alizz’ initiative, strategically designed to educate society about Islamic banking products, foster banking innovation, and empower the bank’s experts to share knowledge in their respective fields, played a central role.

Recognised as one of the bank’s most valuable intangible assets, Alizz Islamic Bank is dedicated to its further development, leveraging the initiative as a platform for sustainability under the education pillar, promoting knowledge sharing in Islamic finance and business.

Enjoy extra discounted rate for Sayyarati auto loan

MUSCAT: Coinciding with the 53rd National Day celebrations, and in commitment to providing the best services to customers, Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in Oman, has launched an exclusive offer for the “Sayyarati” Auto loan for a limited period starting from November 1, 2023.

The offer includes a discounted rate starting from 3.75 per cent on new and pre-owned cars, waiver of fees on credit cards for the first year, and free third-party motor insurance for used cars.

Additionally, Asalah priority Banking customers will have a further discounted rate starting from 4.75 per cent for a maximum loan tenure of 60 months.

Omani nationals employed in government, quasi-government, Tier 1 companies will get a loan tenure up to 10 years, while those working in Tier 2 companies will get a loan tenure up to 7 years.

The offer also applies to expatriates working in government, quasi-government, Tier 1 companies who will get a tenure period up to 8 years.

To make it easier for customers to take advantage of the benefits offered by financing products, they

can now also apply through Internet and Mobile Banking.

With a fast turnaround time and absolutely no need for post-dated cheques, the feature-rich auto finance can be obtained within the shortest possible time through Mobile Banking or Internet banking.

The service is also available in Sayyarati Centres in Salalah and Wattayah as well as Bank Muscat branches located across Oman.

Loans will be offered for both new and pre-owned cars.

The documents needed to process the loan facility are minimal and include the buyer’s ID card, salary assignment letter, quotation/ car valuation from the approved values, driving license, Mulkiya (for pre-owned cars only), and seller’s ID card (for pre-owned cars only).

The Monthly loan installments for Sayyarati are automatically deducted from the customer’s account once the mandate to do so is provided to the bank by the customer.

All customers wishing to own their dream car can take advantage of the fast transaction processing, as the transaction is completed within 24 hours, provided all the required documents are available.



Starting from
3.75%
P.A.

Al Mouj Muscat signs MoU with Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham bin Tarik al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports, and Youth, oversaw the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Al Mouj Muscat and the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth to provide development and on-the-job training opportunities for Omani youth.

Under the agreement, these young talents will gain invaluable hands-on experience in a variety of fields.

To commemorate the partnership, Al Mouj Muscat also hosted a memorable showcase that brought together the nation’s brightest talents to mark this year’s Omani Youth Day.

Under the theme “Horizon,” the activities featured art, culture, and creative performances, designed



Oman’s leading lifestyle destination is set to train the youth of Oman, preparing them to enter the job market with confidence.

in four different zones for all ages to explore and enjoy.

Nasser al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said, “Our youth are our future and the driving force behind our nation’s vision.

At Al Mouj Muscat, we are proud to provide a platform that fosters their growth and empowerment.

Our partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth for this year’s Omani Youth Day programme has enabled us to not only shed light on the tremendous talent and potential we have locally but also provide youth with the right tools and skills to succeed in today’s competitive job market.”

The four main zones encompassed ‘Energies,’ a blend of innovations, ideas, artistic initiatives, and live youth

performances, and ‘Reflections,’ an immersive experience that encouraged youth to continue pursuing their dreams and aspirations through digital displays.

Visitors were also invited to take a stroll through ‘Span or Length,’ a creative path of digital arts curated by youth, while the Stage Area hosted various activations and performances in addition to the official opening event.

Al Mouj Muscat continues to identify opportunities that will further develop Oman’s budding talents.

Whether by providing space, training, or support, it remains committed to helping propel the nation forward, working towards a shared goal of growth and prosperity for Oman and its people.



Top MENA banks introduces ESG strategies



MUSCAT: Nearly three-quarters of the MENA banks analysed have developed ESG strategies, showcasing the growing recognition of the significance of ESG factors in the region's banking sector and underscoring the commitment of MENA banks to sustainability and responsible financial practices, according to the inaugural EY ESG MENA Bank Tracker report Bridging the gaps: ESG governance to climate action.

The inaugural EY ESG MENA Bank Tracker, which has been released in advance of the opening of COP28 in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on November 30, tracks the collective progress of the top 20 banks across the MENA region in the GCC.

The study aims to provide analysis that can help banks benchmark themselves against their peers. It is also designed to inform policymakers and regulators across the region on what changes may be required to help banks play an active supporting role in the region's numerous net-zero commitments. The findings show that more



The study aims to provide analysis that can help banks benchmark themselves against their peers

than 80% of the banks surveyed have not issued a climate commitment statement, while

just 60% say that they carry out materiality assessments.

The report also highlights that

less than 20% of the banks have developed climate risk policies, and only a fifth have created

robust ESG frameworks backed up by key performance indicators.

The findings from the EY ESG MENA Bank Tracker also suggest that most MENA banks are not embedding sustainability considerations — particularly climate change — into their overall strategies.

Charlie Alexander, EY MENA Financial Services Leader, says: "Prioritising climate risk mitigation is crucial for banks, and the integration of ESG risk frameworks and policies into their risk management strategies needs to be accelerated. Moreover, it's essential to bridge the gap in implementing ESG strategies at the board level.

There's an opportunity for banks in the region to make significant progress by adopting fully transparent ESG practices with clear responsibilities, accountability, and robust measurement tools. While there's room for improvement in aligning with global best practices, the MENA region can take advantage of proactive support from regulatory bodies to enhance and evolve their ESG strategies."

Mala'a signs credit information exchange pact with SIMAH

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 13

The Oman Credit and Financial Information Centre (Mala'a) signed a credit information exchange agreement with the Saudi Credit Information Company (SIMAH) on November 12.

The agreement was signed in implementation of the decision of the Supreme Council of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf issued at the Council meeting in its 37th session in 2016.

This approved the exchange of credit information between the GCC countries in accordance with the (short-term) action plan and the comprehensive framework for the mechanism of facilitating the exchange of credit information between the GCC countries, in an effort to support the banking system in the GCC countries and assist credit service providers, provide banking facilities to improve risk management, and support the credit decision-making process.

Bassam bin Tariq al Jamali, Director General, Oman Centre for Credit and Financial Information, stressed the importance of cooperation between the credit and financial information centres. He said "The Centre begins concluding bilateral agreements to exchange credit information with its counterparts in the GCC countries by signing the credit information exchange agreement between Mala'a and SIMAH, which will enhance cooperation between the two sides and establishing communication links and exchanging experiences between the centre and its counterparts in the GCC countries, in addition to supporting the banking sector at the level of the GCC countries and improving credit risk management frameworks."

Oil falls on weak demand outlook in US and China

BEIJING: Oil prices fell on Monday, erasing gains from Friday as renewed concerns over waning demand in the United States and China, coupled with mixed signals from the US Federal Reserve, dented market sentiment.

Brent crude futures for January were down 61 cents, or 0.75 per cent, at \$80.82 a barrel at 0800 GMT, while the US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures for December were at \$76.56, down 61 cents, or 0.79 per cent.

Prices gained nearly 2 per cent on Friday as Iraq voiced support for oil cuts by OPEC+, but lost about 4 per cent for the week, marking their third weekly losses for the first time since May.

"Investors are more focused on slow demand in the United States and China while worries over potential supply disruptions from the Israel-Hamas conflict have somewhat receded," said Hiroyuki Kikukawa, president of NS Trading, a unit of Nissan Securities.

The US Energy Information Administration (EIA) said last week that crude oil production in the United States this year will rise by slightly less than previously expected while demand will fall.

Next year, per capita US gasoline consumption could fall to the lowest level in two decades, it said.

Markets were wary of potential US policy tightening after Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said last week that it could raise interest rates again if progress on curbing inflation stalls.

With financial conditions looser after a Friday jump in stock markets, "there is a good chance of more hawkish Fed speak this week," said Tony Sycamore, a market analyst at IG.

That is "not a prospect that crude oil will welcome given that recent data in China and the US has brought growth fears back to the surface," he said.

Weak economic data last week from China, the world's biggest crude oil importer, increased fears of faltering demand.

China's consumer prices fell to pandemic-era lows in October, casting doubts on the strength of the country's economic recovery. Additionally, refiners in China asked for less supply from Saudi Arabia, the world's largest exporter, for December.

Still, Kikukawa said oil prices would be supported if WTI approaches \$75 a barrel.

"If the market falls further, we will likely see support buying on expectations that Saudi Arabia and Russia would decide to continue their voluntary supply cuts after December," Kikukawa said.

Top oil exporters Saudi Arabia and Russia confirmed last week they would continue



Word "Oil" and stock graph are seen through magnifier displayed in this illustration. — Reuters

with their additional voluntary oil output cuts until the end of the year as concerns over demand and economic growth continue to drag on crude markets.

OPEC+, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, and allies including

Russia, will meet on November 26. On the supply side, US energy firms cut the number of oil rigs operating for a second week in a row to their lowest since January 2022, energy services firm Baker Hughes said. The rig count points to future output. — Reuters

Electric car demand set to stall in Europe's 'valley of death'

BERLIN/LONDON: After years of accelerating growth, Europe's electric car sales appear to be entering a go-slow zone as drivers wait for better, cheaper models that are two to three years down the road.

Fully-electric sales in Europe were up 47 per cent in the first nine months of 2023, but instead of celebrating, automakers including Tesla, Volkswagen and Mercedes-Benz sounded a sombre note.

High interest rates and a subdued market are putting customers off, they warned, with Volkswagen's EV order intake half what it was last year.

Dealers in Germany and Italy as well as research by four global data analysis firms say there is more behind the slower uptake than economic uncertainty, with the consumers unconvinced that EVs meet their safety, range and price needs.

"The main problem is uncertainty," said Thomas Niedermayer, head of a 45-year-old family-owned Bavarian car dealership.

"Many assume that the technology will improve and would rather wait three years for the next model than buy a vehicle now that will quickly lose value."

Take Flavia Garcia and Tom Carvell in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Their 15-year-old hand-me-down Toyota Auris, nicknamed Martina, needs replacing. With a petrol and diesel car ban nearing, the couple would consider an EV, but are put off by a lack of charging infrastructure, battery life fears and price.

AutoTrader says new EVs in Britain are still on average 33 per cent more expensive than fossil-fuel models.

And most new models in the pipeline targeting entry-level



Volkswagen's EV order intake is half what it was last year.

consumers will not hit the market before 2025 at the earliest - by which time they will be contending with an expanded Chinese line-up from BYD to Nio in Europe.

"You want to do the right thing for the environment, but it feels like you're setting yourself up for

a very expensive investment that will make your life that bit more complicated," Garcia, a 29-year-old corporate media director, said. "We'll probably get a hybrid first".

Critics have long warned that a lack of affordable EVs would eventually stall the steep sales

growth boosted by early adopters and corporate fleets.

A weaker performance in September, consumer sentiment surveys and bleak commentary from carmakers and dealers indicates that low growth era may have arrived. US automakers, though further behind on the transition to EVs, are also feeling the pinch.

Ford and GM warned recently they were delaying the launch of cheaper EV models and pulling back on spending due to weaker demand and higher costs in the wake of new United Auto Worker contracts. But the problem is cyclical.

Demand will remain slow for as long as there are no cheaper EVs available, Felipe Munoz of JATO Dynamics said of the slowdown in sales in Europe in September.

"From a regulatory standpoint,

they don't have to push product out right now - they can afford to focus on profitability," said Alistair Bedwell, head of powertrain forecasting at GlobalData.

"But they need to have an eye on Tesla and the Chinese brands, because they don't want to get too far behind."

Intention to buy an EV has stayed constant in Germany over the past year, a poll by consumer research firm The Langston Co showed - meaning that although the number of EVs being sold is rising, the number of people wanting to buy an EV is not.

Growing sales may simply be a sign that carmakers who were struggling to produce EVs because of supply chain bottlenecks can finally meet backed up orders, rather than a sign of rising demand, said The Langston Co's insights manager Ben DuCharme. — Reuters

Oil prices slump as fundamentals reassert themselves

By most measures the oil market is the weakest it has been since late June before Saudi Arabia and its OPEC partners reduced by crude production by more than 1 million barrels per day.

Front-month prices and calendar spreads have retreated sharply since the end of September, reversing much of the spectacular increase over the previous three months:

- ★ The front-month Brent futures contract closed below \$80 per barrel on Nov. 8, down by more than \$17 (18 per cent) from the end of September and only up \$7 (10 per cent) from the end of June.

- ★ Brent's six-month spread ended in a backwardation of \$1.30 per barrel down from \$9.33 at the end of September though still above the 8 cents just before the end of June.

- ★ Inflation-adjusted prices have retreated to an average of



JOHN KEMP

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\$84 per barrel (52nd percentile for all months since 2000) in November from \$93 (60th percentile) in September.

- ★ The six-month spread has averaged \$2.30 (73rd percentile) so far in November from \$5.72 (96th percentile) in September.

The retreat in prices and nearby spreads for US crude futures (NYMEX WTI) has been even more severe than for Brent.

DARKENING OUTLOOK

Some commentators have attributed the collapse to rising interest rates and a worsening outlook for the global economy cutting the outlook for crude consumption.

Benchmark yields on 10-year US Treasury notes climbed to a 16-year high in October as traders anticipated the US central bank would be forced to hold overnight interest rates higher for longer to contain persistent inflation.

Manufacturers in the United

States, Europe and China all reported worse business conditions in October undoing some of the gradual improvement between June and September.

On the production side, US crude and condensates output surpassed the pre-pandemic record in August, defying expectations it would begin to turn lower in response to the fall in prices since mid-2022.

But the limited changes in production and consumption evident over the last two months cannot explain the speed and scale of the drop in prices and spreads.

The massive run up in nearby futures prices followed by an equally sudden collapse has the characteristics of a short-covering rally and a squeeze on deliverable supplies that has since unwound.

CUSHING SQUEEZE?

Between the end of June and the end of September, total US petroleum inventories including

the strategic reserve increased by almost 15 million barrels.

But commercial stocks of crude oil fell by 38 million barrels, and more than 21 million barrels were depleted at Cushing in Oklahoma, which serves as the delivery point for the NYMEX WTI contract.

Chartbook: Oil inventories and prices. Cushing accounted for 55 per cent of the nationwide depletion even though it held less than 10 per cent of all crude inventories at the end of June.

There were only small depletions in the rest of the Midwest (5 million barrels) and along the Gulf of Mexico (8 million barrels) and insignificant changes elsewhere.

Cushing inventories depleted in 12 of the 13 weeks between the end of June and the end of September with a much more consistent depletion than in the rest of the country.

The draining of deliverable stocks sent the WTI futures

contract into a near-record backwardation by the end of September.

The record shows a close correlation between the drawdown in deliverable stocks and the increase in the nearby backwardation.

SHORT COVERING

In response to the rise in prices, hedge funds and other money managers were forced to cut bearish short positions in NYMEX WTI to 20 million barrels at the end of September down from 136 million at the end of June.

In turn, the enforced reduction of bearish short positions anticipated, accelerated and amplified the run up in prices, creating a self-sustaining rise in both spot prices and spreads.

By the end of September, bearish short positions were outnumbered by bullish longs by a ratio of 16:1 up from 2:1 at the of June. — **Reuters**

Certain uncertainty in the US bond market

The last two years have been catastrophic for investors in US Treasury bonds. By one measure, 2022 was the worst year for such investors since 1788.

Bond prices are poised to fall again in 2023, making this the first time in US history that they have declined for three consecutive years. However, now the “smart money” is jumping back in. With interest rates on 10-year Treasuries close to 5 per cent, more than triple the levels of two years ago, yields are attractive.

If the fundamental factors driving them haven't changed dramatically, then it's possible that interest rates will fall, and bond prices will recover now that the inflation scare has passed.

That's a big “if,” of course. But consider those fundamentals. The interest rate on bonds should reflect the underlying natural, or neutral, real rate of interest, plus expected inflation over the holding period.

A range of measures shows inflation to be running at about 3 per cent , belying warnings of a period of chronic high inflation that drastically exceeds the Federal Reserve's 2 per centtarget.

The “breakeven rate” on inflation-indexed Treasury securities similarly points to expected inflation below 3 per centover the next 10 years.

The last mile – the final percentage point needed to bring inflation down to 2 per cent– may prove the hardest. But the only message that can be credibly taken from the Fed's recent performance is that the central bank remains committed to its stated target.

This makes it hard to justify appending more than 100 additional basis points to Treasury yields on expected-inflation grounds.

As for the natural rate of interest, known to cognoscenti as oceans of ink have been spilled on efforts to estimate it. The one thing on which the experts agree is that the determinants move slowly, with the rate moving up and down to balance aggregate savings and investment.

Savings rates, in turn,



BARRY EICHENGREEN

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Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell speaks at a press conference in Washington

depend on slowly moving demographic factors: the share of the population that is of working age and the longevity of the retired.

Those who speak of a “global saving glut” remind us that not just US savings matter.

If Chinese GDP growth slows, making for less Chinese saving, or if China rebalances from saving to consumption, then this, too, can affect the natural rate. But all the evidence is that these structural changes are similarly gradual and ongoing.

Chinese policymakers talk an ambitious game but proceed incrementally, crossing the river by feeling the stones under their feet, as a Chinese folk saying puts it. Their slow but steady progress doesn't point to sharp changes in r* over the last couple of years.

In addition, r* will vary with the potential growth of the economy, since high growth will make additional investment attractive, and a higher real

interest rate will be needed to elicit the corresponding saving.

Enthusiasm about artificial intelligence points to the possibility of faster growth. But experience suggests the need for an extended period of adaptation and reorganisation before new general-purpose technologies deliver faster growth.

It follows that any impact on productivity will only materialise over time.

To be sure, US manufacturing investment has surged since the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS (“creating helpful incentives to produce semiconductors”) and Science Act.

But viewed from an economy-wide perspective, the consequent change in the investment-to-GDP ratio is small because the share of the manufacturing sector is small. In fact, nonresidential fixed investment relative to GDP is down from its average in the five years immediately preceding the

Covid-19 pandemic.

Not surprisingly, the New York Fed's June 2023 estimate shows that r* barely budged over the two preceding years.

Putting this together with recent data on inflation suggests that the bond market is oversold.

Two further variables can also affect the bond market's prospects. One is geopolitical uncertainty, which has spiked with recent events in the Middle East.

Historically, such uncertainty has favoured Treasuries, which are a safe haven for investors who value liquidity above all else in uncertain times. In fact, however, yields, rather than falling, are up slightly since Hamas attacked Israel on 7 October.

Still, if geopolitical uncertainty remains elevated or even rises further, we should expect to see these safe-haven flows reassert themselves.

The other known unknown is the supply of debt. With the

federal government running chronic deficits, yields will have to rise for investors to absorb the Treasury's additional issuance.

Without question, there will now be more defense spending. Republican resistance to higher taxes will only harden under the Republicans' new Speaker of the House, while Democrats will resist cuts in other expenditures.

Stein's Law – “if something cannot go on forever, it will stop” – may ultimately apply in this context, but only after yields have risen to even higher levels than investors currently contemplate.

Clearly, considerable uncertainty is shrouding the bond market. In these circumstances, only one rule applies: one should never take investment advice from a professor.

Barry Eichengreen is a professor of economics at the University of California, Berkeley, and a former senior policy adviser at the IMF.

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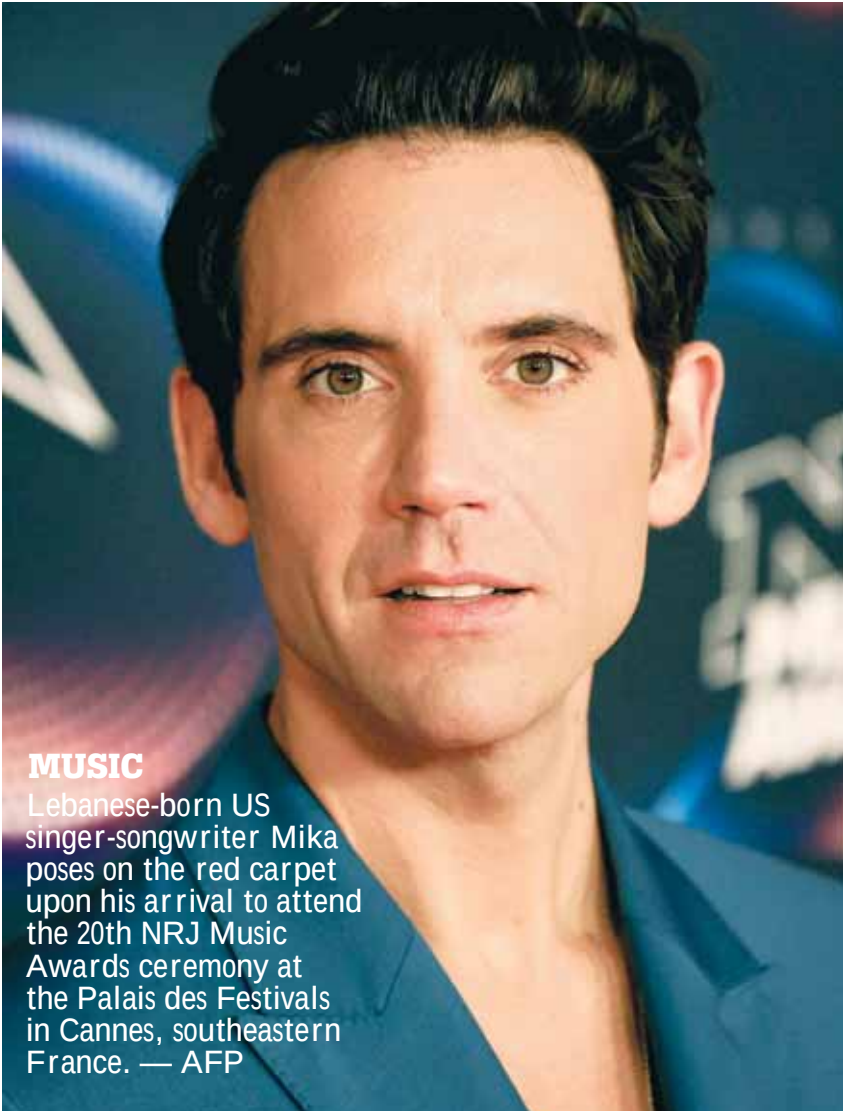
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FASHION
French actress Isabelle Adjani poses during the photocall prior to the Chanel Women's Fall-Winter 2020-2021 Ready-to-Wear collection fashion show at the Grand Palais in Paris. — AFP



MUSIC
Lebanese-born US singer-songwriter Mika poses on the red carpet upon his arrival to attend the 20th NRJ Music Awards ceremony at the Palais des Festivals in Cannes, southeastern France. — AFP



LIFESTYLE
People visit Meiji Shrine Outer Garden as the ginkgo trees start changing to autumn colours, in Tokyo. — AFP



PHOTOGRAPH
A man walks amid maple trees at Nishat Garden in Srinagar, India. — AFP



FILM
US actress Rachel Zegler poses on the red carpet upon arrival for the world premiere of "The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes" in central London. — AFP

art & life

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Learning Italian cooking with a Michelin-starred chef

The initiative aims to promoting the Italian gastronomic culture, emphasising the regional specialties, the importance of a healthy lifestyle, and paying attention to the environmental dimension of food consumption.

LIFE AT THE ACADEME



Dr Zainab Al Ajmi

Dr Zainab al Ajmi is very passionate about the growth of the education system in Oman and wants the country to produce globally competitive workforce. Her column tackles movements and developments within the education sector.

FOR FEEDBACK, EMAIL THE AUTHOR AT zeinbf@moe.om

The Digital Age Impact on Evolving Education: Empowering Lifelong Learning

THE ADVENT OF the digital age has brought about transformative changes in various aspects of human life. Moreover, education as one of the fundamental pillars of society, has not been left untouched by this revolution. Digital technology has made education more accessible, flexible, and learner centric. In the past 10 years, Web access, the nature of the Web, and contexts for learning have been transformed, along with the emergence of desired technological competencies for learners, teachers, and administrators. Internet connectivity in schools, homes,

neighbourhoods, and communities has become increasingly pervasive. Since the mid-1990s, the percentage of public schools connected to the Internet exploded from 35% to 100%. Public instructional classrooms with Internet access grew to 94%, up from 14% a decade earlier (Wells & Lewis, 2006)". In (Greenhow, Robelia & Hughes, 2009). As move further into the digital age, the potential for artificial intelligence (AI) to reshape education is significant. AI technologies have the potential to completely transform how we teach and learn. Chat GPT, a language model developed by Open AI, is one such tool that can deliver individualized recommendations to students, increase collaboration and communication, and improve student learning results. According to the findings of the Rawas (2023) paper, Chat GPT represents a significant opportunity for education institutions to improve the quality and accessibility of education; However, its implementation must be approached with caution and a clear understanding of the opportunities and challenges involved.

With all, as far as is at present known, educational research evaluates the influence of the digital era on empowering lifelong learning. One of the greatest obstacles to facilitating lifelong learning in the digital age is the digital divide. Generally, the Internet is a powerful force that shapes society and culture. Unfortunately, access to information is not equal, resulting in a digital divide between those who are educated and those who are not. Notwithstanding, new technological breakthroughs, particularly e-learning, could close the digital gap in public education if states offer adequate financial and political backing to begin such initiatives. For instance, massive open online courses are a new type of educational offering that falls between official online courses and casual learning. The digital gap disproportionately impacts a significant number of individuals in metropolitan areas since finance remains the key obstacle to digital equality. The digital gap remains,

and there may be a link between digital accessibility and academic accomplishment (Singh, Singh & Nermend, 2022). Another factor affecting the issue of enabling lifelong education is digital distractions. Digital tools and online platforms being so widely available have created a new realm of distractions for students, where students may be more tempted to spend time students using social media and engaging in other online activities, potentially diminishing their capacity to focus on their scholarly activities, as well as its implications for student academic performance. To conclude, the impact of digital technology on education is undeniable by empowering individuals to acquire new knowledge and skills throughout their lives. As digital technologies continue to evolve, it will continue to shape the way of learning and teach. Embracing these changes and harnessing the potential of digital tools can unlock new opportunities for learners of all ages, fostering a culture of sustainable learning.



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AROUND THE WORLD

TITANIC



Titanic menu sells for £84,000 at UK auction

A **FIRST-CLASS** dinner menu from the Titanic's ill-fated maiden voyage offering oysters, beef and mallard duck has sold for £84,000 (\$103,000), the UK auction house responsible for its sale said on Sunday.

The menu, for a meal served on April 11, 1912, is decorated with a red White Star Line burgee but the original gilt lettering is no longer visible.

More than 1,500 passengers and crew died when the vessel sank after hitting an iceberg on the evening of April 14, 1912.

The menu "shows signs of water immersion having been partially erased, the reverse of the menu also clearly displays further evidence of this," said auctioneer Andrew Aldridge.

"This would point to the menu having been subjected to the icy North Atlantic waters on the morning of April 15 either having left the ship with a survivor who was exposed to those cold sea waters or recovered on the person of one of those lost," he added.

It is believed to be the only surviving copy of a first-class April 11 dinner menu and was discovered in a photo album belonging to late Canadian amateur historian Len Stephenson.

The menu was sold on Saturday at Henry Aldridge & Son auction house in Wiltshire, south west England.

Other items in the sale included a Swiss-made pocket watch recovered from passenger Sinai Kantor, which sold for £97,000, while a tartan-patterned deck blanket likely used during the rescue operation fetched £96,000. — **AFP**

FESTIVAL



DOGS IN NEPAL were decked with marigold garlands and bright vermillion paint on Sunday to celebrate a day dedicated to them as part of a Hindu festival.

Kukur Tihar, the second day of the five-day Tihar festival, is reserved for appreciating dogs loyalty and companionship to humans.

Businessman Sujit Dongol, who celebrated the festival at home, said that his dog was part of the family.

"He is a companion to everyone and is always happy and playful like a child," he said, holding his one-year-old



American Bully in his arms.

"We feel happy to have a dog that lives with us."

Dog lovers also offer treats and toys to their pets and street dogs during the celebration.

The Armed Police Force held a special ritual to honour their canine force, which is often used during natural disasters

and in the detection of explosives and drugs.

"It is a special day," said Ramesh Pokharel, chief of the Animal Health and Dog Handler section of the Armed Police Force.

"Our dogs have helped us a lot, so the security personnel feel happy to celebrate this."

Inspired by Nepal's

festival, a similar annual celebration began in Mexico in 2016.

But animal welfare groups say the special treatment should not be limited to a single day and inhumane treatment towards street dogs, such as poisoning them to cull the population or to prevent rabies, must be stopped. — **AFP**

ENVIRONMENT



Greenland glaciers melt five times faster than 20 years ago

GLOBAL WARMING has increased the speed at which glaciers in Greenland are melting by fivefold over the last 20 years, scientists from the University of Copenhagen said on Friday.

Greenland's ice melt is of particular concern, as the ancient ice sheet holds enough water to raise sea levels by at least 20 feet (6 meters) if it were to melt away entirely.

A study of a thousand glaciers in the area showed the rate of melting has entered a new phase over the last two decades, Anders Anker Bjork, assistant professor at the department of geo-sciences and natural resource management at the University of Copenhagen said.

"There is a very clear correlation between the temperature we experience on the planet and the changes we observe in how rapidly the glaciers are melting," Bjork said.

The glaciers on average decrease by 25 metres annually, compared with 5-6 metres around two decades ago, scientists concluded after studying the development of the glaciers over 130 years through satellite imagery and 200,000 old photos.

The world has already warmed by nearly 1.2C (2.2F) above pre-industrial temperatures, and 2023 is "virtually certain" to be the warmest in 125,000 years, scientists from the European Union said earlier this month.

Lowering temperatures would require a global effort to minimise greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, said Jørgen Eivind Olesen, Institute Director of the Climate Institute at Aarhus University.

"I believe we can prepare for those glaciers to continue to melt at increasing speeds," Olesen said.

Glaciers in Greenland are often used to anticipate the effects of climate change on Greenland's ice sheet.

"If we start to see glaciers losing mass several times faster than in the last century, it can make us expect that the ice sheet will follow the same path just on a slower and longer time scale," William Colgan, senior researcher at the Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland (GEUS) said.

The Greenland ice sheet contributed 17.3 per cent of the observed rise in sea level between 2006 and 2018 and glaciers have contributed 21 per cent. There are around 22,000 glaciers in Greenland. — **REUTERS**



art & life

Local Scene

TUESDAY | NOVEMBER 14 | 2023

Learning Italian cooking with a Michelin-starred chef

BY LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

IT IS 10 AM on Sunday, and a batch of students from Oman Tourism College are eagerly waiting for their master class with the Michelin Star, Chef Paolo Gramaglia.

The workshop is part of the Italian Cuisine Week that is currently happening across the globe.

Starting from November 8 to 14, 2023, the eighth edition of the Italian Cuisine Week in the World is back under the theme "At the table with Italian cuisine: well-being with taste".

The initiative, which is endorsed each year by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, aims at promoting the Italian gastronomic culture, emphasising the regional specialties, the importance of a healthy lifestyle, and paying attention to the environmental dimension of food consumption.

"For me, the Italian week is not just about promoting food, products, and the kitchen; it is about exchanging knowledge between the chefs where there is something to learn and to see how fulfilling a career can be in the sector," said the Italian Ambassador to Oman, Pierluigi D'Elia.

Michelin-starred chef Paolo Gramaglia, the founder of "President" restaurant in Pompeii, Italy, is in Muscat for a short visit as part of the event and participated in a special evening at the Italian Residence, indulging the guests with delicious Italian recipes and live cooking.

On Sunday, he was with the students and began by saying, "I enjoy everyday because I don't forget that I am a student and that I will always have a chance to grow and have success. Don't forget, we are all students."

He set the mood of an interactive classroom and divided the students into three groups.

He then explained, "If you are expecting a classic class, sorry, you're not getting it. If you were expecting to be at your station then the answer is no it is not going to be so. You will be experiencing the Michelin-starred kitchen. It will be part of your



experience.

"My intention is to create some scholarships to have a gastronomic voyage. You can always travel even if you are studying," he said excitedly.

Once in the kitchen, he pointed out about working in groups, and looking at the ingredients, he explained, "Potatoes are common because they are found in every country. Today

we will also have local Omani fish. But in the end, the pasta will have an Italian taste. He explained the distinct taste due to the freshness of raw tomatoes."

Then they began, and the training kitchen at the Oman Tourism College transformed into a Michelin-starred kitchen,



week, many initiatives will provide the opportunity to the public to taste the best of the Italian culinary tradition.

As the Embassy of Italy in Muscat also focuses on education, the masterclass will be presented by Chef Gramaglia at Oman Tourism College, highlighting the importance of having a healthy lifestyle through the rich ingredients found in the Mediterranean diet. The Embassy of Italy in Muscat also aims to promote exchanges with young Omani chefs.

and they prepared mixed pasta cooked in seven shellfish essences with squid and potatoes — "pasta a mare."

The students also had their assessments done. He urged the students to keep at it and share what they make so he could follow up. During the