

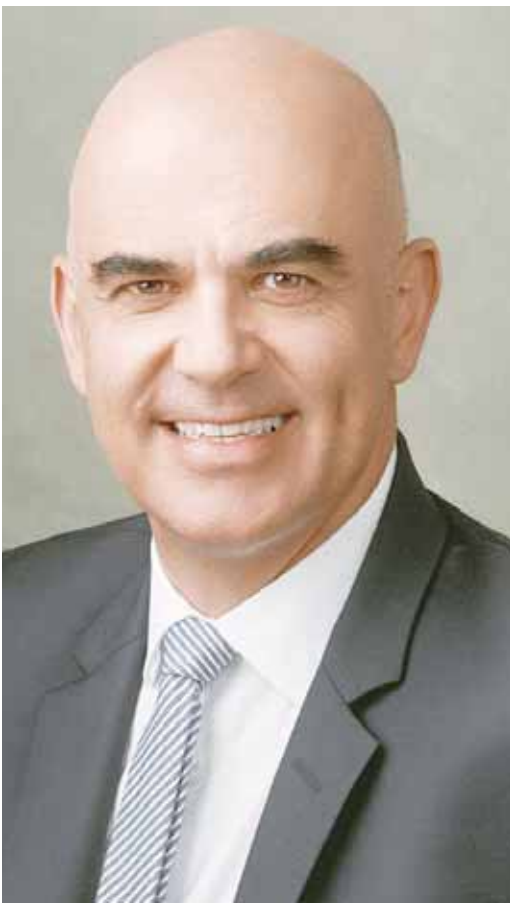
President of Swiss Confederation arrives today on official visit

MUSCAT: President Dr Alain Berset of the Swiss Confederation and his spouse will pay an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman on Thursday.

A statement was issued by the Diwan of Royal Court to this effect. It reads as follows: “With the prime objective of consolidating the friendship relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Swiss Confederation in a manner that boosts their cooperation in various spheres, President Dr Alain Berset of the Swiss Confederation and his spouse will pay an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman on Thursday and Friday.

“The visit reflects the Royal keenness accorded by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and President Dr Alain Berset to bilateral relations between the two countries and means of promoting them to serve their peoples.

“The visit will discuss a set of topics of concern to both countries, in addition to exchanging views on current regional issues. May the Almighty Allah protect His Majesty the Sultan, grant him good health and guard him as a source of pride for Oman and its people.” — ONA



GERMAN PRESIDENT LEAVES



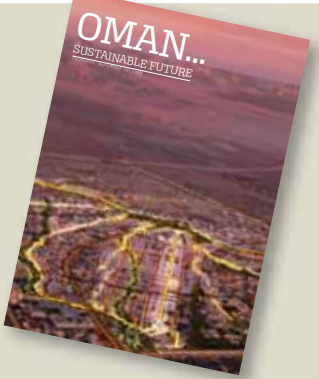
President Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier of the Federal Republic of Germany, and his spouse left Muscat on Wednesday after on an official three-day visit to the Sultanate of Oman, during which he met with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, led the farewell party for the German President and his delegation at the Royal Airport. **SEE P3**

UN’s COP28 climate summit begins today

DUBAI: Delegates from nearly 200 countries will convene this week for the COP28 climate summit in Dubai, where conference host and Opec member the UAE hopes to sell the vision of a low-carbon future that includes, not shuns, fossil fuels.

That narrative, also backed by other big oil producer nations, will reveal international divisions at the summit over how to combat global warming. Countries are split over whether to prioritise phasing out coal and oil and gas, or scaling up technologies such as carbon capture to try to diminish their climate impact.

The annual United Nations summit from November 30 to Decemberr 12 takes place as the world is poised to shatter another



A 27-PAGE SUPPLEMENT ON SULTANATE OF OMAN'S COP28 PARTICIPATION IS AVAILABLE ONLINE

record for the hottest year in 2023, and as reports confirm countries’ climate pledges are not enough to avert the worst impacts of global warming.

— AFP

GCC states affirm joint stance against Israeli aggression

NEW YORK: The GCC states have reiterated their common position demanding an end to the brutal aggression staged by Israeli occupation forces against the Gaza Strip and rejecting the claim that this aggression constitutes self-defence.

This was stated during the UN General Assembly’s discussion of Item 35 titled “The Palestinian Issue”. The statement was delivered on behalf of the GCC states by Khalid bin Saleh al Rabkhi, Deputy to the Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman’s Delegation at the United Nations in New York.

The GCC states commended the Security Council’s Resolution 2712, issued on November 15, that calls for a mandatory ceasefire and supporting the General Assembly’s resolution dated October 27 that stipulated an immediate ceasefire and the supply of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip.

The GCC states demand the immediate and unconditional implementation of those decisions. They categorically reject any efforts or plans for the forcible expulsion of Palestinians from their land. — ONA

SEE ALSO P6 & 7



مدينة السلطان هيثم
SULTAN HAITHAM CITY

PRE-QUALIFICATION
ANNOUNCEMENT FOR PHASE
ONE IN SULTAN HAITHAM CITY
PROJECT

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, in coordination with the Secretariat General of the Tender Board, the Authority for Public Services Regulation and the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, announces for specialized companies registered in the excellent grade category to participate in the following tenders:
You can obtain the documents through the following website:
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إعلان التأهيل المسبق
للمرحلة الأولى
لمشروع مدينة السلطان هيثم

يسر وزارة الإسكان والتخطيط العمراني وبالتنسيق مع الأمانة العامة لمجلس المناقصات وهيئة الخدمات العامة وهيئة تنظيم الاتصالات، دعوة الشركات المتخصصة والفريدة بالدرجة الممتازة من ذوي الخبرة للمشاركة في التأهيل المسبق:
يمكن الحصول على المستندات عن طريق الموقع التالي:
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Phase 1 المرحلة الأولى

المساحة المستهدفة
Development area

4,222,762 sqm

2,217,970 sqm

الشركات المسجلة لدى الأمانة العامة لمجلس المناقصات بالدرجة الممتازة

التفاصيل

Pre-Qualification of Infrastructure Works of Sultan Haitham City

Water Network: 95 km (Diameter 110 to 700 mm) and other works connected to the network.

شبكة المياه: 95 كم (من 110 إلى 700 مم) وغيرها من الأعمال الأخرى المرتبطة بالشبكة.

Sewerage Network: 70 km (Diameter 200 to 1400 mm) and other works related to the network.

شبكة الصرف الصحي: 70 كم (من 200 إلى 1400 مم) وغيرها من الأعمال الأخرى المرتبطة بالشبكة.

Irrigation Network: 65 km (Diameter 50 to 500 mm), in addition to the primary irrigation water tank (45,000 m³), secondary irrigation water tank (27,000 m³), pumping stations and other works related to the network.

شبكة الري: 65 كم (من 50 إلى 500 مم) بالإضافة إلى خزان مياه الري الأولي (45,000 متر مكعب) وخزان مياه الري الثانوي (27,000 متر مكعب) ومحطات الضخ والأعمال الأخرى المرتبطة بالشبكة.

Electricity Network: 370 km of high, medium and low voltage lines, in addition to main and substations and works related to the network.

شبكة الكهرباء: 370 كم لخطوط الجهد العالي والمتوسط والمنخفض، بالإضافة إلى المحطات الرئيسية والثانوية والفرعية والأعمال المرتبطة بالشبكة.

Rain Drainage Network: 50 km (Diameter 300 to 1500 mm) for the main drainage network.

شبكة تصريف الأمطار: 50 كم (من 300 إلى 1500 مم) لشبكة التفريغ الرئيسية.

Fiber Optic Network: 95 km network.

شبكة الألياف البصرية: 9 كم للشبكة.

BID SUBMISSION CLOSING

2023/12/07 10:00 AM

آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات

شc@housing.gov.om
+968 9671 7716 - +968 9951 1778

للتواصل والاستفسار
For contact and inquiries

ألية تقديم العطاءات
shc@housing.gov.om

SHC's portfolio

ملف المدينة





WEATHER

MUSCAT: Max 29°C Min 22°C SALALAH: Max 31°C Min 23°C NIZWA: Max 29°C Min 18°C

PRAYER TIMINGS

SUNRISE: 06:30 FAJR: 05:11 DHUHR: 12:00 ASR: 15:04 MAGHRIB: 17:24 ISHA: 18:39



The Sultanate of Oman in COP28



The Sultanate of Oman participates in The Conference of the Parties (COP28) with an official representation from both governmental and private entities.

This is what the pavilion is all about: bringing awareness to sustainable national projects and efforts aimed towards reducing carbon emissions and energy transformation.

Expert-led panel discussions, alongside interested participants, will align with the conducted summits and specified subjects throughout the conference days.

Objectives

Commitment

To climate change initiatives

Placing

Oman as an ideal, unique investment destination

Visions and actions

Energy transformation, implementation of sustainable initiatives and projects to achieve the goals of Oman Vision 2040

Participatory pavilion

Interactive

Panel discussions and workshops with specialists in alignment with implemented summits.

Reflects the integration of national efforts across various entities in sustainability.



- Green initiatives and projects have a destination, one that is filled with ambition towards energy transition and sustainability.
- For the purpose of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, protecting the environment, and achieving Net-Zero by 2050, the world actively comes together.



#OmanSustainableFuture



German President leaves after 3-day official visit

MUSCAT: President Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier of the Federal Republic of Germany, and his spouse left Muscat on Wednesday after an official three-day visit to the Sultanate of Oman, during which he met with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, led the farewell party for the German President and his accompanying delegation at the Royal Airport.

The German President was also seen off by Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (Head of the Mission of Honour), Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (Minister accompanying the guest's spouse), Maitha bint Saif al Mahrouqiyah, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Germany, and Dirk Lölke, Ambassador of

Germany to Oman.

The President of Germany was accompanied during the visit by an official delegation comprising Dr Tobias Lindner, Minister of State at the Foreign Ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany, Dirk Lölke, Ambassador of Germany to Oman, Wolfgang Silbermann, Head of the Foreign Policy Department of the Office of the Federal President, and a number of German officials.

— ONA



President Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier and his spouse left Muscat on Wednesday

Dr Steinmeier visits Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque

Muscat: Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, and his Spouse on Wednesday visited Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, within the context of his current official visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

The German President and his accompanying delegation were received upon their arrival at the Grand Mosque by Dr Mohammed bin Said al Ma'amari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, and Habib bin Mohammed al Riyami, Head of the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science.

During the visit, the guest was briefed on the mosque's history, and its Omani and Islamic architectural designs.



He also went on tour of the mosque's facilities, such as the Institute of Islamic Sciences, the Library, the lecture hall and other facilities.

The President of Germany

and his spouse were accompanied during the visit by Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

(Head of the Mission of Honour); Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, and several officials.

— ONA



The delegation's objective is to explore the achievements, setting the stage for evaluating Sohar Health City

WHO delegation evaluates Sohar Health City project

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, NOV 29

A delegation from the World Health Organization (WHO) regional office visited Al Batinah North Governorate to assess and evaluate Sohar City's health programme, aiming to certify it as a sustainable health city. Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of North Al Batinah, received the delegation.

The focus of the WHO delegation's visit is to evaluate the Sohar Health City programme, which is one of the cities in the regional network of health cities. Their two-day visit includes a comprehensive review of the city's indicators, assessing 80 criteria under nine key pillars. Additionally, field visits to several health-enhanced development sites are planned in Sohar Health Centre, Sohar University, some schools and other locations in Sohar.

The delegation's objective is to

explore the city's achievements, setting the stage for evaluating Sohar Health City according to global standards. The city has positively impacted governmental, private and non-profit sectors, with all stakeholders dedicating significant efforts to support its initiatives.

Sohar Health City was established in 2005, aligning with the methodology of health cities. It has united various sectors to support health, preparing Sohar to achieve a higher quality of life and well-being for all community members.

This is achieved through health promotion, raising health awareness and ensuring collaborative planning across sectors in line with the city's health objectives, as highlighted by Dr Najat bint Mohammed al Zadjali, Executive Director of Sohar Health City and a founding member and chair of the Health Council of Sohar Health City.

The assessment team also

involves the participation of key WHO representatives: Dr Samar al Faqi, Regional Adviser for Health Promotion and Social Determinants of Health; Dr Mohsen Kanaan, WHO Adviser; Tanal Khawam, Pharmacy Officer at WHO Muscat; Dr Mohammed al Abri, Public Health Officer at WHO Muscat; and Dr Mohammed Khashoqi, WHO Health Cities Expert.

Furthermore, the evaluation team includes Dr Huda al Siyabi, Director of the Health Initiatives Department at the Ministry of Health; Dr Amal al Siyabi, also from the Health Initiatives Department at the Ministry of Health; and Said bin Nasser al Marhoobi from the Health Initiatives Department at the Ministry of Health.

This collaborative assessment aims to ensure that Sohar Health City continues to excel as a sustainable health and well-being model, benefiting the entire community within its ambit.

Annual anti-fraud meet focuses on trends and tools to detect cases

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

More than 200 anti-fraud leaders and experts from various sectors in the country participated in the ACFE Annual Anti-Fraud Conference to discuss the latest trends and tools used in fraud detection and prevention from the evolving risks of fraudulent activities. Recent fraud trends have been related to the pandemic and cryptocurrency.

More than \$4.7 trillion is lost annually to occupational fraud worldwide, as per the latest data in Occupational Fraud 2022: A Report to the Nations released by the ACFE.

The ACFE Annual Anti-Fraud Conference, inaugurated by Tahir bin Salim al Amri, Executive President of Central Bank of Oman, at Oman Sheraton, hosted by the Oman Chapter of ACFE and held under the patronage of the College of Banking and Financial Studies (CBFS), had

More than \$4.7 trillion is lost annually to occupational fraud worldwide, as per the latest data in Occupational Fraud 2022: A Report to the Nations released by the ACFE

attendees from the State Audit Institution, Royal Oman Police, Capital Market Authority, Central Bank of Oman and Public Authority for Consumer Protection.

The typical loss due to fraud varies by region, but at the top three are Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa.

In his speech, Executive President of CBO, Tahir bin Salim al Amri, welcomed the participants and thanked all Board members of ACFE for

hosting the Anti-Fraud Forum 2023 in Oman and for their role in executing sustainable initiatives in secure business environments.

The chief guest felicitated the ACFE awardees. "Developing human capital and getting professional global certification is a mark of achievements, national investment in future, fostering a knowledgeable and skilled workforce moving the Sultanate of Oman towards sustainable development goals," he said.

President of the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) Oman Chapter, Khalil al Rawahi, said, "We greatly appreciate the support and collaborations with the Oman Ministry's representations for the Anti-Fraud Forum 2023. With new fraud threats arising every day, it is important to have events like this to learn from financial crime experts and one another so that we can prevent these frauds from greatly impacting our businesses and governments."



The ACFE Annual Anti-Fraud Conference had attendees from the State Audit Institution, Royal Oman Police, Capital Market Authority, Central Bank of Oman and Public Authority for Consumer Protection



Women with no income call for social security consideration

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

While the Social Protection Fund (SPF) opened online registration to avail of childhood and the elderly benefits two weeks ago, it is likely to expand the scope for benefits to more categories such as widows, orphans, people with disabilities, and family supporting income in the coming days.

As of Tuesday, as many as 507,000 people (425,675 children and 81,325 elderly) have done online registration to avail of childhood and the elderly benefits as stated in the Social Protection Law issued by the Royal Decree 52/2023 in July.

But Speaking to the Observer, a few women with no income felt that they should also come under the ambit of the Social Protection Law benefits.

Saada al Numani, a housewife from Al Khuwair, said, “We appreciate the social security benefits announced by the government in recent times; younger women with no income on their own, like me, should be also considered because they may be still a few years away to turn 60. Employed men and women get post-retirement benefits. Widows will also get benefits under the new law, but what about divorcees who are mostly left to struggle to make ends meet, or married women who have to depend on their husbands for every penny? “Single

OVER 500,000 REGISTER TO AVAIL CHILDHOOD AND ELDERLY BENEFITS



As of Sunday, more than 420,000 people have done online registration to avail of childhood and the elderly benefits

dependent women in the age group 30 to 50 should be made eligible for some benefits, even if they are conditional.” Samya Khalaf, a homemaker from Al Amerat, said, “Due to relentless housework and lack of proper rest and care, we develop chronic back and body problems. The so-called domestic engineers (housewives) are never paid or compensated for their selfless service. They contribute to society like doctors, teachers, chefs, cleaners, and others. The Social Protection Fund should help protect them from adverse situations in life.

Article (39) of the Social Protection Law states that a citizen is entitled to the family income support benefit if the following conditions are met — must be resident in the Sultanate of Oman, one of the family members must

be Omani, with the exception of the non-Omani widow who has no Omani children, provided that she resides in the Sultanate of Oman continuously after the death of her Omani husband, and the total family income must be less than the level specified in accordance with the provisions and regulations that specify the controls for disbursing the income support benefit for families and group.

Meanwhile, several applicants reported issues such as being unable to update the bank details as required for the fund. The Social Protection Fund has requested that beneficiaries who face challenges in the registration process or the data not being updated within one hour should contact 800,776,00 during working hours.

Hashim bin Mohammed al Hashemi, Director General

of Customer Services at Social Protection Fund (SPF), said that the applicants must register only from the official website and should refrain from following any shared links.

He said that benefits will be disbursed salaries from the end of January 2024, and there is no deadline for registration. “There is no need for children to have an ID because the civil number can be found on the birth certificate,” he said. As per the law, an applicant can be entitled to the child benefit and the benefits offered to those with disabilities. SPF said that the bank account is linked to the civil and the phone number, so providing updated details is necessary at the time of application.

The Social Protection Fund has stated that registration for benefits for widows, orphans, people with disabilities, and family income will be opened in the coming days. It may be noted that Article 30 states that a monthly amount of RO 115 will be disbursed starting from the month of reaching 60 years of age if the person fulfils the following conditions — must be Omani, must have reached the age of the elderly, and must be a resident of the Sultanate of Oman. As per Article 37, the childhood benefit will be payable at the rate of RO 10 per month for each child if the conditions are met — must be Omani, must not have reached 18 years of age, and must be a resident of the Sultanate of Oman.

SQCCCCRC obtains international license for ALERT programme



SQCCCCRC in collaboration with Portsmouth Hospital University Trust – UK, conducted three days training on ALERT attended by 29 staff, and 12 of them became certified trainers

MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre has obtained the international license to provide Acute Life-Threatening Events Recognition and Treatment (ALERT) training course.

The course trains the multi-profession healthcare team with a systematic approach to recognising, treating, and escalating to a higher level of care when needed to preserve the patient's life.

SQCCCCRC in collaboration with Portsmouth Hospital University Trust – UK, has conducted three days successful training on ALERT course, attended by 29 staff, and 12 of them became certified trainers.

ALERT is a system that uses a structured and prioritised patient assessment and management to enable a pre-emptive approach to critical illness. ALERT instructs

staff in the recognition of impending clinical deterioration, the management of disordered physiology and other aspects of the delivery of acute care.

This is a significant achievement reflects SQCCCCRC commitment to professional development and collaboration with other institutions. The newly certified trainers can now contribute their expertise to further enhance the skills and knowledge within SQCCCCRC, and health care provider in Oman and the region.

SQCCCCRC will be organising ALERT course training and certification periodically. Registration will be opened for participants across health institutions inside and outside the Sultanate. The program focuses on the detection and management of threatening events in healthcare institutions.

State Council permanent committees elect chairmen, deputies

MUSCAT: The permanent committees of the State Council held separate meetings during which they elected their chairmen and deputy chairmen for the State Council's 8th Term.

The council's five committees are: the Legal Committee, the Economic and Financial Committee, the Social and Cultural Affairs Committee, the Education and Research Committee and the Technology

and Innovation Committee.

The outcome of the electoral process was as follows: Shaikh Sultan bin Matar al Azizi as Chairman of the Legal Committee, with Dr Mohammed bin Suleiman al Rashidi as his deputy; Dr Dhafer bin Awadh al Shanfari as Chairman of the Economic and Financial Committee, with Dr Amer bin Nasser al Matani as his deputy; Dr Mohammed bin Said al Hajri as Chairman of Social and

Cultural Affairs Committee, with Dr Ohood bint Said al Balushi as his deputy; Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Sarmi as Chairman of the Education and Research Committee, with Dr Rashid bin Saif al Mahrezi as his deputy; Dr Hamad bin Salim al Rawahi as Chairman of the Technology and Innovation Committee, with Dr Salim bin Sultan al Ruzaiqi as his deputy.

— ONA

■ PLANS AFOOT FOR QURUM COMMERCIAL DISTRICT FACELIFT



MUSCAT: Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Governor of Muscat, recently held a meeting to revitalise the Qurum Commercial District as a vibrant shopping destination as in the 1980s. Ahmed bin Mohammed al Humaidi, Muscat Municipality Chairman was present at the meeting that reviewed plans to develop the Qurum Commercial District as a shopping and hotspot with the addition of new services and facilities. New measures will include introducing green cover to the areas and offering opportunities for small and medium enterprises in the fields of retail trade, food, cafes, and other entertainment, shopping and event services.

Kids’ rights in focus at Children’s Journalism Charter

TASNEEM AL ISMA'ILI
MUSCAT, NOV 29

The Omani Journalists Association gathered for the ‘Children’s Journalism Charter’ forum under the auspices of Her Highness Sayyidah Dr Mona bint Fahd al Said, Assistant Vice Chancellor for International Cooperation at SQU, President of the Children First Society.

This event brought together a diverse assembly of individuals passionate about children's issues, focusing on the profound impact of widespread technology use, especially in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. The discussion revolved around the development and behaviour of children.

Initiating with a moment of silence dedicated to the young lives lost in Gaza, the forum underscored its commitment to promoting responsible and



This event brought together a diverse assembly of individuals passionate about children's issues, focusing on the profound impact of widespread technology use

informed journalism for children. Against the backdrop of a rapidly evolving technological landscape, the Charter aims to enhance the well-being of children by nurturing their capacities and protecting them from potential abuses facilitated by various media technologies.

Zainab al Zadjali, journalist and member of the Omani Journalists



Association, emphasised the pressing need to activate the Children's Journalism Charter. She drew attention to the consequences of the pandemic-induced reliance on technology for children, surpassing acceptable limits and yielding notable effects on their well-being.

HH Sayyidah Dr Mona al Said

emphasised the Charter's pivotal role in shaping children's cultural understanding, influencing legislation related to children from both cultural and literary perspectives.

The forum unfolded in two sessions, the first skillfully moderated by Dr Hanan al Kindi, delving into the future of



the “Children’s Journalism Code of Honor” and the Ministry of Information’s initiatives in supporting children's programmes.

Dr Umama al Lawati, a prominent novelist, stressed the imperative nature of media campaigns targeting children in schools to educate them on the potential adverse effects of

prolonged exposure to various programmes and technologies. She also urged authorities to fortify literacy initiatives in schools.

In the second session, moderated by Dr Khadija al Shehi , the focus shifted to shielding children from online violence and social media threats. The presentation of various research papers provided insights into protecting children from the perils of internet-based violations.

This forum, dedicated to ensuring the optimal care of Omani children, stands as a testament to the Omani Journalists Association’s commitment to social responsibility in shaping a healthy and balanced future for upcoming generations.

Dr Khadija al Shehi concluded by emphasising the association’s unwavering dedication to its social role and responsibility in fostering a positive environment for future generations.



Oman participates in Global Research Council meeting

DOHA: Represented by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the Sultanate of Oman participated in the 2023 Global Research Council's meeting for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The meeting was held in Doha. Oman was represented at the meeting by Dr Saif bin Abdullah bin Sulaiman al Haddabi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Research and Innovation. The Ministry submitted a scholarly paper presented by Dr Issa bin Salim al Shabibi, Director of the



Research and Innovation Programmes Department. The paper expressed the ministry's view on sustainability of scholarly research. It focused on the importance of education, awareness, political factors, global challenges, digital innovation and other factors that achieve the sustainability of sciences and scholarly research. The ministry's participation in the meeting was aimed at consolidating bilateral cooperation and exchanging experiences, knowledge and visions in the fields of research and innovation. It also sought to establish international partnerships and contribute to innovative solutions. — **ONA**

USE HIGH BEAMS CAUTIOUSLY

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

High beams on the vehicles are meant to help aid visibility occasionally during poor lighting or at night. However, its use for a long time can obstruct the visibility of vehicles coming from the opposite direction and cause an accident.

Statistics reveal that after mobile phone usage, reckless driving and multitasking affect visibility and worsen it due to high beam lights.

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) have urged motorists to turn high beams into low beams when not needed and the opposite vehicles to avoid staring directly at the headlights of vehicles coming towards you. If the vehicle behind you is using a high beam, turn your rear mirror into 'night mode' and alert by showing hazard lights.

"Using high beams when driving behind a vehicle at night, or when facing another vehicle is considered a traffic violation, and motorists should keep aloof from

Using high beams when driving behind a vehicle at night, or when facing another vehicle is considered a traffic violation, and motorists should keep aloof from using the same as it can result in blurred visibility resulting in fatal accidents

ROYAL OMAN POLICE

using the same as it can result in blurred visibility resulting in fatal accidents," an ROP statement has said.

Worldwide, the use of a high beam headlight system has been found to create a glare to drivers of oncoming and preceding

vehicles and they would be distracted or blinded towards an imminent danger on the road. This has resulted in several accidents, the majority of which are fatal, as they aren't given time to react to the sudden thrush of light to their eyes.

Experts say the anti-glare facilities in median strips are intended to block opposing headlights to avoid disability glare. However, headlight leakage from vehicles approaching from opposite directions can result in uncomfortable glare, disabling the drivers from detecting dangerous obstacles or road conditions and leading to accidents.

These high beams or bright lights are brighter than the default headlights and aimed higher to give the driver a clear view of the entire road stretch ahead and both shoulders on narrow roads. Hence, they are only intended for use when there is no oncoming traffic and one should obey the signs given by oncoming cars to turn the bright light into low light.

"I have sometimes felt the consequences of high beam light and have met with an accident due to the same thing. I believe awareness should be placed in public places or malls because everyone doesn't follow social apps. Digital hoarding in malls would be very helpful to spread awareness. Now I am seeing maximum cars keeping the distance from the front car while stopping at a signal," Ahmed al Hattali, a PR executive, said.

"I appreciate this kind of awareness because sudden high beam light from the back is too dangerous as you can't think of whether to keep the car in the same lane or take a right because you can't see; I had a narrow escape once in the recent past," says Shaabu Ahmed, a sales executive.

He added that there are some drivers who, unfortunately, consistently refuse to turn down the lights, and if you insist on him turning them down, he will turn them off near you and turn them back on later, causing trouble to the preceding drivers.



Statistics reveal that after mobile phone usage, reckless driving and multitasking affect visibility and worsen it due to high beam lights

Municipality invites consultant to study traffic pattern

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Muscat Municipality has issued a tender for consultancy services to study the traffic situation in Muscat Governorate.

Bids are invited from specialised international companies with experience in the field of road and public transportation to identify current traffic patterns, peak times, volume, weak spots in the existing road network, and areas known for traffic congestion.

The last date for purchasing tender documents is December 16, while the last date for submitting a bid is January 7, 2024.

The study will cover improvements to the existing road network, future connections, and the governorate's needs for public transportation to keep pace with the growth of population and vehicles by taking into account current and future development in all urban, and tourism sectors.

The consultant will provide solutions to reduce traffic congestion in the short, medium, and long term on a priority basis.

Muscat is the most densely populated governorate in the country ahead of Al Batinah North Governorate, which used to top the list until the recent past.

Muscat Governorate (six wilayats: Muscat, Muttrah, Al Seeb, Qurayat, Bausher, Al Amerat) is home to 28.7 per cent of the total population of the Sultanate of Oman with 1,473,624 people, including 573,387 Omanis (38.9 per cent) and 900,237 expatriates. The Muscat population increased by 2.5 per cent to 1,449,396 people from 1,401,456 people at the end of 2022.



Sultanate of Oman
سلطنة عُمان
وزارة التراث والسياحة
Ministry of Heritage and Tourism

Tenders Announcement

Tender No.	206/2023/ MHT/HQ-43	Tender Name	Implementing the ISO 9001:2015 quality management system for heritage and tourism departments in the governorates.
Fees of Tender Documents		25 RO	
Tender Document Sales End Date		17/12/2023	
Last Date for Bid Submission		9/1/2024	
Grade		Second	
E-Tendering Portal		https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om	

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents.
- The Tenderers must acknowledge commitment to the bid.
- The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids
- The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before (10:00 am, Oman time).

Support and inquiries	For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: https://etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om
	For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@mta.gov.om or 24402200
For further information	Email : solic@mht.gov.om Phones : 22088348 - 22088085

TENDER NOTICE



Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries
Wealth and Water Resources

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tenders:-

Tender No.	Description	Tender documents price (R.O)	Class	Last date for collection of documents	Last date for Submission of documents
506/2023/ MAFWR/ HQ-72 - Recall - 1	HVAC SYSTEM SEPARATION WORK FOR FISH MARKET AND ADMINISTRATION BUILDING IN BARKA MARINA PROJECT	25/-	Specialized	Wednesday 06/12/2023	Sunday 17/12/2023

- Interested Companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- Preference will be given to companies whose bid includes the largest percentage of Omanization and possible purchase of national products.
- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration (regarding the exemption from submitting a bid bond in tenders).
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24402200 or etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources



Sultanate of Oman
سلطنة عُمان
وزارة التراث والسياحة
Ministry of Heritage and Tourism

Announcement of an International Tender

Tender No.	207/2023/ MHT/HQ-42 International Tender	Tender Name	Consultancy Services for Excavations and Restoration of archaeological monuments at the Land of Frankincense sites (WHS), Governorate of Dhofar
Fees of Tender Documents (Non-refundable)		300 RO	
Tender Document Sales End Date		17/12/2023	
Last Date for Bid Submission		9/1/2024	
Grade		International	
E-Tendering Portal		https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om	

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- Bids are submitted that fulfill the technical conditions and specifications, accompanied by electronic tender bond from a local or international bank registered in Oman not less than (1%) of the bid value, valid for (90) days from the date of its submission.
 - The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids.
- The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before (10:00 am, Oman time).

Support and inquiries	For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
	For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om or 24402200
For further information	Email : solic@mht.gov.om Phones : 22088348 - 22088085



New deal in works to e

ERDOGAN CALLS NETANYAHU 'BUTCHER OF GAZA'



Turkish President and AK Party Chairman Recep Tayyip Erdogan gives money to the son of AK Party MP Zehra Nur Aydemir during his party's group meeting at the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Ankara on Wednesday. — AFP

ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday branded Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu “the butcher of Gaza” and accused him of spawning anti-Semitism across the world.

Erdogan has lashed out repeatedly at Israel for the scale of death and destruction caused by its response to October 7 cross-border attack.

He has branded Israel a “terrorist state” and called Hamas “a liberation group.”

Erdogan redoubled those attacks during an appearance before his Islamic-rooted ruling party members in parliament.

“Netanyahu has already written his name in history as the butcher of Gaza,” Erdogan said in nationally televised remarks.

“Netanyahu is endangering the security of all Jews in the world by supporting anti-Semitism with the murders he committed in Gaza.”

Erdogan's sharp rhetoric has threatened to rupture Turkey's budding relations with Israel.

The two sides last year reappointed ambassadors following a decade-long rupture in ties.

They had also been discussing developing closer trade relations and working on new energy projects that could have helped build longer-term trust.

The Gaza war prompted Israel to recall all diplomatic staff from Turkey and other regional countries as a security precaution.

Turkiye has also withdrawn its Tel Aviv envoy in protest at Israel's approach.

Erdogan said Netanyahu's government was complicating those efforts by continuing to discuss plans to eradicate Hamas.

“Statements made by the Netanyahu administration diminish our hopes for the humanitarian pause to be transformed into a lasting ceasefire,” Erdogan said.

— AFP

GAZA: Israel and Hamas were negotiating through mediators on Wednesday over another potential extension of the Gaza truce, with hours left to reach a deal before fighting was due to restart after a six-day pause.

Families of Israeli captives were informed on Wednesday of the names of those due to be released later in the day, Israel's public broadcaster Kan reported, the final group to be freed under the truce unless negotiators succeed in extending it.

Hamas published a list of 15 women and 15 teenagers to be released from Israeli jails in return. For the first time since the truce began it included Palestinian citizens of Israel, as well as residents of occupied territory.

A Palestinian official told Reuters that despite a willingness on both sides to prolong the truce, no agreement had yet been reached. Discussions were still under way with mediators Egypt and Qatar, the official said.

Israeli government spokesperson Eylon Levy said Israel would consider any serious proposal, though he declined to provide further details.

“We are doing everything we can in order to get those captives out. Nothing is confirmed until it is confirmed,” Levy told reporters in Tel Aviv. “We're talking about very sensitive negotiations in which human lives hang in the balance.”

Once the release of captives ends, the fighting will resume, he said: “This war will end with the end of Hamas.”

So far Gaza fighters have freed 60 Israeli women and children from among the 240 captives they seized in a deadly rampage on Oct. 7 under the deal that secured the war's first truce. Twenty-one foreigners, mainly Thai farm workers, were also freed under separate parallel deals. In return, Israel has released 180 Palestinian security detainees, all women and teenagers.

The initial four-day truce was extended by 48 hours from Tuesday, and Israel says it would be willing to prolong it further for as long as Hamas

freed 10 captives a day. But with fewer women and children still in captivity, that could mean agreeing to terms governing the release of at least some Israeli men for the first time.

Tuesday's release also included for the first time captives held by Islamic Jihad, another group, as well as by Hamas itself. The ability of Hamas to secure the release of captives held by other factions had been an issue in earlier talks. Israeli bombardment has since reduced much of Gaza to a wasteland, with more than 15,000 people confirmed killed, 40 per cent of them children, according to Palestinian health authorities deemed reliable by the United Nations.

Many more are feared buried under the ruins. The Palestinian health ministry said another 160 bodies had been pulled out of rubble during the past 24 hours of the truce, and around 6,500 people were still missing.

On Tuesday, mediator Qatar hosted the spy chiefs from Israel's Mossad and the US CIA.

The officials discussed possible parameters of a new phase of the truce deal including Hamas releasing captives who are Israeli men or soldiers, a source briefed on the matter said. They also considered what might be needed to reach a ceasefire lasting more than a handful of days.

Qatar spoke to Hamas before the meeting to get a sense of what the group might agree to, and the opposing sides are now internally discussing the ideas explored at the meeting, the source said.

There was no immediate word on whether the final group to be freed on Wednesday would include the youngest captive, 10-month-old baby Kfir Bibas, held along with his four-year-old brother and their parents. Relatives had come forward with a special plea after they were omitted from the penultimate group freed on Tuesday.

The truce has held throughout the six days despite reports from both sides of comparatively small-scale violations, though both say they are prepared for war to resume with full intensity the moment it lapses.

— Reuters



▲ Palestinians inspect the destruction caused by Israeli strikes in Wadi Gaza, in the central Gaza Strip on Tuesday. — AFP



A house that was damaged during Israeli shelling in recent weeks prior to a truce in Mhaibib village, near the Israel-Lebanon border on Tuesday. — Reuters



CEASEFIRE GIVES DISPLACED CHILDREN RA

KHAN YOUNIS: Displaced Gazan children clapped, sang and jumped up and down clapping a giant multi-coloured parachute, rare moments of fun as the truce between Israel and Hamas gave an opportunity for a youth group to entertain them in a school courtyard.

The war has turned Gaza's schools into overcrowded camps for displaced people, where children have been enduring the fear of bombardment,

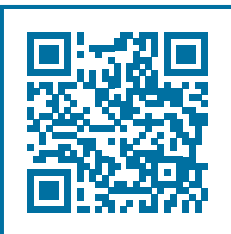
displacement from their homes and shortages of food, water and electricity.

“We were very scared from the war,” said Lina Mohareb, a young girl in a pink sweatshirt with a Palestinian flag painted on her cheek. She was taking part in games and activities organised at the Abdullah Siam school in Khan Younis by Watan Youth Centre, a local civil society organisation that has held similar events at 26 schools.

“As soon as they arrived, we all ran towards them. They played some Palestinian songs for us and we performed the dabke (a folk dance) and sang and played some games. We had so much fun today,” said Mohareb.

The children stood in a large circle around a row of yellow plastic cones, with entertainers dressed up in costumes of cartoon characters, as adults looked on, leaning on the railings of the school's upper floors which





extend truce



Palestinians receive flour bags distributed by UNRWA in Khan Younis on Wednesday. – Reuters



UN CALLS FOR 'IRREVERSIBLE' MOVE TOWARD TWO-STATE SOLUTION

GENEVA: The United Nations on Wednesday called for the international community to move towards a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, saying Jerusalem should serve as the capital of both states.

"It is long past time to move in a determined, irreversible way towards a two-state solution, on the basis of United Nations resolutions and international law," said Tatiana Valovaya, Director-General of the UN office in Geneva, delivering a speech authored by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

She added this would mean "Israel and Palestine living side-by-side in peace and security with Jerusalem as the capital of both states."

The comments coincide with the United Nations' International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which it observes annually. It marks the United Nations General Assembly's approval of a plan to partition Palestine into Arab and Jewish states and for international rule over Jerusalem. — Reuters



Protest in support of Palestinians in Gaza, as today marks the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, in Beirut on Wednesday. – Reuters

ARE CHANCE TO SING AND PLAY



Displaced Palestinians participate in activity organised by volunteers to entertain and support mental health of children affected by the conflict, in Khan Younis on Tuesday. – Reuters

overlooked the courtyard.

Clothes were hanging on the railings, and people had suspended pieces of fabric across doorways and along corridors to provide a modicum of privacy in what was now a living space rather than an educational setting.

"Palestinian children and especially Gazan children are the best in the world, because they've endured so many things," said Samer Nofal, the team leader

from Watan Youth Centre, listing the hardships of the war.

"We took advantage of this truce to organise these events to entertain the children and ease away their stress," he said. "They deserve to play and be happy."

"I am so happy with the games, and I am so happy with this truce," said Gilnar Ahmed, another displaced girl at the Abdullah Siam school. "Hopefully the truce continues."

— Reuters

POPE CALLS FOR CONTINUATION OF TRUCE, RELEASE OF ALL CAPTIVES



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis on Wednesday called for the continuation of the ongoing truce in the Gaza Strip, for the release of all captives and for humanitarian aid access into the territory.

"We call for peace," he said during his Wednesday weekly audience, saying he was concerned by the lack of water, bread and by the suffering of ordinary people in Gaza. Pope Francis took part in the weekly general audience at the Vatican on Wednesday despite feeling ill.

At the reception, the 86-year-old complained: "I'm still not feeling well with this flu." His voice is "not nice," he said.

According to the Vatican, the head of the Catholic Church has been suffering from the flu since last weekend. The pope had to cancel a planned trip to the UN Climate Change Conference, which begins on Thursday in Dubai, on the advice of his doctors. Francis celebrates his 87th birthday next month.



The National Detergent Co. SAOG

P.O. Box 3104 , Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman

Invitation to attend the Extraordinary General Meeting

The Board of Directors of The National Detergent Company SAOG is pleased to invite the esteemed shareholders to attend the Extraordinary General Meeting of the company, which is scheduled to be held on Thursday at exactly 3:00 pm, corresponding to 14/12/2023, through the electronic platform, which you can access through the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company website www.mcd.gov.om, and if the quorum is not complete for the meeting of this association, a second meeting will be held on Thursday at exactly 3:00 pm, corresponding to 21/12/2023, which will be held via the electronic platform, which you can access via the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company website www.mcd.gov.om, to discuss the following agenda:

- 1- Vote on authorizing the company's Board of Directors to take and complete the procedures for selling plot No. 4 in Block No. 30SE, with an area of 25560 square meters, owned by the company and located in the Al Ghubra North area - Muscat, which the Extraordinary General Meeting had previously approved the sale of at its meeting held on the evening of Tuesday, corresponding to 15/3/2016, and the mandate includes the following:
 - Appointing an appraiser to evaluate the value of the land and determine his fees.
 - Announcement to the public about the offer to sell the plot of land.
 - Appointing the broker, determining his fees, and assigning the selling task to him to complete it within a period not exceeding three (3) years. During this period, the Board may dismiss the mediator and appoint another in accordance with the interests of the company and shareholders.
 - Determine the selling price not less than (10,000,000) ten million Omani Riyals, the total price of the plot of land or lands resulting from its division.
 - Accepting and receiving the price and transferring ownership or power of attorney.

In accordance with the company's Article Association and the controls for holding general assembly's using modern technological means issued by the Authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- (a) A legal person has the exclusive right to authorize a natural person to attend the general assembly meeting and vote on his behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number with the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company.
- (b) Voting on any of the items on the agenda begins no more than three days before the date of the meeting until the end of the voting process on the day of the meeting. If the shareholder's balance changes by increase or decrease, the voting process will be canceled and he must repeat the vote again on the day of the meeting.

If you have any inquiries,
please call phone number (92869333) or email nmn@ndcoman.com

Chairman

Legal Advisor

Auditor



العمانية للاستثمارات التعليمية والتدريبية
oman education & training investments

TENDER NOTICE No. 001/INS/2023

OETI Group (Sohar University, TAHJEEZ, TASEES) invites sealed tenders from specialized, professional, and experienced Insurance companies for providing various insurance policies.

The tender details are as follows:

Tender	Description	Fees OMR	Submission Date
001/INS/2023	Insurance Program 2024 (Various Insurance Policies)	100/-	11/12/2023

Description	Deadline
Tender Release Date	30/11/2023
Last Date for collection of tenders after paying tender fee	04/12/2023
Receiving clarifications, if any, from bidders	06/12/2023
Respond to bidder clarifications	07/12/2023
Receiving bids	11/12/2023

The tender document will be mailed to you / your company after paying non-refundable amount of RO. 100.000/- via depositing the money in bank or by cash on or before 04/12/2023. Cash will be collected by Mr. Saud Al Jarwani, OETI, Building 20, Sohar University, Sohar.

Provide the email id to be sent along with the copy of the receipt. For Bank Transfers our account details as below:

Beneficiary : Oman Education & Training Investment Company SAOG
Account No : 002020004442
Bank : Bank Sohar
Branch : Sohar Branch, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman
Swift Code : BSHROMRU

Please send the transfer receipt to sjarwani@oeti.om & insurance@su.edu.om to receive the tender documents via email / link.

Tenders offers must be submitted online (softcopy with password protected) or in closed envelopes sealed, delivered at the OETI premises, tender number shall be written only on the envelope, no indication shall be made, and deadline for submission of offers is 11/12/2023 14:00 hours.

Tender should be addressed to CEO, OETI Office submitted to Mr. Saud Al Jarwani as given below during office hours 08:00 to 15:30 Sunday to Thursday.

CEO OETI Office
Building 20, Sohar University Campus
P.O Box 44, P.C. 311, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman.
Telephone: 26850100 Ext.: 611 / 613



Ali Al Matani
ali.matani2@gmail.com

So, the significance of the name becomes apparent only when the moon is full, signalling a message that the face of Oman has a splendid civilisation in the world of tourism and hospitality. The Omani platform, renowned for its generosity,

The strange and fascinating thing is that every time you visit this palace hotel, it feels like you're visiting it for the first time. That's true, of course, and the reason is simple; it signifies that luxury has more than one meaning and more than one connotation. The viewing angles widen, narrow, and also revolve in a stunning embodiment of the absolute beauty that knows no bounds or places. As it has always been, it stands with all the palaces of luxury, splendour and grandeur in the world. As it is authentic and has deep roots, it challenges every time it ages, declaring a challenge to all emerging hotels and palaces. It tells us that the engravings, decorations, symbols and the meanings conveyed by them, along with its walls and halls, cannot be matched by any other building. Every newcomer will

THE STRANGE
AND
FASCINATING
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TIME

We hope that this palace hotel remains a symbol of everything beautiful, of every beautiful symbol, and of every noble generosity forever. All of these, collectively, embody the meaning of Omani hospitality and generosity across the ages.

JAN HENNOP

Both a social worker and a food bank volunteer said that poverty remained endemic in the neighbourhood, wedged between the A20 highway to the north and Rotterdam city centre to the south. Nearly one third of the neighbourhood's residents are of Moroccan descent, according to figures from the Central Statistics Bureau (CBS). — **AFP**

HASHEM OSSEIRAN

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel

GIANT FANS EXTRACT
CO2 DIRECTLY FROM
THE SURROUNDING
ATMOSPHERE. LIQUID
CO2 IS STORED IN
VERTICAL TANKS, THEN
CONVERTED INTO GAS
AND DISSOLVED IN
SEAWATER THAT WILL BE
INJECTED INTO A WELL
THAT IS ONE KILOMETRE
(0.6 MILE) DEEP.



A general view shows the ADNOC Facility in Fujairah. Using novel technology developed by Omani start-up 44.01, the solar-powered plant will suck carbon dioxide from the air, dissolve it in seawater and inject it deep underground, where it will mineralise over a period of months. — AFP

The “target rate is one tonne of CO2 per day for an initial period of 10 days,”

“The issue with carbon capture and storage technologies is that they are unproven at scale,” he said. — **AFP**

Sorting out the wheat from the chaff

The conflict in Gaza, as with other recent conflicts, highlights the dangers of disinformation. It has become harder to separate the wheat from the chaff in communication, journalism, propaganda and politics.

The changing political economy of information is appealing to many. The increasing influence of individuals and organisational special interests has facilitated a growth in sources of “alternative” information and expertise.

The flood of information has long existed, either with the talking drums that disseminated news of ceremonies and commands or ‘beat the drum’ for an idea, such as the drumbeat for war in Iraq because of weapons of mass destruction. Assessing the trustworthiness of information is complex, even when it comes from official sources.

Thanks to information and communication technology, the Internet and social media have emerged as powerful communication mediums. Everyone has a voice. However, the problem with information pollution is not with the Internet but with the users. The Internet doesn’t create polarisation; it just provides us with more related material.

One of the difficulties with information overload — and manipulation — is that it seizes an individual’s critical thinking skills. Michael Lynch says in his article ‘The Disturbing Power of Information Pollution’ that when citizens don’t know what is true, they become doubtful and unable to know what to believe. The information we get often reflects our use of the Internet, and therefore, it inflates our bubbles. Researchers argue that culture shapes the way we perceive and respond to information overload.

That is not all; it should be a real concern how information pollution affects children and young users. With children being active users of online resources (learning or playing), they do not always have the cognitive and emotional capacity to distinguish between reliable and unreliable information. As a result, not only can they be harmed by mis/disinformation, but they may also spread it among their friends.



SONIA AMBROSIO
@ambrosionelson

The writer is journalist, academic, researcher in media studies

Like children, many adults also lack the cognitive ability to distinguish information. Family background, personality and skills not just affect children, but also adults’ understanding of facts and reliable information, bearing in mind that emotions can affect how people search for evidence to validate their perspectives! Information and digital literacy are needed as part of the school curriculum.

Another challenge is to develop information and digital literacy for mature people. They consume a lot of information and are concerned about news and current affairs, yet they are unaware of the negative consequences of misinformation. The impact of false narratives spreads into the real world. In the Middle East, disinformation can cause undesirable consequences.

We live in a time when fake news can mean anything one disagrees with because the term has become more politicised. Fake news, a term that dates back to the 1890s, is just one form of information pollution. Other types are propaganda, political advertising and press briefings to assert falsehoods. Satire or hoaxes, in addition to misinformation (when false information is shared, but no harm is meant), and disinformation (when false information is knowingly shared to cause harm), out-of-date or incorrect information, rumours and fabricated content, are different styles of information pollution, and the Internet is rife with examples.

Nevertheless, disagreeing does not constitute fake news or being a dissident. Reasoning is a component of social development, and within that are portions of agreements and disagreements. Dialogue is a way to enhance critical thinking skills and increase the probability of eliminating the dissemination of malicious communication.

Scholars claim that the spread of misinformation and the lack of robust journalism contribute to information pollution, which poses a growing global problem. From a sociological perspective, researchers argue that information pollution explains society’s apathy towards issues such as politics, health concerns and scientific advancements.

The success of the chaff results from the ignorance of the public.

THANKS TO INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY, THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA HAVE EMERGED AS POWERFUL COMMUNICATION MEDIUMS

IN SOLIDARITY



A child with the colours of the Palestinian flag painted on her face takes part in a protest in support of Palestinians in Gaza, as today marks the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, near the ESCWA building, in Beirut, Lebanon, on Wednesday. – Reuters

The dawn of a new multilateralism

Today marks 365 days since India assumed the G20 Presidency. It is a moment to reflect, recommit and rejuvenate the spirit of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, ‘One Earth, One Family, One Future.’

As we undertook this responsibility last year, the global landscape grappled with multifaceted challenges: recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, looming climate threats, financial instability and debt distress in developing nations, all amid declining multilateralism. In the midst of conflicts and competition, development cooperation suffered, impeding progress.

Assuming the G20 Chair, India sought to offer the world an alternative to status quo, a shift from a GDP-centric to human-centric progress. India aimed to remind the world of what unites us, rather than what divides us. Finally, the global conversation had to evolve — the interests of the few had to give way to the aspirations of the many. This required a fundamental reform of multilateralism as we knew it.

Inclusive, ambitious, action-oriented and decisive — these four words defined our approach as G20 president, and the New Delhi Leaders’ Declaration (NDLD), unanimously adopted by all G20 members, is testimony to our commitment to deliver on these principles.

Inclusivity has been at the heart



Narendra Modi

The writer is Prime Minister of India

of our presidency. The inclusion of the African Union (AU) as a permanent member of the G20 integrated 55 African nations into the forum, expanding it to encompass 80 per cent of the global population. This proactive stance has fostered a more comprehensive dialogue on global challenges and opportunities.

The first-of-its-kind ‘Voice of the Global South Summit,’ convened by India in two editions, heralded a new dawn of multilateralism. India mainstreamed the Global South’s concerns in international discourse and has ushered in an era where developing countries take their rightful place in shaping the global narrative.

Inclusivity also infused India’s domestic approach to G20, making it a People’s Presidency that befits that world’s largest democracy. Through “Jan Bhagidari” (people’s participation) events, G20 reached 1.4 billion citizens, involving all states and Union Territories (UTs) as partners. And on substantive elements, India ensured that international attention was directed to broader developmental aims, aligning with G20’s mandate.

At the critical midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, India delivered

the G20 2023 Action Plan to Accelerate Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), taking a cross-cutting, action-oriented approach to interconnected issues, including health, education, gender equality and environmental sustainability.

A key area driving this progress is robust Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). Here, India was decisive in its recommendations, having witnessed the revolutionary impact of digital innovations like Aadhaar, UPI and Digilocker first-hand. Through G20, we successfully completed the Digital Public Infrastructure Repository, a significant stride in global technological collaboration. This repository, featuring over 50 DPIs from 16 countries, will help the Global South build, adopt and scale DPI to unlock the power of inclusive growth.

For our One Earth, we introduced ambitious and inclusive aims to create urgent, lasting and equitable change. The Declaration’s ‘Green Development Pact’ addresses the challenges of choosing between combating hunger and protecting the planet, by outlining a comprehensive roadmap where employment and ecosystems are complementary,

consumption is climate conscious, and production is planet-friendly.

In tandem, the G20 Declaration calls for an ambitious tripling of global renewable energy capacity by 2030. Coupled with the establishment of the Global Biofuels Alliance and a concerted push for Green Hydrogen, the G20’s ambitions to build a cleaner, greener world is undeniable. This has always been India’s ethos, and through Lifestyles for Sustainable Development (LiFE), the world can benefit from our age-old sustainable traditions.

Further, the Declaration underscores our commitment to climate justice and equity, urging substantial financial and technological support from the Global North. For the first time, there was a recognition of the quantum jump needed in the magnitude of development financing, moving from billions to trillions of dollars. G20 acknowledged that developing countries require \$5.9 trillion to fulfil their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by 2030.

Given the monumental resources required, G20 emphasised the importance of better, larger and more effective Multilateral Development Banks. Concurrently, India is taking

a leading role in UN reforms, especially in the restructuring of principal organs like the UN Security Council, that will ensure a more equitable global order.

Gender equality took centre stage in the Declaration, culminating in the formation of a dedicated Working Group on the Empowerment of Women next year. India’s Women’s Reservation Bill 2023, reserving one-third of India’s Parliament and state legislative assembly seats for women epitomises our commitment to women-led development.

The New Delhi Declaration embodies a renewed spirit of collaboration across these key priorities, focusing on policy coherence, reliable trade and ambitious climate action. It is a matter of pride that during our Presidency, G20 achieved 87 outcomes and 118 adopted documents, a marked rise from the past.

During our G20 Presidency, India led deliberations on geopolitical issues and their impact on economic growth and development. Terrorism and the senseless killing of civilians is unacceptable, and we must address it with a policy of zero-tolerance.

INDIA AIMED TO REMIND THE WORLD OF WHAT UNITES US, RATHER THAN WHAT DIVIDES US

sport

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Atletico Madrid's Spanish defender #22 Mario Hermoso kicks the ball and scores his team's second goal during the Uefa Champions League Group E match against Feyenoord at the De Kuip Stadium in Rotterdam. – AFP

Barca, Dortmund, Atletico and Lazio into CL last 16



Dortmund's German forward #11 Marco Reus (2ndR) celebrates with teammates after scoring a penalty during the Uefa Champions League Group F match against AC Milan at the San Siro stadium in Milan. – AFP

PARIS: Barcelona, Borussia Dortmund, Atletico Madrid and Lazio all qualified for the knockout phase of the Champions League on Tuesday. Manchester City bounced back from 2-0 down to beat RB Leipzig with both teams already qualified, while Paris Saint-Germain and Newcastle drew 1-1 and both need a result on match-day six to go through. Atletico Madrid booked their place with a sumptuous volley from defender Mario Hermoso and two own goals firing them to a thrilling 3-1 win over Dutch champions Feyenoord. "I am very happy for the players. Today, we knew how difficult our opponent would be," said Atletico coach Diego Simeone to Movistar. That left Atletico with 11 points in Group E ahead of 10-point Lazio, who had a tense wait after playing earlier and needing a Feyenoord defeat to confirm their place. Veteran Italian striker Ciro

Immobile shot the Italian side into the last-16 in a 2-0 win over eliminated Celtic in Rome, leaving Feyenoord to join the Europa League. In Group H, Barcelona came from behind to beat Porto 2-1 as Portuguese duo Joao Cancelo and Joao Felix both netted to turn the game on its head after Brazilian winger Pepe opened for Porto. "It was a final and we won it ... we've put the club in the last-16, which is where it deserves to be," Cancelo told Movistar. The Spanish champions now have 12 points while Porto are locked on nine alongside Shakhtar Donetsk, who beat Antwerp 1-0 in Hamburg. Borussia Dortmund secured their spot in the last-16 with a 3-1 win at AC Milan, who are staring early elimination in the face. Marco Reus' early penalty and second-half strikes from English teenager Jamie Bynoe-Gittens and Karim Adeyemi secured passage into the next

round with a match to spare for Dortmund. — AFP

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE RESULTS ON TUESDAY:

Group E
In Rotterdam, Netherlands
Feyenoord (NED) 1 (Wieffer 77)
Atletico Madrid (ESP) 3 (Geertruida 14-og, Hermoso 57, Gimenez 81-og)
In Rome
Lazio (ITA) 2 (Immobile 82, 85) Celtic (SCO) 0
Group F
In Milan, Italy
AC Milan (ITA) 1 (Chukwueze 37)
Borussia Dortmund (GER) 3 (Reus 10-pen, Bynoe-Gittens 59, Adeyemi 69)
In Paris
Paris Saint-Germain (FRA) 1 (Mbappe 90+8-pen) Newcastle (ENG) 1 (Isak 24)
Group G
In Manchester, England
Manchester City (ENG) 3 (Haaland 54, Foden 70, Alvarez 87) RB Leipzig (GER) 2 (Openda 13, 33)
In Bern
Young Boys (SUI) 2 (Nedeljkovic 8-og, Blum 29) Red Star Belgrade 0 (SRB)
Group H
In Barcelona, Spain
Barcelona (ESP) 2 (Cancelo 32, Felix 57) Porto (POR) 1 (Pepe 30)
In Hamburg, Germany
Shakhtar Donetsk (UKR) 1 (Matviyenko 12) Royal Antwerp (BEL) 0



FC Porto's Mexican defender Jorge Sanchez (L) fights for the ball with Barcelona's Portuguese forward Joao Felix during the Uefa Champions League first round group H match in Barcelona. – AFP

NZ trail Bangladesh despite Williamson ton

SYLHET, Bangladesh: Kane Williamson struck a defiant century on Wednesday but was unable to put New Zealand in control in the first Test against Bangladesh in Sylhet.

The visitors reached 266-8 at stumps on the second day, still trailing Bangladesh by 44 runs in the first innings.

Williamson hit 104 off 205 balls in his 29th Test century with 11 fours, before Taijul Islam broke through his defence to bowl out the right-hander. “I mean, you just see all around the world, he’s amazing and how he sort of works out different attacks, different sort of ways people are trying to get him out, different surfaces,” New Zealand coach Luke Ronchi said in praise of Williamson.

“So to be able to do it the way he does and the calmness he shows in situations is awesome,” Ronchi added. “He’s done it a lot, but a lot of our young guys can see how he does it.”

Taijul was the pick of the Bangladesh bowlers with 4-89, while Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Nayeem Hasan, Shoriful Islam and Mominul Haque claimed one wicket apiece.

“I think the spinners bowled well. We could have created some more pressure. We took eight wickets in the end, so it is a good day for us,” Bangladesh spin coach Rangana Herath said.

Herath praised Taijul for bringing his wealth of experience to the fore. “Taijul is always helping the attack. He is our leading spinner. He created a lot of pressure,” said Herath.

“He created a lot of angles. He

has great experience, knowledge and understanding. I am so happy that he took four wickets today.”

Glenn Phillips scored 42 runs to boost Williamson in their 78-run sixth-wicket partnership — which dug the visitors out of a hole after they lost the top half of their batting order for 175 runs.

Occasional left-arm spinner Mominul forced Phillips to give a catch at slip, ending their partnership.

Williamson took a single off Nayeem to complete his hundred off 189 balls, drawing him level with Don Bradman and Virat Kohli in terms of Test centuries.

TAIL WAGGING

Ronchi remained confident of New Zealand’s tail wagging.

“We’ve still got two wickets in hand and hopefully tomorrow morning we come back,” he said.

“And the guys left can put some more runs on the board and get us closer to the Bangladesh score, definitely.”

SCOREBOARD

Bangladesh 1st innings	
Mahmudul Hasan c Mitchell b Sodhi	86
Zakir Hasan b Patel	12
Najmul Hossain c Williamson b Phillips	37
Mominul Haque c Blundell b Phillips	37
Mushfiqur Rahim c Williamson b Patel	12
Shahadat Hossain c Nicholls b Phillips	24
Mehidy Hasan Miraz c Mitchell b Jamieson	20
Nurul Hasan c Blundell b Phillips	29
Nayeem Hasan c Latham b Jamieson	16
Taijul Islam not out	8
Shoriful Islam lbw Southee	13
Extras (b12, lb3, w1)	16
Total (all out, 85.1 overs)	310
Fall of wickets: 1-39, 2-92, 3-180, 4-184, 5-210, 6-233, 7-261, 8-276, 9-290	
Bowling: Southee 14.1-2-43-1, Jamieson 17-5-52-2, Patel 24-1-76-2, Sodhi 14-1-71-1, Phillips 16-1-53-4	

Taijul redeemed himself for dropping Williamson at midwicket on 63 by taking the wicket of the former New Zealand captain and Ish Sodhi (0) in successive overs.

Daryl Mitchell earlier rode his luck to reach 41 before he was stumped by Nurul Hasan, off Taijul’s bowling. Mitchell, who put on 66 runs with Williamson for the fourth wicket, had nicked pacer Shoriful while batting on four. But Bangladesh did not review the caught-behind appeal, which was turned down by the on-field umpire.

New Zealand bowled out Bangladesh for 310 on the first ball of the morning when Tim Southee trapped last man Shoriful leg-before for 13.

The Black Caps then got off to a fast start, the first three balls yielding 10 runs. Bangladesh’s spinners slowly took control to check the initial batting surge.

Taijul dismissed Tom Latham for 21, Nayeem taking the catch at fine leg. — AFP

New Zealand 1st innings	
Tom Latham c Nayeem b Taijul	21
Devon Conway c Shahadat b Mehidy	12
Kane Williamson b Taijul	104
Henry Nicholls c Nurul b Shoriful	19
Daryl Mitchell st Nurul b Taijul	41
Tom Blundell c Nurul Hasan b Nayeem	6
Glenn Phillips c Najmul b Mominul	42
Kyle Jamieson not out	7
Ish Sodhi c Shahadat b Taijul	0
Tim Southee not out	1
Extras (b 8, lb5)	13
Total (eight wickets; 84 overs)	266
Fall of wickets: 1-36, 2-44, 3-98, 4-164, 5-175, 6-253, 7-262, 8-264	
Bowling: Shoriful 11-2-44-1, Mehidy 19-3-57-1, Taijul 30-7-89-4, Nayeem 22-3-61-1, Mominul 2-1-2-1	



New Zealand’s Kane Williamson plays a shot during the second day of the first Test against Bangladesh at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium in Sylhet. — AFP

Maxwell’s 104 keeps Australia alive in T20 series

GUWAHATI, India: Glenn Maxwell smashed an unbeaten 104 as Australia pulled off a stunning chase of 223 in the third Twenty20 international against India on Tuesday to stay alive in the series with a five-wicket win.

The swashbuckling batsman struck his 100 in 47 balls and completed the win with a six and three fours from the final four balls of the 20th over in Guwahati before he flies back home.

It was Maxwell’s fourth T20 century as he joined Rohit Sharma with most tons in the format and the knock eclipsed a 123 by Ruturaj Gaikwad in India’s 222-3.

His 47-ball hundred was the joint fastest in the format for an Australian batsman alongside Aaron Finch and Josh Inglis.

Australia, who won the ODI World Cup after beating hosts India in the final earlier this month, still trail the five-match series 2-1 with the fourth T20 on Friday in Raipur.

Maxwell, in his 100th T20 international and his last of the series, struck eight fours and eight sixes and put on an unbeaten 91-run stand with skipper Matthew Wade, who hit 28.

“It was always going to take our best, and one of the best players that’s ever played T20s for Australia played his 100th game and got a hundred, so pretty special for him,” Wade said of the man of the match Maxwell.

Australia slipped to 68-3, but Maxwell, called “The Big Show” for his attacking batting, stood firm



Glenn Maxwell, in his 100th T20 international, struck the 100 in 47 balls.

and tore into the Indian attack despite getting cramps towards the end.

Maxwell’s knock brought back memories of his match-winning 201 not out in a 50-over World Cup match against Afghanistan earlier this month when he completed a miraculous chase from 91-7.

WHOLESALE CHANGES

Opener Travis Head, who made the team after his match-winning century in the ODI World Cup final, attacked along with fellow opener Aaron Hardie.

The left-handed Head smashed 35 off 18 balls but fell to fast bowler Avesh Khan and soon Australia lost three wickets before the Maxwell blitz.

The tourists have made wholesale changes to their squad midway into the series with Steve Smith and Adam Zampa back home.

“We really needed this win, and a lot of guys are heading home so a chance for the younger ones to learn how to play in India,” said Wade.

“Hopefully we can take it to the decider with another win in the next game.”

Maxwell, Marcus Stoinis, Inglis and Sean Abbott — all part of the group that won a record-extending sixth 50-over title — are to fly back home on Wednesday.

Earlier, India rode on Gaikwad’s maiden international century and his 141-run unbeaten stand with

Tilak Varma to post a mammoth total, which proved insufficient.

Australia elected to bowl first and got two early wickets but Gaikwad, who hit 58 in the team’s second win, took apart the opposition bowling to raise his 100 off 52 balls. He finished with 13 fours and seven sixes in his 57-ball blitz with Varma, who hit 31 off 24 balls, playing anchor at the other end. — AFP

BRIEF SCORES
India 222-3 in 20 overs (R Gaikwad 123 not out, S Yadav 39, T Varma 31 not out; J Behrendorff 1-12, K Richardson 1-34) v Australia 225-5 in 20 overs (G Maxwell 104 not out, T Head 35, M Wade 28 not out; R Bishnoi 2-32)
Result: Australia won by five wickets
Series: India lead the five-match series 2-1

‘Exceptional’ Dravid to stay on as India coach

NEW DELHI: Rahul Dravid will stay on as coach of India, the country’s cricket board said on Wednesday, having led the hosts to the final of the World Cup earlier this month.

It was “unanimously agreed to further the tenure” of the 50-year-old former skipper, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said in a statement.

“The board acknowledges Mr Dravid’s instrumental role in moulding the Indian team and commends his exceptional professionalism,” it said.

Dravid’s contract had expired after the World Cup, which ended on November 19 with India’s defeat to Australia.

Dravid was appointed in November 2021 for a two-year period.

“The last two years with team India have been thoroughly memorable,” said Dravid.

“Together we have witnessed the highs and lows, and throughout this journey, the support and camaraderie within the group have been phenomenal.

“I am genuinely proud of the culture we have set in the dressing room.”

His team of support staff, including batting coach Vikram Rathour and bowling coach Paras Mhambrey, have also been retained.

The BCCI did not say how long the new term would be, with India now eyeing the Twenty20 World Cup in June next year as they attempt to break their painful drought in global tournaments.

“Mr Rahul Dravid’s vision, professionalism and unyielding efforts have been important pillars in team India’s success,”



Rahul Dravid

Roger Binny, president of the BCCI, said.

“As head coach of the Indian cricket team you are always under immense scrutiny and I extend appreciation to him not only for embracing the challenges but for thriving in them.”

India, captained by Rohit Sharma, remained unbeaten in 10 matches coming into the World Cup final in Ahmedabad.

But they lost by six wickets to an Australia side who extended their record of World Cup titles to six.

India last won a global title with the 2013 Champions Trophy and their last World Cup triumph came in 2011 at home.

Dravid, nicknamed ‘The Wall’ or ‘Mr Dependable’ for his classic batting and rock-solid defence, is expected to lead the team on their tour of South Africa next month.

Before retiring as a player in 2012, Dravid scored 13,288 runs in 164 Tests, second only to the legendary Sachin Tendulkar for India and fourth overall in the world rankings.

Dravid and almost all his World Cup players took a break after the tournament. — AFP

Mbappe rescues PSG with last-gasp equaliser against Newcastle

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe struck a controversial penalty deep in stoppage time to earn Paris St Germain a 1-1 draw against a valiant Newcastle United in the Parc des Princes and keep their Champions League destiny in their own hands on Tuesday.

The visitors had led the Group F clash since midway through the opening half thanks to Alexander Isak's tap-in, his first Champions League goal. They weathered a furious late assault from the hosts only to be denied by a cruel and highly-contentious decision.

PSG's players howled loudly for handball when the ball bounced off Newcastle's Tino Livramento's chest and against his elbow with referee Szymon Marciniak then invited to check the pitchside monitor by the VAR.

To Newcastle's horror, Marciniak, who had turned down a more likely penalty earlier, pointed to the spot and Mbappe was cool as a cucumber to fire high past keeper Nick Pope in the eighth minute of stoppage time.

It was a massive goal for Luis Enrique's side who had contrived to fritter away chances and were seconds away from dropping down to third place which would have left them in grave danger of failing to progress from the group stage to the knockout rounds for the first time since 2004-05.

They are still in danger but their prospects certainly look a lot better. They have seven points from five games and face already qualified Borussia Dortmund (10) away in their final game. Victory in Germany will seal PSG's place in the last-16.

Newcastle have five points and host AC Milan (5) in their final game needing to win while hoping PSG fail to beat Dortmund. Milan could also still qualify with a win on what will be a nervous concluding night to the tightest of groups.

After damaging home and away defeats to Dortmund and with a lengthy injury list, Newcastle produced a superb rearguard action after Isak had tucked away a rebound in the 24th minute when PSG keeper Gianluigi Donnarumma had spilled Miguel Almiron's low shot into his path.

PSG will point to the fact that they had more than 30 goal attempts. But a combination of wasteful finishing and an inspired Newcastle keeper Nick Pope left them on the brink of a second group defeat by Newcastle after a 4-1 spanking away.

But Mbappe's cool finish means they have now lost only one of their last 36 group stage matches in the competition at home.

"It's hard when you see the game. What happened was we had so many chances to win," Mbappe told TNT Sport.

"I think I could have done more for my team. I had many chances and didn't score more goals."

For Newcastle all is not lost but they could not hide their disappointment.

"I'm still coming to terms with it. I feel really flat but at the same time really pleased with what the players gave today," manager Eddie Howe said.

"It's not a penalty when it hits his chest first and then hits his hand which is low. I'm not allowed to sum it up. I can't say my inner thoughts obviously."

Newcastle withstood a fast start by PSG with Pope saving brilliantly from Mbappe's sublime flick.

Pope also denied Ousmane Dembele in the first half but the real siege began midway through the second half.

Substitute Bradley Barcola was denied by a sensational Pope save and missed an open goal late on while Mbappe was also guilty of glaring misses as Newcastle hung on grimly.

"We're still in it, and that's the thing we can't forget," Howe said.

— Reuters

Mbappe celebrates after scoring a goal against Newcastle United. – AFP



Kylian Mbappe (R) scores a penalty kick in front of Newcastle at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris. – AFP

“It’s hard when you see the game. What happened was we had so many chances to win. I think I could have done more for my team. I had many chances and didn’t score more goals

KYLIAN MBAPPE
PSG striker

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE POINTS TABLE

(PLAYED, WON, DRAWN, LOST, GOALS FOR, GOALS AGAINST, POINTS)

Group A							Group E						
Bayern Munich (Q)	4	4	0	0	11	6	12	Atletico Madrid (Q)	5	3	2	0	15
FC Copenhagen	4	1	1	2	7	8	4	Lazio (Q)	5	3	1	1	7
Galatasaray	4	1	1	2	7	9	4	Feyenoord	5	2	0	3	8
Man United	4	1	0	3	9	11	3	Celtic	5	0	1	4	3
Group B							Group F						
Arsenal	4	3	0	1	9	3	9	Dortmund (Q)	5	3	1	1	6
PSV Eindhoven	4	1	2	1	4	7	5	Paris Saint-Germain	5	2	1	2	8
Lens	4	1	2	1	4	4	5	Newcastle	5	1	2	2	5
Sevilla	4	0	2	2	4	7	2	AC Milan	5	1	2	2	3
Group C							Group G						
Real Madrid (Q)	4	4	0	0	9	3	12	Manchester City (Q)	5	5	0	0	15
Napoli	4	2	1	1	6	5	7	RB Leipzig (Q)	5	3	0	2	11
Sporting Braga	4	1	0	3	5	9	3	Young Boys	5	1	1	3	6
Union Berlin	4	0	1	3	3	6	1	Red Star Belgrade	5	0	1	4	5
Group D							Group H						
Real Sociedad (Q)	4	3	1	0	7	2	10	Barcelona (Q)	5	4	0	1	10
Inter Milan (Q)	4	3	1	0	5	2	10	Porto	5	3	0	2	10
Salzburg	4	1	0	3	3	5	3	Shakhtar Donetsk	5	3	0	2	7
Benfica	4	0	0	4	1	7	0	Antwerp	5	0	0	5	3





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Indonesian firm acquires 20% interest in 2 Oman blocks

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, NOV 29

Indonesian oil and gas company PT Medco Energi Internasional Tbk (MedcoEnergi) has announced that the Omani government has green-lighted its acquisition of 20 per cent interests in two blocks owned and operated by OQ Exploration & Production LLC (OQEP), the upstream arm of OQ Group, the integrated global energy group of the Sultanate of Oman.

It includes Block 60, the flagship upstream asset of OQEP, which is presently the most prolific of the latter's wholly operated licenses. Located onshore in west central Oman, the block holds two producing fields: Bisat oil field and Abu Butabul gas field. In November 2022, OQ E&P celebrated the commissioning



MedcoEnergi has boosted its presence in Oman's upstream sector with the latest acquisitions

of its third crude processing plant at the Bisat oilfield in Block 60, helping unlock a further 60,000 barrels per day (bpd) of production from the field.

MedcoEnergi also acquired a 20% interest in Block 48, which is a roughly 3,000 sq km exploration license straddling the boundary between Al Dakhiliyah and Al Wusta

governorates. Wholly owned and operated by OQ E&P, the Block's hydrocarbon potential is currently being evaluated via 2D and 3D seismic, with the drilling of an exploration well.

OQ Group had earlier announced that its Board and shareholders had granted approval for the partial divestment of a 40 per cent

interest in the two blocks. The transaction stemmed from a sale-purchase agreement signed on August 22, 2023, it noted in a report of its fiscal performance for H1 2023.

"The total sale consideration is RO 548 million, subject to adjustment for the period between the effective date (1 January 2023) and the date of the Royal Decree. Management anticipates executing the transaction before the end of 2023," it further stated.

For MedcoEnergi, a relatively modest player in Oman's upstream energy sector, the stake acquisitions will add to its current portfolio of local upstream assets. It has a small stake in Block 56, located in southeast Oman and operated by Tethys Oil of Sweden.

MedcoEnergi is also the operator of the Karim Small Fields project, a cluster of

oilfields within the Block 6 concession of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), but outsourced by the latter to the Indonesian company under a long-term Service Contract.

Commenting on the Omani government's approval of its stake acquisitions, Hilmi Panigoro, President Director – MedcoEnergi, stated "This acquisition is in line with our strategy of owning and developing high-quality, cash-generative assets with great growth potential. Once completed, the acquisition will increase MedcoEnergi's daily production by ~13 MBOEPD (13K barrels of oil equivalent per day) and contribute significantly to future gas and liquids reserves."

The transaction is expected to be completed before the end of this year, the energy firm added.

Refinery and petrochemical production climbs 3.4% in October



QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, NOV 29

The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) has reported a 3.4% increase in total refinery and petrochemical production during October 2023 in comparison with figures for the corresponding period last year.

October 2023 witnessed total refinery and petrochemical production of 49.7 million barrels, up from 48.2 million barrels recorded in October 2022.

This upward trajectory is ascribed to a noteworthy 14.3% surge in gas oil (diesel) production, registering 32.5 million barrels in October 2023, in contrast to 28.1 million barrels in October 2022.

Simultaneously, petrol production experienced a substantial uptick of 20%, culminating in 13.8 million barrels in October 2023, compared to 11.5 million barrels in October 2022.

On the export front, refinery and petrochemical exports witnessed a marginal 1.3% escalation in October 2023, tallying 17.2 million barrels against the 17.0 million barrels of October 2022.

This elevation is chiefly attributed to a remarkable 31.3% surge in gas oil (diesel) exports, with 17.3 million barrels exported in October 2023, contrasting with 13.1 million barrels in October 2022.

Domestic sales of refinery and petrochemical products similarly climbed 2.2% in October 2023, amounting to 32.5 million barrels, relative to 31.7 million barrels in October 2022.

Uptick in electricity and water production during Q3

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, NOV 29

Electricity production in Oman experienced a noteworthy 6.0% growth during the third quarter of 2023, culminating in 41,698 megawatt-hours (MWh), a marked elevation from the 38,403.9 MWh registered in the third quarter of 2022, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

This upswing was propelled by a robust 7.6% increase in electricity production within the private sector, amounting to 40,362.9 MWh, contrasting with 36,661.2 MWh in the third quarter of 2022. Simultaneously, electricity production in the public sector exhibited a more modest 2.0% increase, reaching 1,335.1 MWh, up from 1,312.7 MWh in the third quarter of 2022.

Concurrently, water production in

Oman saw a 2.0% rise during the third quarter of 2023, registering 512,440 thousand cubic meters (MCM), surpassing the 502,420 MCM recorded in the third quarter of 2022.

This escalation was underpinned by a 3.5% increase in water production within the private sector, reaching 218,550.9 MCM, as opposed to 211,655.2 MCM in the third quarter of 2022. Water production in the public sector also experienced a marginal

0.1% uptick, amounting to 29,389.1 MCM, compared to 29,304.8 MCM in the third quarter of 2022.

This amplified output in electricity and water production mirrors the sustained economic growth in Oman. The trajectory of this growth is envisaged to persist in the foreseeable future, aligning with Oman's strategic pursuits to propel economic expansion through investments across diverse sectors.

PDO pilots CO2 utilisation for Enhanced Oil Recovery

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 29

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) announced yesterday, November 29, 2023, the commencement of an extended pilot dedicated to utilising CO2 for Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR) in the north of the Sultanate of Oman. This is a first for PDO and for Oman.

PDO is committed to its purpose of building a sustainable and low-carbon future, aiming to ensure the company's long term success by continuing to generate significant oil and gas revenue in a cost-effective and carbon-efficient manner, thereby maximising value for the Sultanate of Oman. This project marks a key milestone in PDO's dedication to increasing oil and gas production sustainably, decarbonising its operations, and

working towards achieving net-zero carbon emissions goal by 2050, in alignment with Oman's Vision 2040.

The goal of the pilot is to de-risk and therefore expedite the full-field EOR development. Over the next three months, continuous injectivity of CO2 into the reservoir will be proven, followed by long-term injection, lasting up to one year. This strategic approach aims to unlock substantial oil volumes stranded in the subsurface, paving the way for a major sustainable CO2 EOR project within the PDO concession area. Importantly, the project also plays a key role in proving up a larger PDO EOR portfolio whilst mitigating PDO's own CO2 emissions.

Minister of Energy and Minerals, Eng Salim al Aufi, said, "Oman has committed to reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.



"The goal of the pilot is to de-risk and therefore expedite the full-field EOR development": PDO

The national decarbonisation roadmap includes several technologies in which CCUS is a key technology enabler. The pilot undertaken by PDO exemplifies both the Company's and the country's unwavering dedication to simultaneously boosting production and decarbonising operations. This initiative serves as a tangible manifestation of Oman's commitment to

pioneering sustainable solutions in the pursuit of a cleaner, more environmentally conscious future."

PDO Managing Director Steve Phimister, said, "We are immensely proud to announce this milestone in our journey towards a net-zero CO2 emissions future. This project is not just a technological achievement but a demonstration of our unwavering commitment to both cost and carbon competitiveness. We are determined to safely, efficiently and sustainably grow our core oil and gas business while minimising emissions from our operations."

The project represents a significant stride forward in both the Company's and the nation's journey towards achieving net-zero emissions whilst maximising value from its natural resources.

Saudi wealth fund scoops up 10% of London Heathrow airport

LONDON: Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund is to buy ten per cent of London's Heathrow airport from Spanish infrastructure giant Ferrovial, whose departure from the hub after almost two decades leaves Qatar as its biggest shareholder.

Ferrovial on Tuesday said it was offloading its 25 per cent stake for nearly £2.4 billion (\$3.0 billion), with the other 15 per cent going to French private equity group Ardian.

Heathrow, which is one of the world's busiest airports, is owned by the consortium FGP Topco Limited, which going forward is set to be led by Qatar Investment Authority, with an existing 20-per cent stake.

Ardian will be the second biggest player, while Riyadh's Public Investment Fund (PIF) will join China Investment Corporation at ten percent, around the level held by other members of the consortium.

It is yet to be seen if the UK government will intervene in the sale.

Last week, the Conservative administration headed by Prime



Passengers wait for their flights at Heathrow Airport's Terminal 5 in west London. — AFP file photo

Minister Rishi Sunak said it was “minded” to review the proposed sale of the Telegraph Media Group to an Abu Dhabi-backed investment fund on public interest grounds.

Announcing Ferrovial's exit, the head of its airport business, Luke Bugeja, said in a statement: “Over the last 17 years, we have been contributing to Heathrow's

Ferrovial said it was offloading its 25 per cent stake for nearly \$3 billion, with the other 15 per cent going to French private equity group Ardian

transformation, together with our fellow shareholders, achieving some excellent milestones throughout our long-term role as investor.

“We are very pleased to have made Heathrow one of the world's most connected airports and the busiest airport in Europe.”

The specialist in transport infrastructure management

operates a vast portfolio of global assets, including airport interests in Turkiye and New York. Heathrow was not seen as a core asset by Ferrovial.

It bought its stake in Heathrow in a 2006 takeover and initially held 56 per cent of the hub, before gradually reducing its interest.

Heathrow recently said it recorded its highest-ever September passenger numbers of more than seven million, which also marked the first time it exceeded pre-pandemic traffic figures. Ferrovial said it remains “fully committed to advancing its airport business”, which includes a 50-per cent stake in three other UK hubs — Aberdeen, Glasgow and Southampton.

It owns also 60 per cent of Turkiyes Dalaman Airport and a 49-per cent stake in the new Terminal 1 at JFK Airport in New York. This summer, the firm angered Spain's government by relocating its headquarters to the Netherlands in a decision it said would give it access to cheaper credit and make it more attractive to investors ahead of a planned US stock listing. — **Reuters**

Sri Lanka and creditor nations agree in principle on debt restructuring

COLOMBO/TOKYO: A group of Sri Lanka's creditor nations and Colombo reached an agreement in principle on debt restructuring for the South Asian nation, Japanese top financial diplomat Masato Kanda said on Wednesday.

Japan co-chairs this group, together with France and India, which is comprised of 14 nations. China is Sri Lanka's largest bilateral creditor and has not joined this group as a formal member.

Sri Lanka's finance ministry said the agreement in principle covered approximately \$5.9 billion of outstanding public debt and consisted of a mix of long-term maturity extension and reduction in interest rates.

Mired in its worst financial crisis in decades, Sri Lanka has been trying to reach restructuring deals with creditors since last year.

“The fact that we agreed in principle with Sri Lanka today on debt restructuring conditions is a major achievement,” Kanda told reporters. “I expect this case will be applied as a leading case in dealing with debt problems in middle income nations.”

According to data from the finance ministry, Sri Lanka's external debt was \$36.6 billion at the end of June this year.

Once the debt restructuring is completed, Sri Lanka hopes to reduce its overall debt by \$16.9 billion. The deal will help Sri Lanka clear the review of a bailout under the International Monetary Fund (IMF) executive board programme by the year end, while securing a second IMF tranche of about \$334 million.

“This is a key milestone for debt restructuring,” said Udeeshan Jonas, chief strategist at equity research firm CAL Group.

“The good news is that this activates the second IMF tranche and that also means ADB (Asian Development Bank) and other funding comes into place helping the government's borrowing requirements to come down.”

— **Reuters**

Trend Micro unveils enterprise cybersecurity platform

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 29

Trend Micro Incorporated, a global leader in cybersecurity, launched Trend Vision One platform marking a significant leap forward in enterprise cybersecurity, encompassing robust attack surface risk management, cross-layer protection across hybrid environments, and cutting-edge extended detection and response (XDR), now amplified by powerful generative AI technology.

The platform's advanced XDR and AI capabilities include a broad set of native security sensors to deliver the most comprehensive and cross-domain threat protection. By consolidating data across internal and third-party sources, utilising advanced AI



and machine learning analytics, and correlated detection models, the platform brings revolutionary cyber protection to Oman and the region.

The threat landscape in the Middle East and Africa region is evolving rapidly, and Trend Micro is leading the charge in ensuring the safety of organisations in Oman and the

region. As per the 2022 Annual Cybersecurity Report by the Company, “Rethinking Tactics,” Trend Micro security solutions successfully blocked and detected over 870 million cyber threats in the region last year. The launch of Trend Vision One Platform underscores the company's dedication to this mission.

“In a world where threats constantly evolve, Trend Micro continues to challenge the status quo,” says Assad Arabi, Managing Director, Gulf and Emerging Markets, Trend Micro. “Our relentless pursuit of innovation has enabled us to stay at the forefront of cybersecurity, delivering unparalleled solutions that safeguard Omani and regional organisations against emerging risks. Trend Vision One underscores our commitment to pushing boundaries, redefining

industry standards, and providing the highest level of protection for organisations in Oman and the region.”

With its robust integration ecosystem, Trend Vision One elevates enterprise cybersecurity by unifying visibility, automation, and orchestration. It integrates smoothly with third-party networks, fueling security organisations' growth. Additionally, it empowers MSSP (Managed Security Service Provider) partners to deliver comprehensive solutions addressing industry needs. Offering a range of services including Attack Surface Risk Management (ASRM) and extended detection and response (XDR), it enables MSSPs to provide clients with a potent, all-encompassing defence against cyber threats.

Trend Micro brings transformative generative AI capabilities into its platform with the introduction of Companion, an AI-powered cybersecurity assistant. Companion amplifies security operations, boosts productivity and efficiency, and accelerates threat detection, response, and cyber risk management for analysts of all skill levels.

Companion streamlines workflows by automating processes like e-mail and ticketing, providing plain-language explanations for alerts, and offering AI-driven mitigation recommendations. Working in tandem with Trend Vision One, it effectively prioritises risks, threats, and vulnerabilities, while eliminating task-switching risks and alert fatigue, leading to enhanced SOC efficiency.

Liva Head of HR wins ‘Excellence in Talent Acquisition in Insurtech’ Award at Muntada Al Mar’a 2023

MUSCAT: Driving the journey of excellence and setting new benchmarks in the insurance sector, Fathiya al Hajri, Head of Human Resources at Liva Insurance, was recently honoured with the ‘Excellence in Talent Acquisition in Insurtech’ award at the 12th edition of Mundata Al Mar’a Awards Event 2023.

This prestigious accolade reflects Al Hajri's unmatched efforts and contributions in acquiring national talents and competencies, acting as the main driver of the company's success.

Held under the auspices of HH Sayyida Hujaija al Said, Al Mar’a summit and awards event

witnessed the presence of a number of business leaders, dignitaries, and key decision-makers from a cross-section of the industry at Sheraton Oman Hotel in November. This annual event honoured and felicitated the unwavering dedication and exceptional contributions of Omani women across diverse fields.

On this occasion, Fathiya al Hajri said, “It gives me immense pride to be recognised and honoured with this prestigious award. This achievement not only reflects the individual's dedication to promoting excellence in the insurance sector, but also confirms the vision of Liva in alignment with the national goals



of empowering women while simultaneously contributing to the development of the insurance landscape. Thanks to the company

for continually encouraging employees to excel and accomplish new heights in their professionals.”

Further stated, “This award is a

true testament to our commitment to improving calibres and enhancing innovation and future vision in the field of talent acquisition in the insurance sector. This has significantly contributed to having a great record of excellence and accomplishments. We constantly devoting our efforts to reiterate our leading position in the region and we will move forward towards effectively contributing to the advancement of the insurance industry in the Sultanate.”

Al Hajri holds over 25 years of experience in Human Resources management. She is currently upholding the responsibilities of managing HR operations

and aligning the department objectives with the company's strategic objectives. Thanks to her broad experience in the field of Human Resources, her insightful vision and exceptional leadership, Al Hajri has successfully acquired competent cadres, as well as implemented policies and systems that efficiently support attracting young talents, contributing to achieving the institutional goals of Liva Insurance.

Positioning itself as the region's leading multi-line insurer, Liva is committed to provide the best customer services by offering a wide range of innovative insurance products, with a highly qualified and dedicated team.

European stock markets climb as bets build on rate cuts



A TV presenter gets ready for the daily reporting from the floor of the German share price index DAX at the stock exchange in Frankfurt, Germany. – Reuters

LONDON: Europe's main stock markets mostly climbed on Wednesday as traders ramped up bets on the US Federal Reserve cutting interest rates in the new year after a top official sounded an optimistic note on the battle against inflation.

Asia's leading indices closed lower after a tepid performance on Tuesday on Wall Street, with focus on the release of the US central bank's favoured gauge of prices due on Thursday.

The dollar, which has been under pressure over the prospect of rate cuts, firmed against main rivals on Wednesday.

"Comments from a usually hawkish Fed policymaker that there could be room for cuts

to interest rates... look set to push Wall Street higher at the open," noted Susannah Streeter, head of money and markets at Hargreaves Lansdown.

Oil prices extended gains before an output meeting of OPEC and its allies, notably Russia, on Thursday.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development trimmed its forecast for global growth this year to 2.9 per cent.

The OECD, which warned on growth risks stemming from the Israel-Hamas conflict, added that it expects global output to slow next year to 2.7 per cent.

Multiple interest rate hikes over the past two years aimed at

cooling decades-high inflation have weighed heavily on the economy.

Markets are now eyeing cuts to borrowing costs amid less rampant price increases, with billionaire investor Bill Ackman, founder of Pershing Square Capital Management, believing there could a US rate-reduction as early as the first quarter of next year.

His comments came as Fed Governor Christopher Waller, usually one of the more hawkish members, struck an upbeat tone in a speech Tuesday.

"I am increasingly confident that policy is currently well positioned to slow the economy and get inflation back to

two per cent," he told the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, referring to the bank's target.

"I am encouraged by what we have learned in the past few weeks — something appears to be giving, and it's the pace of the economy."

A string of indicators in recent weeks has suggested the US jobs market is softening and the economy slowing down — but not quickly enough to cause much concern about a recession.

That has encouraged investors to shift back into risk assets, though the latest advance has been tempered by profit-taking ahead of what many hope will be a "Santa rally".

Sohar Aluminium participates in ARABAL 2023 in Riyadh



Arab International Aluminium Conference and Exhibition

MUSCAT: Sohar Aluminium (SA) concluded its participation in the recently held 25th edition of Arab International Aluminium Conference and Exhibition (ARABAL 2023), organised in Riyadh. ARABAL is the Middle East's premier trade event for the aluminium industry, and this year's edition was titled "Aluminium: The Future, from Mine to Space" showcasing the limitless applications and possibilities for Aluminium.

The 3-day event, hosted by Saudi Arabian Mining Company (Ma'aden), marked a unique conference attended by primary aluminium manufacturers in the region as well as attracting those interested in the Middle East aluminium industry. ARABAL 2023 featured different workshops, thought-provoking presentations, panel discussions, and keynote speeches from industry pioneers, exploring the latest trends, challenges and opportunities in the aluminium sector such

as achieving industry decarbonisation and net-zero, promoting market dynamics, sustainability practices and the impact of technological advancements.

SA's participation in ARABAL 2023 was across various activities during the 3-day conference which includes its booth at the exhibition. Kicking off the first day, the CEO of SA, Eng Said al Masoudi, shared his views on the current challenges and future opportunities of aluminium industry during the Arab CEO Smelters Panel.

In a later session, SA's Chief Operating Officer, Agnello Borim, touched on the various initiatives that are increasing the company's recycling efforts that serve in meeting decarbonisation targets. Furthermore, Lead Process Engineer Roa al Shizawi shed light on the role of female talents in delivering the ambitious growth vision of the GCC aluminium industry during a session designated to highlight women's valuable contributions in this industry.

Arabian Car Marketing Company Launches Next-Gen Ford Everest 4X4 SUV in Oman

Arabian Car Marketing Company, the dealers for Ford vehicles in Oman, recently launched the Next-Gen Ford Everest 7-seater 4X4 SUV at the Ford showroom at Wattayah. Gracing the occasion were dignitaries from the public and private sectors.

A representative from Arabian Car Marketing said, "As a brand, Ford has always prioritised high levels of customer satisfaction. This passion is evident in all the Ford vehicles through their stylish designs, advanced technology and industry-inspiring safety features. Ford vehicles are more than just vehicles. They are reliable partners that take you further on every journey. The Next-Gen Ford Everest too unravels an exciting spirit of adventure and a pursuit for the extraordinary. What makes the Next-Gen 4X4 SUV truly distinctive is its remarkable features that are engineered to cater to the diverse needs of customers. Its impressive design that highlights its ruggedness and sophistication along with its technical advancements and a spacious and well-appointed interior make the Next-Gen introduction stand as a testament to Ford's distinction in craftsmanship and engineering excellence.

Sharing his thoughts on the 4X4 capability of the Next-Gen



Everest, he said, "The Everest SUV has a remarkable 4x4 capability. It is designed to take you places and conquer the most demanding terrains with confidence. With such a capability, the Everest encourages you to explore and discover your desires. The Everest 4X4 SUV is your steadfast companion on the path less travelled."

Expressing his gratitude to loyal Ford customers in Oman and to Ford Motor Company, he said, "We take this opportunity to thank our valued customers for their continued patronage. We would also like to thank Ford Motor Company, for their constant

support and encouragement."

Engineered to excite, the Next-Gen Ford Everest has been built for the adventurous — with capability at its core. Inside, premium levels of craftsmanship have created a quiet and refined seats for up to seven, while class-leading technology and safety features offer driver and passengers comfort and peace of mind on every journey.

Everest's wider track and longer wheelbase enabled designers to create a more progressive, muscular appearance. Designers also put a lot of thought into the function and feel of the interior, taking inspiration from modern homes and bringing

in plush materials, premium finishes and ambient lighting in areas customers will appreciate them best.

Everest's sense of spaciousness is amplified by the full-width coast-to-coast instrument panel and centre console with dual cup-holder recesses, plus dash-mounted 'pop-out' cup-holders for front-seat occupants. It is equipped with integrated wireless charging and a svelte new leather trimmed e-shifter and an electric parking brake. Access to the third row is much easier thanks to second-row seats that slide further forward than before. Additionally, all occupants



which comes customer-ready with its voice-activated communications, entertainment and information systems.

The portrait-orientated 12-inch screen is linked to a 360-degree camera with split-view display to make parking a breeze in tight urban spaces or to assist when negotiating particularly tricky terrain while out exploring.

The Next-Gen Ford Everest is equipped with Ford's proven, 2.3L EcoBoost Turbo petrol engine, mated to an efficient 10-speed SelectShift automatic which delivers Best-in-Class 296HP power and 420Nm of torque.

Everest comes loaded with new and enhanced driver assist technologies and safety features that are designed to take the stress out of driving and help drivers remain focused. They include airbags for front driver and passenger, dual side curtain airbags for all three rows, cruise control, Adaptive Cruise Control with Stop-and-Go and Lane Centring and more.

During the event, the first few customers of the Next-Gen Ford Everest 4X4 SUV were felicitated. Later, Ford enthusiasts went around viewing the vehicles on display and getting a first-hand experience of the all-new Everest.

The Next-Gen Ford Everest 4X4 SUV is now on display at all Ford showrooms.

now have places to store their things and depending on the model, charge their devices with power outlets in all three rows.

In addition to a more refined and comfortable interior, Ford focused on incorporating the latest connectivity and technology features into the Next-Gen Ford Everest. It comes with an 8-inch digital instrument panel that replaces the traditional analogue cluster, in addition to large, high-resolution portrait 10.1-inch or best-in-class 12-inch touchscreens.

Next-Gen Ford Everest is loaded with Ford's latest SYNC4 A system,

OCCI's role in strengthening Oman's private sector

Although it is considered one of the national institutions that was established in the early 70s, some still ask about the role that the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) has played in supporting economic development plans during the past five decades since its founding in 1973.

They also voice concern about its achievements, support and motivation for business in various fields. The question that is always posed to the chamber's boards of directors relates to the extent of this institution's need to impose the annual financial fees paid by the owners of institutions, especially small ones in order to become members of the chamber.

There is a lot that can be said about this matter, 50 years after the establishment of the chamber,



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which contributes positively to the development work of companies and institutions affiliated with the Omani private sector. The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry has played a major role in supporting Omani institutions and companies of all levels through the services provided by the Chamber to facilitate the businesses of institutions, as well as supporting the country's five-year plans. Oman has witnessed a commercial boom in the number of institutions and companies, with the number exceeding 400,000 institutions registered with the Chamber to keep pace with new developments, while today it works continuously to support various approaches towards the strategies that are being developed to make the Oman 2040 Vision a success.

Recently, the Chamber organised an economic forum aimed at shedding light on the

achievements it and its branches have achieved over the past five decades, in which it discussed the approach it has taken since its founding in supporting strategic development trends in the country, in addition to its economic plans for the current period of the new Board of Directors for the years 2022-2026. Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the Chamber's Board of Directors, believes that the organisation's directions at the current stage embody the paths and priorities that are consistent with the directions of Oman Vision 2040, which aims to improve the business environment, partnership in developing the governorates economically, and expanding the base of economic diversification, while working to establish principles governance, improving the internal work environment and

achieving digital transformation in line with government digital transformation. The Chamber also works within the framework of these trends to improve the business environment in the country, review laws and legislation related to economic work and strengthen Oman's position as an investment destination capable of attracting foreign capital.

Over the past decades, the Chamber has achieved many works by working on several axes, including managing trade delegations, organising specialised economic events and contributing to raising the Sultanate of Oman's ranking in special global indicators by simplifying and facilitating commercial activities, which accelerates the achievement of the economic diversification policy that aims to the government, in addition to supporting the

work of the research and studies centre to enhance the growth of the business of institutions and companies affiliated with the private sector.

It also works to strengthening the partnership in developing the Omani governorates economically by contributing to the creation of investment opportunities according to the comparative advantage of each governorate, which enhances the opportunities for expanding the base of economic diversification, attracting more foreign investments in various targeted economic sectors for each governorate.

All of these plans support improving the internal work environment, keeping pace with changes and responding to interim developments, developing competencies and productivity in institutions.

Is industrial policy like vitamin C or penicillin?

Vitamin C may not be particularly effective at preventing the common cold or treating cancer (notwithstanding Linus Pauling's claims to the contrary), but a lack of it can cause scurvy. As a result, daily consumption is essential to a healthy diet. In contrast, penicillin cures bacterial infections, although its overuse can lead to drug-resistant germs. It should thus be taken only when absolutely necessary.

So, is industrial policy more like vitamin C or penicillin? Can a deficiency lead to problems, meaning that regular, modest amounts are crucial to a well-functioning economy? Or should it be used sparingly to combat a particular type of infection?

In this context, infections represent market failures, which many economists tend to see more as the exception than the rule. They would argue that leaving the body to cure itself is better than intervening. As the old joke goes, an untreated cold lasts a week, whereas a treated cold lasts seven days. The late Nobel laureate Gary Becker famously quipped that "the best industrial policy is none at all."



RICARDO HAUSMANN

From another perspective, however, market failures are more widespread and generic. Firms have little incentive to train their workers and invest in research and development (R&D), as other companies could lure away their employees and copy their costly ideas. Meanwhile, it can be difficult to coordinate the inputs — including electricity, water, mobility, logistics and security — required to make a particular location suitable for manufacturing. Consequently, it has become standard practice for the government to share training costs, to subsidise R&D through the tax code and to plan industrial zones. Like vitamin C, these policy interventions are beneficial for many industries and should be recurrent.

The reality, however, is more complex: market failures are endemic but also extremely heterogeneous; as such, they can rarely be treated with generic

WHEN IT COMES TO BUILDING A WELL-FUNCTIONING ECONOMY, IS INDUSTRIAL POLICY A VITAL NUTRIENT THAT MUST BE TAKEN REGULARLY AND IN MODEST AMOUNTS TO AVOID A DEFICIENCY? OR IS IT A TREATMENT THAT SHOULD BE USED ONLY WHEN ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY TO COMBAT A SPECIFIC TYPE OF INFECTION?



Integration of industry 4.0 into the strategy of economic development. Fourth Industrial Revolution, Internet of Things IoT, artificial intelligence AI, big data analytics, cloud computing, robotics

tools. To understand why, we must remember that well-functioning markets achieve three things. First, through the price system, they reveal highly decentralised information that is distributed across the economy. Second, through the profit motive, they provide incentives to create value by producing goods and services where the gaps between the price of output and that of the requisite inputs is large. Finally, through financial markets, resources are allocated to those firms whose responses to the information contained in prices suggest future profitability.

Market failures, including the provision of public goods, create challenges to information, incentives and resource mobilisation that industrial policy must ultimately overcome. For example, without sanitary controls, safety certifications, and

cold-chain logistics, international trade in fresh produce would not exist, just as the lack of infrastructure explains why high-speed rail does not exist in the United States.

Similarly, nascent industries often face daunting chicken-and-egg problems. For example, people are unwilling to buy electric vehicles (EVs) as long as the charging infrastructure is inadequate. But investors are reluctant to sink money into charging stations without assurances that EV sales will increase. Providing financial guarantees to investors would expand the charging network and boost EV sales, making the guarantees unlikely to be used and thus cheap to issue.

Such interventions, however, must be designed for each context, just as different antibiotics are used to treat

specific infections. This raises the question of who diagnoses the problem and prescribes the course of action, and whether their sources of information are adequate.

Given this, a better metaphor for industrial policy may be the body's immune system, which protects against various invaders by using a highly decentralised detection network to identify threats and determine when it needs to act. Leveraging its "memory" of previous infections, the immune system develops antibodies to address the issue at hand. Each exposure to disease thus strengthens the system's capacity.

Such an analogy is apt because industrial policy involves close cooperation between a wide network of public entities — including area ministries, economic development

boards, investment-promotion agencies and special economic zones — and private-sector actors. Moreover, like the immune system, industrial policy can fail in one of two ways: its response can be too weak, or it can misfire, as with autoimmune disorders, attacking the body it is meant to protect. Policy capture, corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies can lead governments to exacerbate, instead of resolve, market failures.

The fact that industrial policy can backfire does not imply that countries should eschew it. Learning how to deploy these interventions is as important for a well-functioning economy as developing sound education and health policy, and a failure to do so would likewise carry an unacceptable social cost.

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TRAVEL TALES

A winter swimming enthusiast dives into a lake in Shenyang, in northeastern China's Liaoning province. — AFP



CHANGING WORLD

A newly arrived Rohingya refugee walks to the beach after the local community decided to temporarily allow them to land for water and food in Ulee Madon, Aceh province, Indonesia. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

Best Actress in a Supporting Role winner US actress Jamie Lee Curtis (R) and Best Actress in a Leading Role Malaysian actress Michelle Yeoh (L) are pictured in the press room during the 95th Annual Academy Awards at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California. — AFP



MUSIC

Moroccan Dutch singer Dystinct performs in the AFAS Live concert hall, in Amsterdam. — AFP



TRENDS

Commuters ride on a metro train in Dubai ahead of the COP28 United Nations climate summit. — AFP

art & life

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Omanis introduce device that addresses missing persons at sea

The issue of missing persons at sea due to various factors has not been properly addressed worldwide. An Omani company is introducing an innovative device with technology that aids in tracking, sending distress signals, and improving maritime safety, offering hope in reducing sea-related tragedies worldwide... **P20**



TOURISM

LOST IN THE METRO? PARIS TRANSLATION APP AIMS TO HELP VISITORS

THE PARIS METRO has launched an instant translation app ahead of next year's Olympic Games to help hapless foreign visitors navigate the French

capital's urban transport system. The meandering metro, featuring more than 300 stations whose names can be hard to find or pronounce even for natives, easily becomes a nightmare for anybody without fluent French. The Summer Olympics, to be held in the French capital between July 26 and August 11, will bring millions of visitors without knowledge of French or even English to the capital, most of whom will be using public transport to shuttle between sports venues. In comes Tradivia, an instant translation app able to handle 16 languages, with which metro operator RATP has equipped 6,000 of its staff across the network's stations. The app translates spoken queries, including in English, German, Mandarin, Hindi and Arabic, into French for the benefit of RATP's agents whose responses then get translated back to the language of the visitor.



"We had a real issue here, because our agents can't be expected to answer queries in all languages," said Valerie Gaidot, customer experience head at RATP. The app has been specifically tailored to the Paris metro experience, and knows its way around station names, itineraries and the various ticket and travel pass types that can leave tourists bewildered. This, RATP said, is a decisive advantage over general translation help like Google Translate that sometimes fails to make sense of the metro's idiosyncrasies. After experimenting on three urban lines first, the operator rolled out the service across the network over the summer. In addition, four languages -- English, German, Italian and Spanish -- are currently available for special platform announcements, with Mandarin and Arabic to be added before the Olympics.

— AFP

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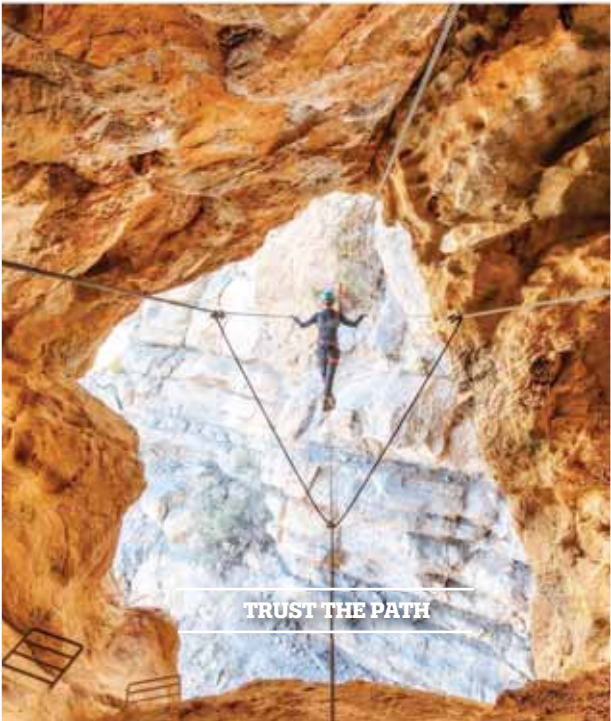


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Gaza's olive harvest is too little, too late, say farmers



FARMERS IN GAZA were taking advantage of the truce between Israel and Hamas to harvest what was left of their olives after weeks of fighting during which they dared not go to their lands for fear of getting killed.

In a normal year the harvest would have started weeks earlier, but until the truce farmers were afraid of being mistaken for Hamas

and targeted by Israeli forces if they ventured out into the olive groves.

Some lands were also damaged by fighting or the passage of military vehicles, while some farmers were displaced from their homes and unable to get back to their groves.

"This war destroyed us. There's hardly any production. The majority of the harvest was wasted," said

Fathy Abu Salah, who was picking olives with a small team, sorting them from leaves and twigs on a groundsheet and collecting them in a wheelbarrow.

He said that normally they would harvest enough olives to fill 12 containers, but this year they would fill just one. There were other problems linked to the war, he said, such as a dearth of fuel to transport the

olives to the nearest press.

"We are trying to do this with all of the resources we have in these six days (of truce)," said Abu Salah. "This fruit is all we have. This is how we make a living year after year."

At the Wafy press in Khan Younis, the machinery had cranked into operation weeks late. Sacks of olives were being brought in on the backs of carts pulled by donkeys.

it's working at minimum capacity."

Wafy said almost all of his own olives fell to the ground before he was able to get to his land. He said some farmers had found nothing, while others had harvested a fraction of what they would normally expect.

"The season is gone," he said.

—Reuters



FASHION

Pioneer designer Iris Van Herpen on fashion that goes 'beyond beauty'

FOR IRIS VAN HERPEN, whose radical couture dresses have attracted top musicians like Bjork, Beyonce and Lady Gaga, fashion is a way to "transform a human being".

The Dutch designer, 39, spoke to AFP on Tuesday as she launched an exhibition of her work, "Iris van Herpen: Sculpting the Senses", at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris. The opening was attended by Queen Maxima of the Netherlands, wearing one of the designer's creations, and France's first lady, Brigitte Macron.



"Fashion can be an intellectual expression, something that goes beyond beauty," Van Herpen said.

"It can be connected to all the layers of life... to architecture, to science, to biology, to nature, to everything that matters," she added.

Van Herpen has been a pioneer in fusing a broad range of technologies with couture.

She was one of the first to present 3D-printed dresses, and has borrowed ideas from microscopic photography, deep space imagery,

architecture and many other fields.

"It's a very important piece for me, because it was the first real (3D) print I made in 2010," Van Herpen said, displaying a swirling, digitally-printed white dress made from polymer and eco-leather that she designed along with architect Daniel Widrig.

"Before, I only focused on traditional crafts, but this is when I started collaborating with architects and scientists. I started not only drawing inspiration from these disciplines, but to work with them, and that really raised the level of my clothing," she added.

Among the other trippy pieces are items that look like intricately detailed skeletons, shimmering dresses based on images of the cosmos, and floaty outfits that resemble plankton blooms in the sea. The perennial question for any haute couture designer: are these clothes really wearable?

"Oh yeah, absolutely," Van Herpen insists.

"I have a background in dance, so I really think about movement when I create, it's about a transformation of the body." — AFP

ENTERTAINMENT

Timothee Chalamet turned to vocal coach to the stars for 'Wonka'

TIMOTHEE CHALAMET TOOK lessons from a top vocal coach as he prepared to follow in the footsteps of Gene Wilder and Johnny Depp to play Willy Wonka in a new movie that tells the origin story of Roald Dahl's famed character.

In "Wonka", a musical film, the "Dune" and "Call Me by Your Name" actor plays a younger version of the chocolate-loving inventor.

"(It was) daunting because the character's beloved, people are very protective over characters they love and sceptical about Hollywood remakes. But I think we did a great job. I'm very happy with



the film," Chalamet told Reuters at the "Wonka" world premiere at London's Royal Festival Hall on Tuesday.

The 27-year-old said he worked with Eric Vetro, the vocal coach to singers including Ariana Grande, John Legend and Katy Perry.

"A lot of training, a lot of vocal lessons with Eric Vetro in LA, a lot of work," he said of his preparation for the film's musical

numbers.

"Wonka" sees the top hat and long jacket wearing character land in a fictional city after several years at sea. The town is home to the world's top chocolatiers and Wonka, too, hopes to open his own shop. As he chases his dream and goes against a powerful chocolate cartel, he befriends a young orphan girl and a curious small creature with orange skin and green hair — an Oompa Loompa, played by Hugh Grant.

The film is co-written and directed by "Paddington" filmmaker Paul King.

"We wanted to make a movie that would stand as a companion piece to the Gene Wilder movie, which obviously has these enduring classic songs," said King.

"There's a lot of clues that Roald Dahl left as to what Willy did before 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory' so we felt confident if we just picked up on those clues, we could make something that Roald Dahl would be proud of," added Simon Farnaby, who co-wrote the screenplay with King.

"Wonka" is out globally in December. — Reuters



Omanis introduce device that addresses missing persons at sea

Due to the high cost and vast expanse of the sea, communication with the missing has become extremely difficult, as maritime communication companies cannot extend their lines into the sea. Flokiz is hoping to address this.

BY KHALID AL BALUSHI
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In recent times, a phenomenon has spread in the seas: an increase in the percentage of missing persons at sea. The causes may be diverse, such as adverse weather conditions, boat malfunctions, or even a lack of experience in the maritime field, among other reasons.

In a report compiled by the Eurofish International Organisation, an international organisation established to assist the development of fisheries and aquaculture in Europe, focusing on the post-harvest sector, thousands of accidental deaths at sea are reported worldwide every year.

The report included details that among fishermen alone, "in Guinea, around 500 deaths per 100,000 fishermen are estimated each year. In other countries on the West African coast, the mortality rate in small-scale fishing is said to vary in the range of 300 to 1,000 per 100,000 fishermen. Figures from South Africa show 585 deaths per 100,000 fishermen."

Worldwide, the number is even greater. However, due to poor reporting and inadequate information maintenance in records, those incidents affecting the public have not been properly dissected. This means there is a possibility of an even greater number of sea incidents.

Due to the high cost and vast expanse of the sea, communication with the missing has become extremely difficult, as maritime communication companies cannot extend their lines into the sea.

In Oman, if a boat goes beyond the borders of the Sultanate, neighbouring countries consider the communication lines as espionage. Moreover, the limited number of radars in Oman adds to the difficulty of finding the missing at sea.

In response to this, Sulaiman bin Mohammed al Mujaini, head of research and development, said that they launched Flokiz, a company that hopes to help address this worldwide issue of missing people in the sea.

"Flokiz was created to help mitigate this phenomenon by creating an environmentally friendly algae box containing a tracking and distress device connected to three cells (satellites, a wireless network, and an innovative third cell) to

achieve the highest coordinate accuracy. Each fisherman registers their maritime number on their respective box and places it on the boat," he explained.

Sulaiman and his team developed a user-friendly website suitable for all age groups. There are two ways to communicate with the missing. Firstly, when a person is lost at sea, one of their family members or relatives enters their maritime number on the website, and directly, it will show their exact location. The second method is through distress SOS signals.

By using the programme, the missing person can send distress messages to the registered numbers in the programme and the emergency number. With this product, we ensure the safety and return of sailors to their families. Additionally, it facilitates the search and quick access to the missing for coastal patrols. Instead of all the villagers going out to search, the search process becomes easy and fast.

The device can be used in hot deserts without the need for the Internet, and it can also track vehicles in case of risks or accidents, allowing individuals to use the device to send distress signals.

The device features specifications including a battery life of up to three years, a size of 15*20 cm, a weight of 1,100g, and it is considered environmentally friendly, with a rating of 10 per cent Internet-enabled and 90 per cent without Internet.

Al Mujaini added, "This device works without the Internet, and we already tried this new device. It proves to us that it works well with efficiency as it is guided by GPS."

POSITIVE RESPONSE AND OVERWHELMING SUPPORT:

Al Mujaini said that they have received positive responses from different people they have pitched their ideas and shown the prototype.

"We are getting a great response, and with Oman having a very long coast and fishing still a big part of the business industry, this is quite an exciting product that they're looking forward to," Al

Mujaini said.

Al Mujaini and his team are thankful for the support they are getting, not just from the government but also from the private sector, and most especially from



one of Oman's big telecom providers that supported the development of the product.

"There is still lots of work that needs to be done. We've finished the prototype, and we've done numerous tests. Making it available publicly would still take a bit of time as there are numerous considerations that we have to make," he said.

They are also looking into production and distribution, which, he explained, are different parts but an essential section of the business.

Al Mujaini, however, said that as it stands now, they are very positive that they will reach their target and niche buyers, people who would relate and find the device helpful in their day-to-day operations.