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DUOM REFINERY
EXPORTS FIRST
ULTRA-LOW SULPHUR
DIESEL CARGOES



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THE
GUARDIANS
OF OMAN'S
TURTLES



P12

DJOKOVIC POWERS
SERBIA INTO DAVIS
CUP QUARTERS,
BRITAIN WIN AGAIN



SAUDI CROWN PRINCE CONCLUDES PRIVATE VISIT



HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, left on Saturday evening after a private visit to the Sultanate of Oman during which he met with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. — ONA

MUSCAT
BAUSHER MOUNTAIN ROAD CLOSED

As part of the road maintenance work in Muscat Governorate and in coordination with the Traffic Department, Muscat Municipality will close Al Jabal Street (mountain road) towards Basher from Al Amerat. To be closed for four months, one lane will be opened during the morning peak hours, between 5 and 9.30 am. For the purpose of maintaining the necessary protections on the road, the municipality urged everyone to take caution and follow traffic instructions shown on the website. SEE P5

OPINION

P8



Thomas Firedman
A trip to Ukraine clarified the stakes

P9



Ray Petersen
Teachers with artistic motivation

US praises Oman’s important role in Yemen peace efforts

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The US State Department welcomed the arrival of a senior Ansar Allah delegation to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, which is the first official visit by a representative of Ansar Allah to Riyadh since the war in Yemen began nearly a decade ago.

“It comes after nearly 18 months of calm that began after a UN-me-

diated truce which first went into effect on April 2, 2022. President Joe Biden, from his first weeks in office, has made de-escalating and ending the war in Yemen one of his top foreign policy priorities. The United States has been proud to lend our diplomatic support to these peace efforts in coordination with the Yemeni parties and the United Nations.

We commend the leadership of

Saudi Arabia for this current initiative and thank the leadership of the Sultanate of Oman for its important role. We call on all parties to this terrible conflict to further solidify and expand on the benefits of the truce that has brought a measure of peace to the Yemeni people and ultimately bring this war to an end,” an official statement said.

The Yemeni government also welcomed the efforts of the King-

dom of Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman, and the UN and international efforts aimed at pushing the Ansar Allah towards seriously dealing with calls for peace and alleviating the human suffering of the Yemeni people. Ansar Allah said they hoped to overcome “challenges” on Friday as they head into unprecedented talks in Saudi Arabia aimed at ending their devastating eight-year war.

Their visit, five months after hosting a Saudi team in the Yemeni capital Sanaa, is the latest hopeful sign for a war that has created one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises. “We hope that a serious discussion will take place in the interest of both peoples and that the challenges will be overcome,” senior political leader Mohamed Ali al Huthi posted on X, formerly known as Twitter.

NIDAA TO THE ‘RESCUE’



The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) launched ‘Nidaa’ programme which enables mountain climbers to register data of the site on which they are going to practice mountain climbing as well as the time and number of climbers. The programme enables the users to report any incidents by the click of a button. The move follows a notable increase in the number of locals and tourists practicing mountain climbing in Oman. SEE ALSO P2

Cooperation must to deal with global challenges

HAVANA: The Sultanate of Oman has been working hard in the fields of technology, science and innovation to advance its development strategy. It is working diligently to develop our digital economy, diversify sources of income, and maintain the pace of our sustainable growth and prosperity.

This was stated by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, who is taking part in the two-day G77+China Summit in Havana, Cuba.

Sayyid Badr conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and his best wishes for the event and congratulated the Republic of Cuba on assuming the presidency of the G77+China.

“We would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for its efforts during its presidency of the previous session. And I also wish to welcome the high-level engagement of China here. China’s relations with G77 countries and its role in supporting development in many regions are both highly appreciated by Oman.”

He added that the significant progress in the field of artificial intelligence represents a pivotal opportunity that opens doors to great potential for economic and social improvements.

“We know that achieving



Dr Miguel Díaz-Canel, President of the Republic of Cuba, received Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, on the sidelines of the G77 and China summit held in Havana, Cuba, on Saturday. Sayyid Badr conveyed the greetings and best wishes of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the President and his wishes of more progress and prosperity for the friendly Cuban people.

this requires effective international cooperation, including the exchange of knowledge and technology, and establishing frameworks to ensure the responsible and sustainable use of artificial intelligence, strengthening institutional systems and their structures. Oman Vision 2040 aims to stimulate innovation and investment, develop human resources, and empower the public and private sectors to contribute to development in all its social, economic and scientific dimensions,” Sayyid Badr said.

TURN TO P3

Global hunger worse today than in 2015

WASHINGTON: There are 745 million more moderately to severely hungry people in the world today than in 2015, and the world is far off track in its efforts to meet an ambitious United Nations goal to end hunger by 2030, the UN said in a report.

At the halfway point to the deadline set for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the world is seeing little to no improvement in most of the food and agriculture-related goals, said the report by the Food

and Agriculture Organization, released ahead of a UN sustainable development summit next week in New York.

“The lingering effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, along with other crises such as climate change and armed conflicts, are having widespread impacts,” the report said. “Progress made in the past two decades has stagnated, and in some cases even reversed.”

Global food insecurity spiked sharply in 2020 as the pandemic disrupted food markets and drove

up unemployment, but hunger has not returned to pre-pandemic levels. About 29.6 per cent of the global population - 2.4 billion people - was moderately or severely food insecure in 2022, up from 1.75 billion in 2015, the report said.

FOOD WASTE

Undernourishment is worst in the global south, with hunger rising most in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The world has also seen no improvement towards a goal to halve food waste, which has remained

at about 13 per cent since 2016. Countries should craft policy to reduce food loss, the report said.

Reuters reported last November that the lack of global progress on food waste is due to low public investment and clear policy, and wasteful consumer habits.

The world is also far from achieving goals to protect fish stocks, conserve forests, and reverse land degradation. Some progress has been made on water use efficiency and curbing illegal fishing. — Reuters



CDAA launches Nidaa for safe adventure sports

MUSCAT: The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) launched Nidaa programme which enables mountain climbers to register their climbing details of the site as well as the time and number of participants.

The programme enables the users to report incidents by clicking a button. This will enable speedy rescue in the event of accidents.

The move followed a notable increase in the number of locals and tourists practicing mountain climbing in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority said it is concerned with the safety of climbers and urged that trekking should only be done on trails approved by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in cooperation with other bodies, including the CDAA.

The Authority said accidents increase in mountains and caves and during winter and in valleys in summer.

Slips and falls are the most common accidents during



mountain adventure. This is because the victims do not follow safety measures and use poor quality climbing equipment. Sometimes they are unaware of using them properly leading to injuries. Others push the limits in physically demanding trekking routes.

To create awareness about safe adventure sports, CDAA

is conducting workshops and lectures across governorates. It also posts safety tips in social media for the public and adventure enthusiasts.

CDAA has response teams in all governorates equipped with modern gear to deal with adventure accidents. Most of the trails are located in the eastern and western Hajar Mountains.

The programme enables the users to report incidents by clicking a button. This will enable speedy rescue in the event of accidents.

The Authority participates in the Mountain Trails Evaluation Committee, headed by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, by providing first-aid training, identifying mountain trails and caves that are safe for exploration, setting safety procedures, and identifying a specialised team to follow up and supervise the activity.

The programme also aims to develop youth capabilities in the skills of dealing with potential accidents and mountain rescue through the practical implementation of rope descent and rescue of the injured adventurers, and explaining methods of dealing with tools and equipment, including rope ties.

589 DOCTORS TAKE OMSB ENTRANCE EXAM



MUSCAT: Oman Medical Specialty Board (OMSB) conducted an entrance examination for doctors who wish to join the board in the academic year 2024-2025.

589 doctors from inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman took the exam in order to qualify for 19 training programmes offered by the OMSB.

The entrance examination, prepared and developed

by local specialists in cooperation with the teaching staff, is conducted annually. It consists of 160 varied multiple-choice questions spanning all medical fields based on a predetermined curriculum. After passing the exam, the successful applicants undergo personal interviews before joining the specialised training programmes.

— ONA

GCCHRIF PARTICIPANTS VISIT OMAN ACROSS AGES MUSEUM



Participants of the GCC Human Rights Institutions Forum accompanied by members of Oman Human Rights Commission visited the Oman Across Ages Museum on Saturday. The guests viewed the museum's sections and contents which highlight the history and civilisation of the Sultanate of Oman and its modern Renaissance initiated by the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said and is overseen by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. — ONA

Rich pottery tradition draws tourists



TEXT & PHOTOS BY
YAHYA AL SALMANI

Pottery, a timeless art form, is a silent storyteller of human history and identity. Its roots trace back to ancient times, pre-dating even the Neolithic era. Archaeological finds like the 'Venus' statue in the Czech Republic (dating back to 2500-2900 BC) and pottery vessels discovered in China's Jiangxi region (dating back to 18,000 BC) bear witness to its enduring presence.

Today, it enjoys a resurgence as a popular hobby, attracting countless amateurs and academic institutions offering theoretical and scientific courses. Thanks

to the power of social media, pottery artisans can now showcase and market their creations globally.

The pottery industry in the Sultanate of Oman dates back more than 5,000 years and is spread in various regions of the Sultanate. Pottery has many uses, such as storing dates and grains, cooling water, and preserving liquids and food. Nowadays, it is used frequently for decorative purposes.

The journey of crafting pottery involves several intricate stages. It commences with the careful selection of specific soils for pottery production. These soils, categorised into three types - green, red and white, are mixed

with water using specialised machines designed for rapid and efficient blending. This mixture is then channelled through pipes into underground basins, where it dries.

Once the clay has dried and the dough is ready, it undergoes further process using dedicated machines. Modern technology has significantly expedited this drying process. After drying, the clay is collected, forming the foundation for the subsequent stages of production.

Modern machines contributed to the development of the industry and the speed of its completion while preserving the past.

In Oman, all pottery used for

storing food and water is locally manufactured, showcasing various designs, including castles and forts. Training courses persistently nurture a new generation with artistic talents, safeguarding this ancient craft's continuity.

Tourists from diverse nationalities flock to these workshops daily, seeking to learn the art of pottery making. They witness firsthand the intricate process behind crafting pottery and gain insight into the daily production of these remarkable pieces.

Oman's pottery tradition is a testament to its rich history and identity, continuously shaping its cultural tapestry.

Nation committed to phase out HCFCs

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Environment Authority, joined world countries to observe the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer which is celebrated on September 16 each year.

This year's celebrations are held under the theme: fixing the ozone layer and reducing climate change.

The Sultanate of Oman joined the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and its amendments in London, Copenhagen, Montreal and Beijing. The Sultanate of Oman was classified among

the countries with the least consumption of substances that depleted the ozone layer.

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Environment Authority, is currently implementing the third phase of the HCFC phase-out strategic project in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

The project aims to carry out a number of training and awareness activities and targets to review and develop national procedures and regulations in accordance with the requirements of the Montreal Protocol during the upcoming period. — ONA





Cooperation must to deal with global challenges

FROM P1

He stressed that a number of developing countries still face major challenges in their ability to deal with issues such as climate change, energy security, food security, health and education, which prevent them from achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

“We see the importance of addressing the concerns of nations of the Global South and working to intensify south-south cooperation. Such meetings, such as today, shed light and contribute in addressing the multiple crises faced by developing countries in supply chain disruptions, debt constraints, political issues, as well as challenges related to climate change,” Sayyid Badr added.

As sustainable development is a common goal for all parties, including civil society organisations and the private sector, the foreign minister



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, addresses G77 + China Summit at Havana on Saturday.

stressed the importance of multilateral international cooperation and the need to exert concerted efforts for the development of strategies and executive mechanisms to achieve sustainable development. “This is the way to enable our world to close the economic gap between developed and developing countries, and achieve sustainable development for all.”

He added that it is vital to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and technology, create funding mechanisms, and stimulate scientific research and innovation so that societies can develop solutions to address contemporary development issues and their pressing challenges, to ensure active participation and mutual commitment of all countries.

G20 took bold steps on environment: MoCIIP

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The G20 summit in New Delhi resulted in a unanimous agreement on the New Delhi Declaration, featuring commitments to environmental sustainability, sustainable energy transitions, and addressing plastic pollution.

The Global Biofuel Alliance was also launched at the summit to promote the development and adoption of sustainable biofuels.

Speaking to the Observer, Faisal al Nabhani, Director of International Cooperation and Trade Relations at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), said the G20 summit resulted in major decisions and declarations.

“A significant development was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) amongst several countries to establish the India – Middle East – Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC),

aimed at promoting economic development through the integration of transportation routes,” Faisal al Nabhani said.

The G20 nations, collectively responsible for around 80 per cent of global emissions, agreed to a goal of tripling global renewable energy capacity and emphasised the need for emissions to peak before 2025.

There was also a call to mobilise significant funding for climate change and clean energy technologies, with figures reaching into the trillions of dollars.

Furthermore, the African Union, representing the 55 countries of the African continent, was accepted as part of the G20, expanding its representation beyond South Africa, the only previous African member. This shows that the G20 is more inclusive and might be a sign of things to come where other country groups find a permanent place at the G20 soon.



Ominvest is delighted to extend heartiest congratulation to :

Khalid Muhammad Al Zubair
Chairman of the Board of Directors

For the well-deserved

Sheikh Isa bin Ali Al-Khalifa Award for Voluntary Work
in its 13th edition dedicated to honour prominent Arab
voluntary work pioneers



PARENTS SHOULD ENSURE GOOD
HYDRATION, GOOD NUTRITION,
HYGIENIC ENVIRONMENT ARE ESSENTIAL TO
HELP IN CONTROLLING INFECTIONS
AMONG CHILDREN

DON'T FORGET HEALTH AND SAFETY STEPS

ACCORDING TO THE
NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR
SCHOOL HEALTH,
UPDATED IN LINE WITH
THE PRIORITIES OF OMAN
VISION 2040, THERE ARE

732

MALE AND FEMALE
NURSES IN GOVERNMENT
SCHOOLS ACROSS OMAN

KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabeeryousef](#)

The beginning of the new academic year also sets in motion parental concerns of the health and safety of their wards. The Ministry of Health and doctors advise parents as well as school staff to pay more attention to the health of the children.

Doctors feel that school reopening often brings a host of health issues like flu, fever, diarrhoea as children face summer heat, consume food from eateries and are careless about cleanliness. The parents are also worried about safety on the school bus. The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has advised all drivers as well as assistants on the buses to check to avoid risks of asphyxiation inside the bus as the tiny tots tend to fall asleep often after hectic school hours.

Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, after careful review of the national plan for school and university health for this year, said

the health of our children is the responsibility of each one of us, and we are all partners in promoting it and that promoting the health of school-age students will reflect positively on the general health of the community.

HYGIENE PROTOCOLS

“To prioritise children’s health as schools reopen, it is crucial to enforce hygiene protocols such as frequent handwashing and respiratory etiquette. Schools should conduct regular health check-ups, and provide comprehensive health education. Physical activity and healthy eating should be encouraged, while mental health support and communication with parents are essential,” said Dr Abood Sawafy of Buraimi University.

Experts advocate that the health of students is one of the most important priorities.

School children between the ages of 5 and 19 years represent about 31 per cent of the total population of Oman, according to 2020 estimates. According to the national strategy

for school health, updated in line with the priorities of Oman Vision 2040, there are 732 male and female nurses in government schools across Oman.

The Ministry of Health believes that promoting the message of healthy living through schools and universities is an investment for the future. It has collaborated with the Ministry of Education and other private and public bodies for a healthy generation of kids.

Dr Dilip Kumar Singhvi, internal medicine specialist, feels that good hydration, good nutrition, hygienic environment are essential to help in controlling infections among school children.

“Continuous awareness on good mental and physical health preparation will help the child immensely to adjust to the new routine, and increasing awareness about social distancing, good hygiene, all will help the children protect themselves against infections and other respiratory issues.”

SCHOOL CHILDREN
BETWEEN THE AGES OF
5 AND 19 YEARS
REPRESENT ABOUT

31%

OF THE TOTAL
POPULATION OF OMAN



Law guarantees enough safeguards for wage protection

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Labour Law issued by Royal Decree No 53/2023 has enough provisions to guarantee that all employees are paid their dues or salaries on time and as per the contract. The law ensures that wages and other amounts due to the worker shall be paid in Omani Rials unless it is agreed to pay them in one of the currencies legally circulating in the Sultanate of Oman.

Article 41 states that the worker may leave the work without adhering to the notice period or before the end of the contract period if it is for a limited period while retaining all his rights, including the end-of-service gratuity, and without prejudice to his right to compensation, after notifying the employer of that.

The worker can leave the job without service for a notice period only if the employer does not grant the worker his wages

for more than two consecutive months.

Article 86 states the burden of proving payment of wages to the worker falls on the employer.

Article 87 states that the employer shall not be released from the worker's wages unless he transfers the worker's wages to his account in one of the local banks or financial institutions licensed by the Central Bank of Oman.

The minister shall issue a decision regulating employers' transfer of wages and cases of

exception.

Article 88 states that minimum wage shall be determined by a decision from the minister after consultation with the Joint Dialogue Committee between production parties.

Article 89 states that the minister shall issue a decision specifying the minimum periodic bonus, the procedures and conditions for its disbursement, and the cases of its suspension and reduction.

Article 90 states that wages

shall be paid on one of the working days, taking into account the following provisions, including workers appointed for a monthly wage are paid their wages at least once a month, if the work is for a period of time, and the work requires a period of more than two weeks, the worker must receive every week payment on account commensurate with the work he has completed, and the remainder of the wage shall be paid to him in full during the week following the completion of

the work assigned to him.

In other than the two previous cases, the wage is paid to the worker once every week, provided that it may be paid to him or her once every fortnight, or every month if they agree in writing to that. In all cases, the wage must be paid within three days from the end of the period specified. It is permissible, by a decision of the minister, to determine the date of payment of workers' wages before the specified date, on the occasion of national and official holidays.

TENDER NOTICE



Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries
Wealth and Water Resources

The Ministry of Agricultural, 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
747/2023/MAFWR/HQ-87	Rehabilitation of an Extension and a Training Hall in the outer yard of the Safety and Quality Centre	25/-	Second	Sunday 24/9/2023	Sunday 15/10/2023
748/2023/MAFWR/HQ-88	Rehabilitation and maintenance of laboratory floors at the Food Safety and Quality Center	25/-	Third	Sunday 24/9/2023	Sunday 15/10/2023
749/2023/MAFWR/HQ-89	Providing gardening and maintenance services for the garden of the Ministry building in Al Khuwair and the garden of the Food Safety and Quality Center at the airport for a period of 36 months	25/-	Specialized	Sunday 24/9/2023	Sunday 15/10/2023

- 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



BAUSHER MOUNTAIN ROAD TO BE CLOSED

MUSCAT: As part of the road maintenance work in Muscat Governorate and in coordination with the Traffic Department, Muscat Municipality will fully close Al Jabal Street (mountain road) towards Bausher from Al Amerat.

To be closed for four months, one lane will be opened during the morning peak hours, between 5 and 9.30 am. For the purpose of maintaining the necessary protections on the road, the municipality urged everyone to take caution follow the traffic instructions shown on the website, and use the alternative road (Wadi Adai Road) to avoid traffic congestion.

With the closure of Mountain Road, motorists can expect heavy traffic on the Wadi Adai-Al Amerat road, especially during morning and afternoon office hours.

Authorities have urged road users to take the extra commuting time into account to avoid untoward incidents.

DUALISATION OF SQU ROAD COMPLETE



MUSCAT: Muscat Municipality has completed the dualisation of the Sultan Qaboos Road in the Wilayat of Al Seeb and opened it for traffic on Thursday.

The project included the construction of a dual carriageway - two lanes in each direction with a length of 3.5 km - a four-way intersection with traffic lights replacing the roundabout and a new intersection, among others.

The project includes sidewalks for pedestrians (seven kilometres in both directions), a rainwater drainage system, and side barriers.

The four-way intersection will be built to lead to the front entrance that leads up to the Sultan Qaboos University Hospital (SQUH), which will be gate number 2 of the Sultan Qaboos University.

MUSCAT WINTER WONDERLAND PROJECT GETS APPROVAL

MUSCAT: One of the important allocations among the approved projects by the Tender Board last week is Muscat Winter Wonderland festival activities, which has been allocated RO6.9mn for its implementation and marketing.

The Tender Board approved several projects worth RO488.7mn.

Even though details are yet to be made available, the Winter Wonderland is expected to be a theme park at a permanent venue offering several games, rides, and entertainment activities for both domestic and foreign tourists. Muscat Municipality has issued a tender for consultancy services to design and develop a festival ground as part of the efforts to present all types of events, activities, and programmes at one integrated site.

A Muscat Municipality official earlier said it is time to have a permanent venue to organise annual festivals and events.

"It is time to have a permanent venue to hold festivals in the future. We have also discussed the proposals, and Muscat Municipality will announce the venue where we can have the festivals and events at a later time." The three-week-long Muscat Nights festival held at the start of this year received over 500,000 citizens, residents, and tourists but had to be held across four venues. The venues offered activities such as a heritage village, shopping pavilion, stage shows, and e-games and laser shows.



Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Economy

TENDER NOTICE

The Ministry of Economy Announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Document Fees (Omani Rials)	Last Date For Tender Submission
2023/8	Cleaning Services for The Offices Of The Ministry Of Economy To 2024	LO: 25 SME: 10 RE: 25	31/ 10/ 2023

First

- All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the Tender tender from the following website: www.etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
- The bidders must submit their offers electronically via the website.

Second

- Tenders that does not meet the above conditions shall not be considered. The ministry shall have the right to reject any tender, and shall not be obliged to award the tender for the lowest bid without giving reasons.

For inquiries regarding tenders, please contact through the website of the electronic tendering system; <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

For inquiries regarding the technical support of the electronic tendering system, please contact via e-mail and phone :

 etenderhd@mtc.gov.om
 + 96824402200



Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Defence
ENGINEERING SERVICES

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

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

Tender No.	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (RO)
031/2023	Termite Treatment Work - Various locations	First and above - specialist in anti-termite treatment	28 September 2023	23 October 2023	100/- RO
032/2023	Building & Maintenance Work - Various locations	First and above	28 September 2023	30 October 2023	600/- RO
034/2023	HVAC System Works - Salalah	First & above Specialized in HVAC system	28 September 2023	30 October 2023	271/- RO

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

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



THE ROYAL GUARD OF OMAN

Tenders Advertisement

The Royal Guard of Oman, invites tenders for the following:-

Tender Reference	Subject	Tender Document Value	Bid Submission Date
03/2023	Supply of Vehicles for the year 2023	R.O. 25/- non-refundable	15 th Oct 2023
04/2023	Supply of Tyres for the year 2024	R.O. 25/- non-refundable	15 th Oct 2023
05/2023	Provision for Insurance Policy Covers for year 2024	R.O. 25/- non-refundable	15 th Oct 2023

Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of Tender Board - Sultanate of Oman, having Grade I & above, can collect the tender document from the Tender Committee Secretariat, Royal Guard of Oman, Seeb during working hours from **Sunday 17th to Thursday 21st September 2023**.

The bids should be submitted in wax-sealed envelopes addressed to the Chairman - Tender Committee should be deposited in the tender box before 1200 hours on the submission date. The tenderer shall not reveal his identity anywhere on the wax-sealed envelope, other than the tender title and the address mentioned below.

No Tender will be accepted after the submission date. The Royal Guard of Oman reserves the right to accept or reject any Tender without giving reasons.

Tender Committee
P.O Box 381, C.P.O
Postal Code 111



An elderly woman moves away from the coffin of the Zulu prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi during his funeral proceedings in Ulundi. – AFP

S Africa holds state funeral for divisive Zulu leader Buthelezi

ULUNDI: Thousands of people, some holding spears and dressed in traditional warrior clothes, on Saturday attended the funeral of South Africa’s divisive Zulu leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi. Mourners crowded a stadium in Ulundi, the ancient capital of the Zulu kingdom in eastern South Africa, to pay tribute to the founder of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), who died on September 9 aged 95.

Family members dressed in black, followed by men holding shields and spears, led a coffin covered by an animal skin and an IFP flag across a red carpet inside the stadium before it was placed under a black canopy on the pitch.

Earlier, members of the IFP Women’s Brigade were chanting in Zulu as guests including President Cyril Ramaphosa and his predecessor Jacob Zuma arrived at the venue.

“He treated all of us Zulus as

one person. That is why I am here,” said Bonga Makhoba, 31, who said he drove 150 kilometres to attend the ceremony.

“I just respect him and I want him to... rest in peace.”

Ramaphosa, who ordered flags to be flown at half staff across the country, was to deliver a eulogy during the service celebrated by the head of South Africa’s Anglican Church.

“Buthelezi has been an outstanding leader in the political and cultural life of our nation, including the ebbs and flows of our liberation struggle,” Ramaphosa had said when announcing Buthelezi’s death.

The party was his political home until he broke away to form the Inkatha movement in 1975. Born of royal blood, he was to some the embodiment of a proud and feisty Zulu spirit, while to others he often acted as a warlord. — AFP

Aid arrives in flood-hit Libya but hopes fade for survivors

DERNA: Shipments of international aid began to arrive in Libya on Saturday, offering a lifeline to thousands despite dwindling hopes of finding more survivors days after deadly flash floods.

Sunday’s floods submerged the port city of Derna, washing thousands of people and homes out to sea after two upstream dams burst under the pressure of torrential rains triggered by a hurricane-strength storm.

The World Health Organization said “the bodies of 3,958 people have been recovered and identified”, with 9,000 more still missing, as it announced 29 tonnes of aid had arrived in the eastern city of Benghazi.

“This is a disaster of epic proportions,” said Ahmed Zouiten, the WHO’s Libya representative. “We are saddened by the unspeakable loss of thousands of souls.”

Two aid-laden planes were seen, one from the United Arab Emirates and another from Iran, land in Benghazi, more than 300 kilometres west of Derna.

A steady stream of vehicles trickled into Derna on a makeshift road as diggers toiled to shift rubble near an apartment block with a missing facade.

In Al-Bayda, 100 kilometres west of Derna, people worked to clear roads and homes of the mounds of mud left behind by the flash flood.

The Islamic Relief aid organisation warned of a “second humanitarian crisis”, pointing to the “growing risk of water-borne



The rubble of buildings that collapsed during floods are piled up after the Mediterranean storm “Daniel” hit Libya’s eastern city of Derna. – AFP

diseases and shortages of food, shelter and medicine”.

The spokesman for the eastern-based Libyan National Army, Ahmed al Mesmari, said the flood had affected “over 1.2 million people”.

“Everything was washed away... the waters have completely cut off the roads in these regions,” he said. The United Nations has launched an appeal for more than \$71 million to assist hundreds of

thousands in need.

“We don’t know the extent of the problem,” UN aid chief Martin Griffiths said, as he called for coordination between Libya’s two rival administrations.

The scale of the devastation has given way to shows of solidarity, as volunteers in Tripoli gathered aid for the flood victims in the east. Teams from the Libyan Red Crescent were “still searching for possible survivors

and clearing bodies from the rubble in the most damaged areas” of Derna.

Others were trying to deliver much-needed aid to families in the eastern part of the city, which had been spared the worst of the flooding but was cut off by road.

The International Organization for Migration, meanwhile, said “over 38,640” people had been left homeless in eastern Libya, 30,000 of them in Derna alone. — AFP

Kim inspects key weapons with Russian defence chief

MOSCOW: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un met on Saturday with the Russian defence minister in Vladivostok, where he inspected state-of-the-art weapons including a hypersonic missile system on the latest leg of a rare visit outside his country.

Upon arriving in Vladivostok, a Pacific port city near the Chinese and North Korean borders, Kim was greeted by Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and an honour guard.

They inspected some of Russia’s nuclear bombers at an airfield before boarding a warship, a video released by the Russian defence ministry showed.

Kim’s extended tour of

Russia’s far eastern region, which began on Tuesday, has focused extensively on military matters, as evidenced by his own officer-dominated entourage, a symbolic exchange of rifles with President Vladimir Putin and a tour of a fighter jet factory in Komsomolsk-on-Amur.

Kim’s first official visit abroad since the coronavirus pandemic has fanned Western fears that Moscow and Pyongyang will defy sanctions and strike an arms deal.

Moscow is believed to be interested in buying North Korean ammunition to continue fighting in Ukraine, while Pyongyang wants Russia’s help



North Korea’s leader Kim Jong Un and Russia’s Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu inspect Russian military aircraft and missiles near Vladivostok in the Primorsky region, Russia. – Reuters

to develop its internationally condemned missile programme. The Kremlin has said no agreement has or will be signed.

After meeting Kim on Wednesday at the Vostochny cosmodrome, roughly 8,000 kilometres from Moscow, Putin talked up the prospect of greater cooperation with North Korea and the “possibilities” for military ties.

At the Knevichi airfield in Vladivostok on Saturday, Kim was shown strategic Tu-160, Tu-95MS and Tu-22M3 bombers.

“These aircraft form the air component of Russia’s strategic nuclear forces,” the defence ministry said in a statement.

According to footage released by Moscow, Kim was shown carefully listening to senior representatives of the Russian military and inspecting the aircraft.

Russian officials also showed the reclusive leader a range of fighter jets as well as a hypersonic, air-launched Kinzhal missile system.

Kim and Shoigu then boarded the Marshal Shaposhnikov, an anti-submarine destroyer, where the head of the Russian navy, Admiral Nikolai Yevmenov, explained the characteristics of the warship and the weapons it carries including Kalibr cruise missiles. — AFP

SANAA

Flooding, lightning strikes kill 8 in Yemen

Flooding and lightning strikes in Yemen have killed eight civilians, an official and a doctor said on Saturday, underscoring the threat of extreme weather in the country.

The lightning strikes occurred on Friday in the Al-Layha and Al-Zahra districts of Hodeida governorate on the Red Sea coast, said Hamza Saied, a doctor at the hospital in Al-Layha.

“Six women and a man were killed, and three others were



injured,” he said.

Also on Friday, flooding killed one woman and destroyed dozens of homes in the nearby town of Hais, according to an official. — AFP

BRUSSELS

EU chief to visit Italy after migrant surge

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen will visit the Italian island of Lampedusa on Sunday with the country’s Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni after migrant arrivals there surged.

Meloni has called on the EU to help relieve the pressure after some 8,500 people landed by boats over three days this week on Lampedusa, just 145 kilometres off the coast of Tunisia.

“President von der Leyen will be travelling to Lampedusa



tomorrow on the invitation of Italian PM Meloni,” European Commission spokesman Eric Mamer posted online on Saturday. — AFP

KYIV

Ships headed to Black Sea to load grain

Two cargo vessels were headed to Ukrainian ports on Saturday, Deputy Prime Minister Oleksandr Kubrakov said, becoming first ships to use a temporary corridor to sail into Black Sea ports and load grain for African and Asian markets.

Ukraine last month announced a “humanitarian corridor” in the Black Sea to release ships trapped in its ports since the start of the war in February 2022. Five vessels have so far left the port of Odesa,



using the corridor which hugs the western Black Sea coast.

The bulk carriers “Resilient Africa” and “Aroyat” were making their way through the Black Sea to Ukrainian ports. — Reuters

Walking out of Morocco’s rubble, homeless



Catherine Porter

The writer is an international correspondent for the NYT based in Paris

The earthquake, the most powerful to strike Morocco in more than a century, killed more than 2,900 people, most of them in the small villages scattered in mountains near the southwestern city of Marrakesh

Essaadia Boukdir stumbled through a valley of death in the throes of labour. Her husband, Brahim Bel Haj, held her up on one side. A cousin supported her on the other.

She’s worried her baby would die, as so many of her neighbours had only two days earlier, when an earthquake struck high up in a valley on the Atlas Mountains on Friday, cracking concrete, hurling giant boulders down the rocky slopes and burying people in their mud-brick and rock homes.

The earthquake, the most powerful to strike Morocco in more than a century, killed more than 2,900 people, most of them in the small villages scattered in mountains near the southwestern city of Marrakesh.

The valley where Boukdir lives, in the more distant province of Taroudant, is about 50 miles from the epicentre but reachable only by travelling hours up and down winding dirt roads. Residents say the earthquake killed 80 there, including three of Boukdir’s immediate neighbours. They are now buried in the local cemetery under stones and brambles.

“I was just hoping to stay alive,” Boukdir, 32, said softly. “I was so scared that the trauma we suffered would kill the baby.” Her family thought so, too.

Many in her family burst into tears in the terraced field where they had stopped, an area that normally serves as the village’s breadbasket, where residents grow corn and wheat along with almonds and walnuts. It has since become a homeless encampment, filling with makeshift shelters as each extended family has strung up tarps to protect them and the few meager belongings salvaged from the wreckage of their homes. This is where Boukdir had been sleeping, on a carpet stretched over dirt, since she and her family fled in search of safety.

“We knew if she stayed here, she would die,” said her brother-in-law Lahcen Bel Haj. “Nothing was certain.”

They shepherded her down the sand road, weaving around the boulders that had bounded down the jagged pink mountainside like giant balls bouncing down steep staircases, crushing everything in their path. One had crashed through a brick wall into a neighbour’s bathroom. From the road, it was visible where it had come to rest, hovering next to a small sink, its pointy top reflected in the pink-framed mirror.

The road to safety was new, but not finished. Construction workers used excavators to clear the vital link to the outside world, and help. In the meantime, donkeys were ushering down the injured and shuttling up aid.

Boukdir and her family passed the collection point of donated food for Ameguerniss, the valley’s worst-hit village, another hour up the mountain. The stories from there are the darkest: 36 dead, now buried in a field, too many for the cemetery.

Boukdir stopped from time to time, in despair. “She was crying and saying she couldn’t continue,” said Brahim, who had spent much of their marriage far away in the coastal city of Agadir, working as a bulldozer driver on construction sites. As fate would have it, he had quit his job three days before the earthquake to be closer to his family.

So he was there on Friday night, when a big family dinner was held in his childhood home, which he and his father had built. When the earthquake struck, most of his family was in the courtyard, but his 8-year-old daughter, Ilham, had fallen asleep inside the house and was trapped under the ceiling and a leaning wall. Two relatives had



Residents of the historic Medina pass a destroyed wall at the Bahia palace in Marrakech, Morocco.

helped her out, including her uncle Lahcen, one of the few residents who, drawn by calls for help, dismissed the aftershocks to venture back into the wreckage. “My only goal was to save people,” he said. He saved eight neighbours and collected some blankets for his family members so they wouldn’t freeze in the cold nights.

They are now piled high in their shelter in the field, along with the few pieces of furniture they managed to salvage from their demolished homes: three small tables, some teapots and a stove with its gas cylinder. They have been using it to make tea, which they offer to visitors along with fruit on a rare unbroken plate.

Brahim, 38, and his cousin helped Boukdir down a rocky trail, over a stream that was flooding the path, and along the edge of a cliff before, an hour and a half later, they finally made it to a sandy clearing. The spot had once hosted soccer games, but since Saturday, it has become a depot for the valley’s growing donations.

Bags of clothes, blankets, mattresses and pillows rose in giant piles. Cars and trucks now navigate between them, delivering more.

The donors are largely fellow Moroccans who, hearing the government had not yet arrived with aid, were moved to help, travelling in many cases for hours by car across the country. Some in Morocco have begun to criticise the movement, which, though inspired by good intentions, is ad hoc, poorly organised and not sustainable.

Brahim doesn’t see it that way.

“It’s comforting to feel we have other brothers we don’t even know who are helping us in our darkest moments,” he said. As for the government, he added, “Where are they?”

A group from the city of Oulad Teima, to the southwest, had arrived with supplies. They quickly

hauled a mattress into the back of their pickup truck for Boukdir, and she settled uncomfortably atop it. By then, it was dark. She pulled a blanket over her head and cried faintly as the truck bounced up another windy road.

The single sandy track was not suited for emergencies. With few places to pull over, each face-to-face encounter with an arriving vehicle loaded with aid required much ginger manoeuvring and many impromptu traffic controllers. At one point, the truck waited 40 precious minutes before getting through, Brahim said.

An ambulance met them part of the way down the mountain and shuttled them to the valley below.

Brahim held Boukdir’s hand. “I was just thinking about saving my wife,” he said.

Shortly after arriving at the hospital, she gave birth to a baby girl. When the nurse held up the baby, and her mother saw she was alive, she felt relief.

“I was so happy,” Boukdir said, kissing her fingers and then passing them to the lips of her baby, now sleeping beside her, a small white hat pulled over her soft head.

She named her Fatima Zahra. In the line to mark Fatima’s weight on her birth certificate, the attendant wrote simply, “good.”

Amid so much death, there was a new life in the valley. A couple days later, Brahim was greeted by congratulations and hugs as he walked up the same path his wife had stumbled down after the earthquake.

For now, they will stay in the valley, in the home of a relative. A tarp shelter seemed like no place for a baby. Maybe Fatima Zahra is a blessing, her father said, “not just for us, but for the whole region, after all these deaths.”

But he is not sure about the future. “We don’t know if we will survive until 1 pm,” he said. “Only God who knows.”

Colleges wrestle with AI-generated admissions essays



Natasha Singer

The author writes about technology, business and society for NYT

ChatGPT, prompting the AI chatbot to produce the kind of extracurricular activity lists and personal essays commonly required on college applications.

Clark said he wanted to get a handle on how AI chatbots might reshape the admissions process this fall — the start of the first full academic year that the tools will be widely available to high school seniors — and come up with

guidance for students applying to Georgia Tech.

“Students on some level are going to have access to and use AI,” Clark said. “The big question is: How do we want to direct them, knowing that it’s out there and available to them?” The easy availability of AI chatbots like ChatGPT, which can manufacture humanlike text in response to short prompts, is poised to upend the traditional undergraduate application process at selective colleges — ushering in an era of automated plagiarism or of democratised student access to essay-writing help. Or maybe both.

The digital disruption comes at a turning point for institutions of higher education across the United States. After the Supreme Court in June ruled that race-based university admissions programmes were illegal, some selective universities and colleges had hoped to rely more on essay questions — about applicants’ upbringing, identities and communities — to help foster diversity on campus.

The personal essay has long been a staple of the application process at elite colleges, not to mention a bane for generations of high school students.

Admissions officers have often employed applicants’ essays as a lens into their unique character, pluck, potential and ability to handle adversity. As a result, some former students say they felt tremendous pressure to develop, or at least concoct, a singular personal writing voice.

But new AI tools threaten to recast the college application



The digital disruption comes at a turning point for institutions of higher education across the United States

essay as a kind of generic cake mix, which high school students may simply lard or spice up to reflect their own tastes, interests and experiences — casting doubt on the legitimacy of applicants’ writing samples as authentic, individualised admissions yardsticks.

“Part of the process of the college essay is finding your writing voice through all of that drafting and revising,” said Susan Barber, an advanced placement English literature teacher at Midtown High School, a public school in Atlanta. “And I think that’s something that ChatGPT would be robbing them of.”

In August, Barber assigned her 12th-grade students to write college essays. This week, she held class discussions about ChatGPT, cautioning students that using AI chatbots to generate ideas or writing could make their college essays sound too generic. She advised them to focus more on their personal views and voices.

Other educators said they hoped the AI tools might have a democratising effect. Wealthier high school students, these experts noted, often have access to resources — alumni parents, family friends, paid writing coaches — to help them brainstorm, draft and edit their college admissions essays. ChatGPT could play a similar role for students who lack such resources, they said, especially for those at large high schools where overworked college counsellors have little time for individualised essay coaching.

Achieving work-life balance



Dr Hamed al Sinawi
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The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

A few weeks ago, I was conducting a workshop on well-being at work and mentioned the importance of keeping a work-life balance when one of the participants told me that it's something easy said and done.

He explained that the competitive nature of his job demands extra working hours and working during weekends and holidays.

He returns home late most evenings to find his children already in bed and leaves the following morning before they wake up.

He explained that most companies are interested in performance and do very little to help their employees achieve work-life balance.

In simple terms, "work-life balance means allocating time and energy efficiently to both work-related activities and personal interests, relationships, and self-care."

Achieving the right balance enables individuals to excel in their professional lives while maintaining a satisfying personal life.

Here are a few key reasons why companies should help their employees achieve work-life balance.

First, employees who are able to balance work and

personal life are happier at their jobs. This happiness boosts their energy and productivity, which is good for them and the company.

Second, balancing work and personal life with breaks helps them stay productive while working too much can make people tired and less productive.

Thirdly, balancing work and life enables people to spend more time with family and friends. This makes relationships stronger and provides emotional support when needed.

Fourthly, people who enjoy hobbies and learning new skills achieve better personal growth which has a positive impact on their overall wellbeing.

Fifthly, people with good work-life balance are less likely to get sick from stress which means fewer unplanned days off and a more dependable workforce.

Attracting and keeping employees: Companies that care about work-life balance attract good employees and retain them. This reduces hiring and training costs.

7. Creativity and new ideas: Rested minds are more creative. Employees with time to relax come up with new ideas to solve problems at work.

8. Good workplace vibes: A workplace that

WORK-LIFE
BALANCE MEANS
ALLOCATING
TIME AND
ENERGY
EFFICIENTLY
TO BOTH
WORK-RELATED
ACTIVITIES
AND PERSONAL
INTERESTS,
RELATIONSHIPS,
AND SELF-CARE

supports work-life balance is a happy place. Happy employees work together better and create a good company culture. So, what can you do to achieve work-life balance? Here are a few tips:

Make to-do lists and learn to love them. I adore to-do lists, this will help you plan your time well and avoid taking work home. Make sure you exercise regularly as it's a great way to release stress and regulate your mood. Block out distractions while working stay focused if you are sharing an office with colleagues and make sure you don't indulge in unnecessary talks.

Learn to how better delegate work to other team members so you can focus on other tasks.

Give yourself time to relax when you need it. Take a walk in nature, or listen to music. Make boundaries between work and personal time so you don't overwork. Have regular hobbies and spend quality time with your loved ones. This will enhance your support systems which contribute to your overall well-being.

Finally, achieving a work-life balance requires conscious effort, discipline, and self-awareness. But it is worth all the effort as it can lead to more fulfilling lives and lasting happiness.

Global climate protests demand world leaders phase out fossil fuels

KATE ABNETT

Climate protesters were set to take to the streets in more than 50 countries from Friday to Sunday, in a weekend of demonstrations to demand that governments phase out the burning of fossil fuels heating the planet.

In a year of mounting deaths and economic destruction from record-breaking floods, wildfires and drought, protesters have planned more than 500 gatherings in 54 countries - from Pakistan and Nigeria to the United States.

Organizers of the protests expect global turnout over the weekend to total more than a million people. That could make this weekend's action the largest international climate protest since before the Covid-19 pandemic, when the "school strike" movement led by Swedish activist Greta Thunberg saw millions of people worldwide join marches.

"This is directed at world leaders," said Mitzi Jonelle Tan, a climate activist with youth movement Fridays for Future in Manila, the Philippines.

"The fossil fuel industry's time is up. We need a just transition, and we need to phase out the fossil fuels causing the destruction of our environment," she said.

Organisers said they would call on governments to immediately end subsidies for oil and gas and to cancel any plans for expanding production.

Governments spent a record-high \$7 trillion in subsidies to oil, gas and coal last year, according to an IMF analysis.

"We're taking to the streets to demand that African leaders phase out on fossil fuels and focus on investing in community-led renewable energy, to meet the energy demand for the 600 million Africans who do not have access to electricity," said Eric Njuguna, a climate activist based in Nairobi, Kenya.

The demonstrations take place two months before this year's UN COP28 climate summit, where more than 80 countries plan to push for a global agreement to gradually phase out coal, oil and gas.

The burning of fossil fuels is the main cause of climate change, but countries have never agreed in UN climate talks to phase out fossil fuels - though they have committed to phase down use of coal power. Governments reliant on oil and gas revenues, and those planning to use fossil fuel-based energy to improve poor communities' living standards, are expected to push back on the proposal. — Reuters

A trip to Ukraine clarified the stakes



Thomas L. Friedman

The writer is an American political commentator and author

While visiting Kyiv this month, my first trip to Ukraine since Vladimir Putin's in February 2022, I tried to get my exercise every morning by walking the grounds of St Michael's Golden Domed Monastery. Its serenity, however, has been disrupted by a jarring exhibit of destroyed Russian tanks and armored personnel carriers.

During my walks, I'd poke my head into these jagged, rocket-pierced hulks, wondering what a terrible death must have come to the Russian soldiers operating them.

But the shock of this tangled mass of rusting steel, sitting in the middle of this grand, whitish-stone piazza, evoked a different image in my mind's eye: a meteor.

It looked as if a giant meteor had plummeted from space, disrupting life as we knew it — nearly eight decades without a "great power" war in Europe, a continent where centuries of attacks and conquest had given way to security and prosperity.

Now we have this ugly pile sitting here in our midst, smoldering, and we, Ukrainians and the world community, are struggling with how to deal with it.

Nearly every Ukrainian I spoke to in Kyiv was at once exhausted by the war and passionately determined to recover every inch of their Russian-occupied territory — but no one had clear answers about the road ahead, the painful trade-offs that await, only certainty that defeat would mean an end to Ukraine's democratic dream and a smashing of the post-World War II era that had produced a Europe more whole and free than ever before in its history.

What Putin is doing in Ukraine is not just reckless, not just a war of choice, not just an attack in a class of its own for overreach, mendacity, immorality and incompetence, all wrapped in a farrago of lies.

What he is doing is evil. He has trumped up any number of shifting justifications — one day it was removing a Nazi regime in power in Kyiv, the next it was preventing Nato expansion, the next it was fending off a Western cultural

of Russia — for what ultimately

was a personal flight of fancy that now requires his superpower army turning to North Korea for help. It's like the biggest bank in town having to ask the local pawnshop for a loan. So much for Putin's bare-chested virility.

What is so evil — beyond the death and pain and trauma and destruction he has inflicted on so many Ukrainians — is that at a time when climate change, famine, health crises and so much more are stressing planet Earth, the last thing humanity needed was to divert so much attention, collaborative

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energy, money and lives to respond to Putin's war to make Ukraine a Russian colony again.

Putin lately has stopped even bothering to justify the war — maybe because even he is too embarrassed to utter aloud the nihilism that his actions scream: If I can't have Ukraine, I'll make sure Ukrainians can't have it, either. "This is not a war in which the aggressor has some vision, some outline of the future. Rather, on the contrary, for them, everything is black, formless, and the only thing that matters is force," Timothy Snyder, the

Yale historian, remarked on a panel we did together at a conference in Kyiv last weekend.

Being in the city has been clarifying for me in three regards.

I understand even better just how sick and disruptive this Russian

is. I understand even better just how hard, maybe even impossible, it will be for Ukrainians to evict Putin's army from every inch of their soil.

Perhaps most of all, I understand even better something that former US national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski observed almost 30 years ago: "Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire."

Most Americans don't know a lot about Ukraine, but I say this without any hyperbole: Ukraine is a game-changing country for the West, for better or for worse depending on the war's outcome. Its integration into the European Union and Nato someday would constitute a power shift that could rival the fall of the Berlin Wall and German unification. Ukraine is a country with impressive human capital, agricultural resources and natural resources — "hands, brains and grains," as Western investors in Kyiv like to say. It's full-fledged integration into Europe's democratic security and economic architecture would be felt in Russia and China.

Putin knows that. His war, in my view, has never been primarily about countering Nato expansion.

— The New York Times



Smoking ruins after a Russian strike in Kharkiv, Ukraine.

Teachers with artistic motivation

HOW can we help our learners learn more, and be better? Maybe one of the problems with global education is that we don't ask the learners. We keep going to the so-called experts, the educators, psychologists, educationalists, and the administrators, and in the end, simply end up with a recipe that is acceptable to all of them... but very few of the learners, and quite probably, even less teachers.

My time teaching and lecturing in the Sultanate of Oman has left me with many, what I would call, learner inspired experiences that have shaped my educational thinking, both then, and subsequently. My supervisor of the time was Dr Khalfan bin Hamed al Harrasi, who I have always respected for his vision of teaching and learning, who emphasised that education should "focus on developing artistically motivated teachers," saying also, "If you are dedicated, motivated, efficient, skillful, enthusiastic, and happy, and teach to the learning objectives... you can do magic, even without books."

I took his lead and 'unleashed,' them. For instance, I sent English classes out to a particular carpark on campus and ask them each to make notes describing different vehicles of their choice. I asked them to be back in the classroom at a specific time, to write up their descriptions, and then write why the vehicle appealed to them. We had some real laughs as those who wished, read theirs out to the class. I also, with my Current Events class, got them to video interview people on campus in pairs, one as a cameraman, the other as an interviewer, and then to swap roles. We also did groups of five each producing a 'TV News' segment, with a director, researcher, news, sports, and weather presenters. They loved it!

Many of my colleagues thought I was borderline 'nuts' as I would have my students, for example, in Literature, reading Walt Whitman's 'Oh Captain, My Captain,' to each other from 20 metres apart, outdoors. Yet, I know that it developed their speech, listening, and their understanding of the language and vocabulary used by the author. Most rewarding, however, was how, after their initial reservations, they became joyful, ebullient, and had experienced, in that



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learning, something that was fun! How do I know? I can hear the laughter, see gaiety in their eyes, and will never forget the rosy cheeks, delighted as they realised learning could be fun.

Similarly, I took them out, again to the outdoor auditorium, and in small groups got them to dissect Emily Dickinson's 'I Could Not Stop for Death.' I wanted them to understand the intimacy of Dickinson's thoughts, how she drew her own conclusions on immortality and the 'afterlife,' how personification is an active and legitimate descriptor, and to understand that our world works in strange and different ways. We never know what waits around the corner. We cannot plan everything in our lives, and the truth that 'man plans, but God laughs.

And how did I know that learning had taken place? They had had some good, thoughtful discussions as I circulated, being a good listener, rarely intervening. With 15 minutes left of the lesson suggested we return to the classroom to summarise. We were walking past the stage, and one of the students asked if she could read the poem to the class, and I felt it was too good an opportunity to miss, as they are not always so 'outgoing.' There were more who wanted to as well, so we jointly decided that each would recite one of the six verses.

It was a jaw-dropping thing of beauty, seeing and hearing these young women pour their souls into their compassionate and dramatic elocution of a literary icon. I was emotionally drained by their words, gestures, expressions, and the sense of achievement as they all looked to me for my approval, and their spontaneous dances of joy, and their peer's applause, all erupted. They would never know that my thumbs up, and gesture of applause, were to hide the fact that I had been rendered speechless. So, wiping a speck of dust from my eye, I turned and led the way back to the classroom.

Goethe said, "Magic is believing in oneself," and Nayab Suhel wrote, "Magic is not always an Alladin's lamp." Giving young Omani learners a voice in their experience, unleashing their curiosity, answering their questions, and embracing their education as being more than four walls and a whiteboard... is magic!

IF YOU ARE DEDICATED, MOTIVATED, EFFICIENT, AND TEACH TO THE LEARNING OBJECTIVES... YOU CAN DO MAGIC, EVEN WITHOUT BOOKS

CELEBRATING THE CULTURE



A participant takes part in the annual 'Khong Dee Muang Nara' festival celebrating the culture and traditions of Thailand's southern province of Narathiwat, in Narathiwat on Saturday. – AFP

The siren song of climate authoritarianism

THIS summer — with its record temperatures, deadly floods, and raging wildfires, which in Canada alone destroyed the equivalent of all the trees in Germany — might have felt like a final warning: without urgent and drastic action, the current climate emergency will become an inescapable climate disaster. Some might be tempted to think that we have reached a point when our only chance of mounting a sufficiently rapid and potent response to the threat is to embrace decisive state authority, even outright authoritarianism. But the notion that ecologically minded authoritarians will outperform democratic leaders on climate is a dangerous fantasy.

Concerns about democracies' capacity to act swiftly and efficiently are nothing new. Government that allows all to participate (in theory, if not always in practice) makes for an imperfect and slow-moving system. Influential players can often veto actions that the majority supports. On the other hand, the view that irrational masses wield too much power — long expressed sotto voce — has become entirely salonfähig in the age of Donald Trump. For example, voters tend to punish politicians for taking measures to prevent catastrophes, and reward



JAN-WERNER MUELLER

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WITH THE CLIMATE CRISIS ESCALATING FAST, CALLS FOR MORE AUTHORITARIAN DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURES — WIDELY VIEWED AS MORE EFFICIENT — ARE INCREASING

them for appearing heroic during a disaster, even though disaster relief is far more expensive than prevention.

In addition to well-known prejudices — many as old as Plato's writings — one can argue that some of democracy's benefits do not count for much in the climate emergency. Democracies pride themselves on the fact that every decision can be revisited — that policies can be updated and improved, and that the losers in one election can become winners in the next (and thus have reason to keep playing the democratic game). But climate-related decisions have major, irreversible consequences, so even if bad choices — such as doing too little — are revisited later, serious damage will have been done.

Other contemporary criticisms are blunter. Democracies are based on compromise, but bargains often turn out to be incoherent, especially in multi-party systems, because too many different political players want to get their way. Germany's current governing coalition would appear to be a case in point. Correcting such incoherence takes time, which democracies might have

under normal circumstances, but certainly do not have when the planet is becoming hotter and more apocalyptic practically by the day. Another key concern stems from the de facto dominance of business interests in capitalist democracies. Given that climate action will inevitably harm at least some capitalists' interests, these interests seem likely to prevent the necessary steps from being taken in time — or perhaps ever.

Now, with the climate crisis escalating fast, unabashed calls for more authoritarian decision-

making are increasing. Some advocate a more technocratic approach, and hold up China as a shining example. (The irony that China is the world's largest greenhouse-gas emitter is apparently lost on them.) Others — notably, the Swedish thinker Andreas Malm — envision a novel form of Leninism-cum-War Communism.

These proposals raise obvious questions, which their proponents never quite address. If, for the sake of climate action, power is concentrated in the hands of

a state that does not answer to the people, what would prevent abuses of that power? Why, in the absence of any mechanisms of accountability, would an authoritarian regime actually tackle climate change at all? Does one really expect the powerful interests that are currently impeding climate action not to be just as powerful, if not more so, under a climate-autocracy?

Authoritarian regimes are notoriously corrupt. So, the notion that such a system would be free of "special interests," and run by neutral, rational technocrats, is implausible. In fact, far from bolstering climate action, a shift towards authoritarian-style decision-making would likely make things worse.

Climate authoritarianism might also backfire in less obvious ways. In a polity with any amount of freedom, opposition is inevitable. If the authorities deem new restrictions necessary to quell criticism or resistance, they may well end up eroding other basic freedoms, including the freedom to produce and exchange potentially transformative ideas.

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Climate-related decisions have major irreversible consequences.



Liverpool's Harvey Elliott celebrates scoring their third goal with Curtis Jones. Action. – Reuters

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Liverpool go top of the league with 3-1 win at Wolves

WOLVERHAMPTON: Liverpool beat Wolverhampton Wanderers 3-1 away on Saturday thanks to two late goals in a scintillating comeback that put the Reds - at least temporarily - top of the Premier League. The hosts dominated the first half at Molineux against an unusually sluggish and sloppy Liverpool, Hwang Hee-chan stroking in a 7th minute goal after a brilliant run from Pedro Neto, before Wolves missed a string of further chances.

However, Liverpool came out transformed in the second half,

drawing level in the 55th minute when Mohamed Salah set up fellow striker Cody Gakpo for a tap-in.

Wearing the captain's armband on his 200th Premier League appearance, Andy Robertson slid in Liverpool's second from another Salah pass in the 85th minute as the visitors poured forward.

Liverpool made it three in time added on, with Wolves' Hugo Bueno deflecting the ball into his own net from a shot by Harvey Elliott, sending the away fans into delirium.

"I thought the second half performance was impressive and we got what we deserved," said Robertson.

"We can come up with excuses for the first half, like the international break and people travelling, but we made mistakes which we are not used to making."

The result put Liverpool top of the table for now on 13 points after five games, with Manchester City one point behind them and playing later on Saturday away at West Ham. Wolves are 15th on three points.

WOLVES RUE MISSED CHANCES

Liverpool's slow start on Saturday was due in part to the absence of stalwart defenders Virgil van Dijk and Trent Alexander-Arnold through suspension and injury respectively.

Fresh back from international duty for Argentina, midfielder Alexis Mac Allister looked out of sorts, uncharacteristically misplacing passes and losing possession.

But the introduction of Luis Diaz and Darwin Nunez, also back from World Cup qualifiers in

South America, gave Liverpool the speed and trickery they sought for a second-half onslaught.

"In the first half we had some problems physically, we weren't sharp, we weren't right. We tried to find out who's ready (after the international break) and it was not a perfect choice," said manager Juergen Klopp.

"That's why we changed pretty much everything in the second-half, tactically and physically. Second half, we controlled it completely and it was a really good game then. We deserved to win in the end, that's clear."

Wolves were left to rue missed opportunities, none more so than when Neto again beat his man to dink a cross into Matheus Cunha who inexplicably chested the ball instead of stooping to head home from close range and extend his team's lead.

"It looks like a comfortable win for Liverpool but it wasn't comfortable for most of the afternoon," said Wolves manager Gary O'Neil. "When we were on top, we could have probably taken one or two more... To have pushed Liverpool so close was a great effort." — Reuters



Al Hilal's Salem Al Dawsari celebrates scoring their fifth goal with Malcom and Neymar. – Reuters

Neymar makes debut as Al Hilal hand Al Riyadh 6-1 thrashing

RIYADH: Brazil's all-time leading goal scorer Neymar made his Saudi Pro League debut for Al Hilal on Friday, coming off the bench to feature for the final 26 minutes of his new club's 6-1 demolition of Al Riyadh.

The 31-year-old, who last month joined the former Asian champions for 90 million euros (\$95.9 million) from Paris Saint-Germain, was introduced in the 64th minute for fellow Brazilian Michael and set up Malcom to score Al Hilal's fourth in the 83rd minute.

Aleksandar Mitrovic had put Al Hilal in front with a 30th

minute penalty before goals from Yassir al Shahrani and Nasser al Dawsari gave the league leaders a comfortable advantage.

Neymar, who surpassed Pele's record as Brazil's leading scorer when he netted twice in last Friday's 5-1 win over Bolivia, had not played for Al Hilal since moving to Saudi Arabia due to an ankle injury.

Fans jeered as Al Hilal captain Salem al Dawsari opted to take an 87th minute penalty as Neymar watched on, the Saudi Arabia winger converting before adding his side's sixth goal in injury time.

— Reuters

OASIS BADMINTON ACADEMY OPENED IN MUSCAT



CENTRE STRENGTHENS ORSC IN BOOSTING SPORT IN OMAN, SAYS DR ABDUL RAHIM

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 16

The Oasis Badminton Academy was inaugurated in Muscat as an international standard badminton hub offering top-class facilities in the Sultanate of Oman. The inauguration ceremony took place on Friday under the auspices of Dr Abdul Rahim bin Musallam al Darwashi, Chairman of Oman Racket Sports Committee (ORSC), in presence of Yogendra Singh Katiyar, founder of the academy, and dignitaries.

Upon the arrival of the chief guest, the opening ribbon was cut to make the grand opening of the academy. Later on, the chairman of ORSC and founder of the academy played an exhibition game before

all the attendees went on a tour inside the academy to unveil the provided facilities and the future plans and programmes of the academy. Moreover, the opening ceremony invitees attended some matches between the ranked players including local player Ahmed al Barwani.

The academy comprised six avant-garde badminton courts with top-tier amenities. The academy also featured a professional shop which offered a treasure trove of badminton essentials and attire. The academy offered a range of different courses and lessons including Badminton Mastery namely the lessons catering to all levels and spanning from novices to experts. Personalised Training unlocks the potential with private sessions. Group Dynamics thrives through collective

learning in group lessons. Tournament Excellence will elevate the game with dedicated tournament training. It targets all-age players including individuals across age spectrums and skill tiers.

TOP COACHES

The Oasis Badminton Academy is set up with a personal prowess from expert and qualified mentors namely coach Balasubramannian NG from India who is a highly accomplished badminton player with a quarterfinal position in the Tata Open Challenge men's doubles category and multiple semifinalist with titles in All India Ranking Tournaments. Coach Ari Taufik from Indonesia is a true badminton virtuoso with an illustrious journey. Boasting over 40 titles triumphed in the

Indonesia Junior Circuit and a remarkable runner-up at the UITM International Malaysia. Coach Favian Robben, hailing from Indonesia, is a seasoned stalwart in the realm of badminton, who seamlessly amalgamates skill enhancement and inspiration into each player's odyssey.

Dr Abdul Rahim bin Musallam al Darwashi, Chairman of ORSC, said that the opening of such a distinguished sports facility is considered a strong support for the sport of badminton. "Special thanks to the management of Oasis Badminton Academy for their top efforts in bringing this academy into reality. The arena promises to deliver an exceptional playing experience for both amateur enthusiasts and professional athletes alike. The academy will strengthen our orientations

in the coming period by investing in all available opportunities to transform this sport into an industry. Also, exploiting all available means to spread badminton in the Sultanate of Oman and providing greater opportunities for young players to experience the sport and continue in it until advanced stages," he added.

The chief of ORSC affirmed that the committee will provide its support for this project and all similar projects that have many positive aspects which will contribute to the development of sports in the country.

Oman Racket Sports Committee was formed in July by an official decision from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. The committee will supervise the sports of squash and badminton.



England's Jos Buttler celebrates catching out New Zealand's Will Young with teammates Action. - Reuters

England wrap up the series with 3-1 win

ANDY JALIL
LONDON, SEPT 15

With the momentum gained after comfortable victories in the previous two ODIs, England had little difficulty in inflicting a significant 100-run defeat on New Zealand to complete the four-match series with a 3-1 result. For form and confidence this win seems fine preparation for the forthcoming World Cup.

Chasing a substantial target of 312 to win and level the series, New Zealand had to score at the rate of just over 6 an over. They began reasonably well at 5 an over in the first ten overs but lost three wickets by the 12th over.

The first fell to an unlucky run out, that was Devon Conway, and his opening partner Will Young, on 24, got a ball which moved away considerably taking a thin edge. Brydon Carse then bowled Daryl Mitchell for four.

Moeen Ali came into the attack for the 19th over and he struck with his third ball bowling Tom Latham for 13 to reduce New Zealand to 88 for four. With Liam Livingstone at the other end, England effectively operated a double spin attack.

Henry Nicholls had moved on to 41 from 48 balls before Moeen struck again trapping Nicholls leg before. He departed after a review showed the ball would have hit leg stump. While picking up the runs was a priority, keeping wickets intact was imperative as half the side was back in the pavilion for 122 in 24.5 overs.

An innocuous leg side full toss from Livingstone which should have been hit for six instead went into the hands of mid-wicket and Glenn Phillips departed for 25. Thereafter, the end was soon in sight with the seventh and eighth wickets falling in successive balls on 169.

Finally, after some lusty hitting

by Rachin Ravindra which brought him 61 from 48 balls, the innings ended on 211 for 9 in 38.2 overs as Tim Southee was unable to bat having sustained a dislocated thumb.

Earlier, England started well after deciding to make first use of a fine pitch and in sunny conditions. Although they lost the first wicket on 28 in the fifth over when Jonny Bairstow edged to first slip where Daryl Mitchell held a superb catch around his boot laces, Dawid Malan and Joe Root combined in a 79-run stand taking the total to 107.

Root did struggle and was dropped twice before he reached double figures and on 29, he missed his sweep shot to be bowled by Ravindra. The left-armed struck again three overs later having Harry Brook held for 10 at short mid-on with some luck as it was a long hop which Brook failed to connect well and England had lost their third wicket on 139.

Meanwhile, Malan had brought up his half century in the 17th over and was continuing to dominate the bowlers. He took his score to 70 at the rate of a run-a-ball with a lovely cover drive for 4 off Kyle Jamieson and promptly square cut the next ball for four. In the same over he pulled over deep mid-wicket for six and with that he brought up 1,000 runs in ODI in his 21st innings.

His fifth ODI hundred followed in the 32nd over with a drive for two to long off, having faced 96 balls with 14 fours and a six. He struck a six off Ravindra from a slog/sweep and then went on to hit two huge sixes in three balls off Henry which took him to 123.

His marvellous innings ended on 127 from 114 balls including 3 sixes and 14 fours and was just 7 short of his highest score in ODI. England were 243 for 5 in 40 overs at his dismissal and the lower order contributed a further 68.

Sainz tops final Singapore GP practice, Verstappen forth

BERLIN: Ferrari's Carlos Sainz led final practice for the Singapore Formula One Grand Prix while Ferrari while Max Verstappen drew a little closer to the top ahead of qualifying later on Saturday despite still complaining about "unacceptable" problems.

Saint completed a Ferrari sweep of the practice sessions when he clocked 1 minute 32.065 seconds on the 5.063-kilometres Marina Bay street course.

Mercedes' George Russell was the fraction of .069 of a second behind in second, and Lando Norris third for McLaren.

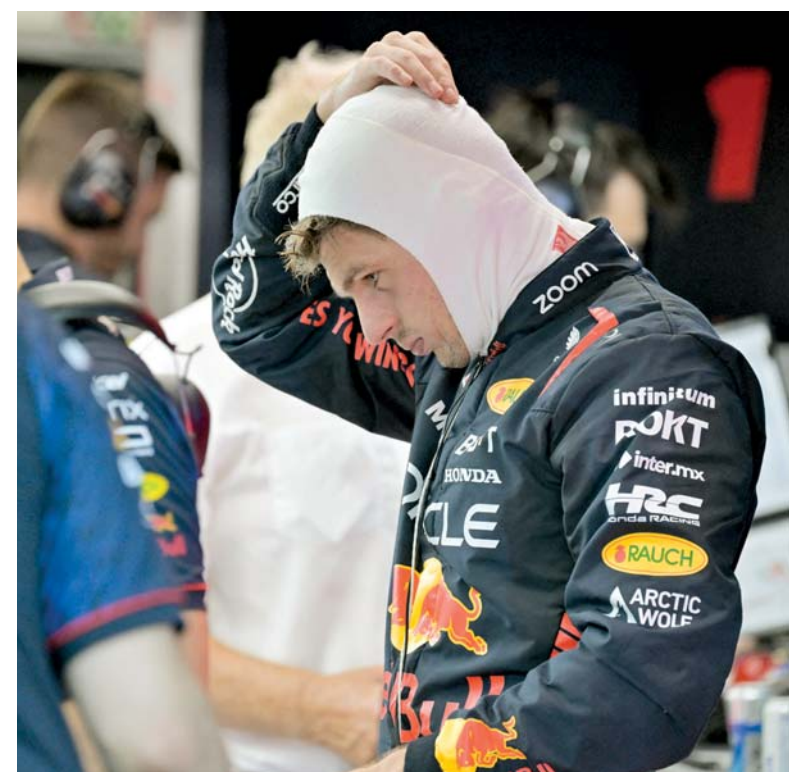
Verstappen, who along with team-mate Sergio Perez had failed to make the top six on Friday and said their showing was worse than expected, finished .313 back in fourth.

That was closer to the top than the previous day but Red Bull's struggles on the twisting course continued as he named the car "unacceptable" and fumed: "I'm just struggling for rear grip. If I'm going to compete in drifting I might win the race."

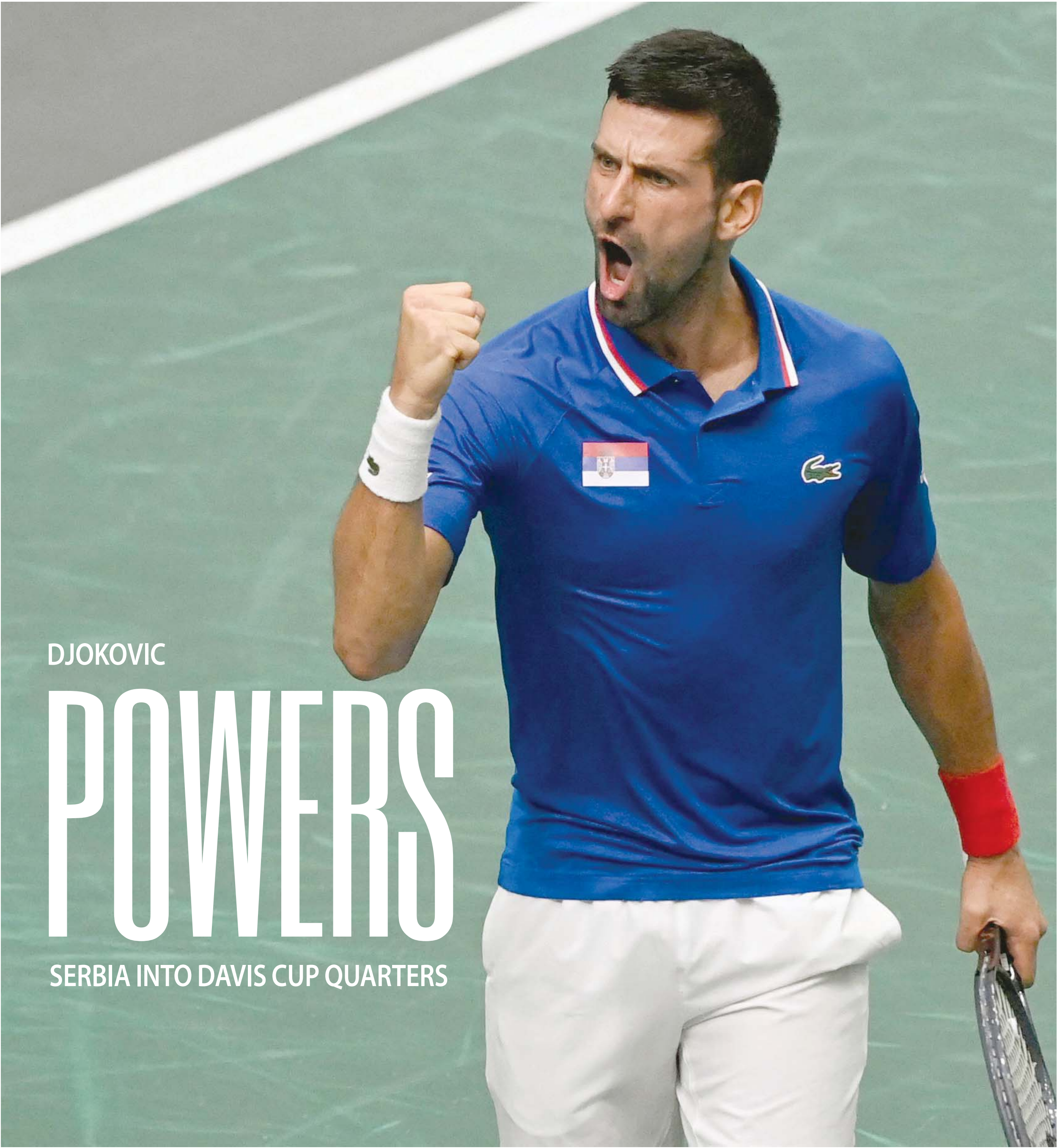
Red Bull have won all 14 season races and 15 in a row in all, and Verstappen is on a run of 10 straight victories - both F1 records.

But Verstappen and his team appear to face an uphill battle to keep these streaks alive on one of the courses where the Dutchman is yet to win and had to settle for seventh last year.

Verstappen is also trying to get one step closer to a third straightworld title. He currently leads the standings by 145 points over Perez and if everything goes his way, he could seal the title with six races to spare next weekend in Japan. — dpa



Red Bull's Max Verstappen during practice. - Reuters



DJOKOVIC

POWERS

SERBIA INTO DAVIS CUP QUARTERS

PARIS: Novak Djokovic returned to the court just five days after his historic US Open title triumph to lead Serbia into the Davis Cup quarterfinals on Friday, while Andy Murray helped Britain edge past Switzerland.

World number one Djokovic eased to a 6-3, 6-4 success against Alejandro Davidovich Fokina to give his country an unassailable 2-0 lead in Valencia after Laslo Djere's earlier 6-4, 6-4 win over Albert Ramos-Vinolas.

It was Djokovic's first appearance in the team competition since Serbia's semifinal loss to Croatia in 2021.

The 36-year-old won a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title last weekend with a straight-sets triumph against Daniil Medvedev in the US Open final.

"I'm on cloud nine with everything that has happened recently on the tennis court," Djokovic said.

"Playing for Serbia, for my country, is something completely different."

"It's a huge responsibility and pressure, but it's also a privilege and an honour."

Djokovic took the opening set against world number 25 Davidovich Fokina with a single break in the eighth game, before battling back from 4-1 down in the second set with a run of five straight games.

Serbia have now secured a spot in the knock-out phase which will be played in Malaga in November, after also seeing off South Korea 3-0 on Tuesday, while Spain are out of the competition.

"It can create some pressure," said Djere on having Djokovic back in the team. "But I try not to put any pressure on myself and use it as motivation. I think I managed quite good in doing so."

Djokovic played a starring role when Serbia won their only previous Davis Cup title in 2010.

Serbia wrapped up a 3-0 victory in the Group C tie as Nikola Cacic and Miomir Kecmanovic beat Davidovich Fokina and Marcel Granollers 6-4, 7-6 (15/13).

“

Playing for Serbia, for my country, is something completely different. It's a huge responsibility and pressure, but it's also a privilege and an honour

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

They will round off their group campaign against the Czech Republic on Saturday.

BRITAIN POST SECOND WIN

An emotional Murray won the opening rubber of Britain's victory over Switzerland before revealing he had missed his grandmother's funeral to play.

"Today is a tough day for me, it's my Gran's funeral today," Murray said after his epic 6-7 (7/9), 6-4, 6-4, win over Leandro Riedi at the Manchester Arena.

"I'm sorry to my family that I'm not able to be there but Gran, this one's for you."

The 36-year-old had only lost three of his previous 35 singles matches in the competition but needed every ounce of skill and competitiveness to see his way past 21-year-old Riedi, who was making his Davis Cup debut.

The Swiss levelled the tie as veteran Stan Wawrinka quietened the crowd with a 7-5, 6-4 win against Cameron Norrie.

But Dan Evans and Neal Skupski brushed aside Dominic Stricker and Wawrinka 6-3, 6-3 as Britain made it two wins from two in Group B after also beating Australia earlier in the week.

Britain can secure a last-eight berth if they beat France on Sunday, while even a loss could be enough depending on the result of Saturday's tie between Switzerland and Australia.

Italy bounced back from their surprise opening defeat by depleted reigning champions Canada in Group A, downing Chile 3-0.

Youngster Matteo Arnaldi battled past Cristian Garin 2-6, 6-4, 6-3 before Lorenzo Sonego edged out Nicolas Jarry 3-6, 7-5, 6-4. Sonego then teamed up with Lorenzo Musetti for a 6-7 (3/7), 6-3, 7-6 (7/2) doubles victory against Tomas Barrios Vera and Alejandro Tabilo.

Finland kept their hopes of progressing alive with a 2-1 win over Croatia in their Group D clash in Split.

— AFP





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New gulf conformity badge to replace GCC quality mark

هيئة التقييس
لجول مجلس التعاون دول الخليج العربية
GCC Standardization Organization

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, SEPT 16

The GCC Ministerial Committee for Standardisation Affairs, during its sixth meeting in Salalah last week, discussed a number of issues, including the report of the Chairman of the Gulf Standardisation Organisation's (GSO) performance, and the memorandum of the Presidency of the Standardisation Organisation regarding the decision of the Trade Cooperation Committee to adopt the new Gulf Conformity Badge system as an alternative to the Gulf Quality Mark.

Chairing the meeting, Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Qais al Yousef, lauded the tireless efforts of the Gulf Standardisation Organisation in drafting standards and technical regulations covering products and services across a wide variety of sectors.

Thanks to the efforts of the GSO, a total of 1,186 technical regulations – out of a total of 26,921 issued to date – are presently mandatory. In addition, 73 memorandums of understanding and cooperation agreements have been reached with a total of 60 regional and international organisations.

These pacts, Al Yousef said, constitute an important path for development and a reference source on standardisation activities and training programmes encompassing a variety of sectors.

He also commended the work of the technical committees and specialists drawn from the standardisation bodies of the GCC member countries for their knowledge and studies.

At the last meeting, the ministerial committee approved the adoption of 10 Gulf technical regulations as well as sectoral Gulf technical regulations.

The committee also approved use of the Gulf Conformity Badge as an alternative to the Gulf Quality Mark.

The ministerial committee also adopted several 5 draft Gulf technical regulations, completing the agreement to establish the Gulf Accreditation Centre, as well as preparing a study for the GCC Quality Award.

45% jump in Oman-UK bilateral trade

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 16

Bilateral trade between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom has grown an impressive 45.2 per cent to reach a value of £1.4 billion (RO 670 million approx.) during the four quarters leading up to the end of Q1 2023, the British Department for Business and Trade revealed in a new report on Thursday.

The announcement came on the heels of high-level meetings between officials of the two governments held late last week with the aim of bolstering trade and economic ties. Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, had met with Nigel Huddleston, the British Minister of International Trade, during the latter's visit to Oman late last week.

These meetings, which took place at the Invest in Oman Hall, marked a crucial step in advancing economic cooperation between Oman and the United Kingdom.

According to Faisal al Nabhani, Director of International Cooperation & Trade Relations at the Ministry, the discussions aimed to strengthen collaboration across critical sectors, with a strong emphasis on trade and commerce.

Al Nabhani highlighted the significance of the exchange of knowledge and best practices



between the two nations.

Furthermore, these talks serve as a platform to align Oman's vision plans and strategies for implementation with evolving global dynamics, especially in vital sectors like green energy and investment attraction, he noted.

Notably, UK exports of services to Oman accounted for an overwhelming share of total bilateral trade. Valued at

a total of £1.1 billion (RO 520 million) over the 12 months to the end of Q1 2023, it had grown by nearly 50 per cent over the year, according to the British Department for Business and Trade.

Around 44 per cent of UK exports to Oman during this period comprised goods, while the remaining 56%, represented services. A closer look at the data shows that UK exports of

goods to Oman increased by £96 million, marking a growth of 24.6% at current prices compared to the four quarters leading up to the end of Q1 2022.

In an evolving global trade landscape marked by climate change, digital transformation, and shifting economic corridors, Oman and the UK are showcasing a determined commitment to adapt and enhance their collaborative

efforts, said officials in reference to the latest round of trade talks between the two countries.

Both sides discussed bilateral trade growth indicators and strategies to increase trade and investment exchanges while enhancing trade relations. One prominent item on their agenda was the status of negotiations concerning the Free Trade Agreement between the GCC and the United Kingdom.

Duqm refinery exports first ULSD cargoes

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, SEPT 16

OQ8 — a joint venture between Oman's OQ Group and Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) — has achieved a significant milestone by exporting the first ultra-low sulphur diesel (ULSD) cargoes on Tuesday from its newly established 230,000 barrels per day (b/d) Duqm refinery.

The refinery has undergone trial runs and is on track to reach full capacity by the end of this year.

According to shipping fixtures, two tankers, namely the Hellas Margarita and Oinoussian Star, have been provisionally contracted to transport 35,000 metric tonnes of ULSD each to either East Africa or South Africa.

The Hellas Margarita departed from Oman on September 12, while the Oinoussian Star departed on Thursday. These shipments mark the commencement of



commercial operations for the Duqm refinery's ULSD production.

In addition to the ULSD cargoes, OQ8 (Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries Company or Duqm refinery) has also been active in exporting other petroleum products. This month, the refinery exported 59,000 tonnes of naphtha, following its first naphtha cargo in June.

Moreover, in August and September, the facility exported

an 82,000 tonnes cargo of high-sulphur fuel oil (HSFO) and 93,000 tonnes of low sulphur fuel oil (LSFO).

These exports demonstrate the refinery's capability to produce and supply a diverse range of petroleum products to meet regional and international demands.

The Duqm refinery has made substantial progress in its construction and development. As of July, the project was reported to be around 99% complete, according to KPI's Chief Executive, Shafi al Ajmi.

The joint venture between OQ and KPI has strategically leveraged their expertise and resources to ensure the timely completion of the refinery, which is poised to become a significant contributor to Oman's energy sector.

The Duqm refinery holds immense potential in bolstering the countries' refining capabilities and strengthening their position in the global

energy market. With a refining capacity of 230,000 barrels/day, the facility is well-equipped to refine a variety of crude oil grades, offering flexibility in processing different types of feedstock.

Moreover, the production of ULSD, which complies with stringent environmental regulations, underscores the refinery's commitment to sustainability and reducing emissions.

The successful export of ULSD cargoes from the Duqm refinery represents a significant step forward for Oman's energy sector.

It not only showcases the country's refining prowess but also highlights its role as a reliable supplier of high-quality petroleum products. The shipments to East Africa and South Africa further strengthen Oman's trade relationships with these regions, fostering economic cooperation and driving growth in the energy sector.

Ominvest Chairman granted Shaikh Isa bin Ali al Khalifa Award for Voluntary Work

MUSCAT: In recognition of his noble contributions in the humanitarian field, Shaikh Khalid bin Mohammed al Zubair, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Ominvest, was awarded on Thursday with Shaikh Isa bin Ali al Khalifa Award for Voluntary Work, in its 13th edition dedicated to honour prominent Arab voluntary work pioneers.

Shaikh Khalid bin Mohammed al Zubair was selected to represent the Sultanate of Oman in the voluntary work field.

He was awarded for his many contributions over more than 20 years in sports and youth volunteering, and for his many initiatives in the field of spreading the culture of entrepreneurship, and promoting small enterprises, as well as for his inspiring leadership of Omanis in many corporates and institutions he worked in.

During the 13th edition of Shaikh Isa bin Ali al Khalifa Award for Voluntary Work, the most prominent figures from the voluntary work pioneers in the Arab world were honoured in recognition of their great sacrifices to serve their communities, and to mark their noble humanitarian efforts.



The winners were selected according to the mechanisms and objective criteria set by the organising committee, in co-operation with the Arab Union for Voluntary Work.

The award was established by the Good Word Society in Bahrain.

It aims to achieve the sustainable development goals and raise awareness of their importance, highlight the role of volunteerism

in capacity-building and skills development among volunteers, and contribute to the development of humanitarian and community aspects as well as enhancement of the spirit of citizenship.

Shaikh Khalid bin Mohammed al Zubair is one of the Omani leaderships who has enriched youth and sports work with his good endeavours. He has adopted many social responsibility

programmes and projects aimed at human and community development, and supporting community voluntary teams in the cultural, sports and social sectors.

In the field of sports, Shaikh Khalid al Zubair helped achieving numerous accomplishments for the Sultanate of Oman during his presidency of the Oman Tennis Association, the Oman Olympic Committee and during his

HE WAS AWARDED FOR HIS MANY CONTRIBUTIONS OVER MORE THAN 20 YEARS IN SPORTS AND YOUTH VOLUNTEERING, AND FOR HIS MANY INITIATIVES IN THE FIELD OF SPREADING THE CULTURE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND PROMOTING SMALL ENTERPRISES, AS WELL AS FOR HIS INSPIRING LEADERSHIP OF OMANIS IN MANY CORPORATES AND INSTITUTIONS HE WORKED IN.

membership in the International Olympic Committee. He also led Ahli Sidab Club to achieve a number of local successes. Al Zubair was a part of the establishment of the Zubair Small Enterprises Centre, which is one of the most important social responsibility initiatives in supporting Omani entrepreneurs and developing their capabilities and skills. In addition, Shaikh Khalid bin Mohammed al Zubair chairs the Board of Directors of Injaz Oman, a non-profit organisation that works to spread the culture of entrepreneurship among schools, colleges and universities' students.

New 'TechTalks' series focuses on energy sustainability



MUSCAT: Birba, the Sultanate of Oman's leading energy-focused event management specialist, launched 'TechTalks' – a platform for knowledge sharing – in collaboration with Oman Hydrogen Centre (OHC)

The objective behind these technical talks is to create an environment in which stakeholders, researchers and thought leaders can come together to share knowledge and discuss the latest developments in science, technology and engineering in support of growth in Oman.

The inaugural session, focusing on 'Hydrogen Storage' was held at Hormuz Grand Muscat last week.

During this session, experts shared technical insights and learnings from global feasibility studies specific to the storage of hydrogen and explored Oman's untapped potential for underground storage within its geological formations.

Oman's potential for underground hydrogen storage is immense due to favourable geological attributes such as abundant salt caverns and porous rock formations. These provide secure, large-scale storage options that can support renewable energy integration, carbon reduction, and positioning the country as a regional hydrogen hub.

There was also a review of the 'Hystories' project and its potential for secure, efficient, and sustainable energy storage. Dr Sausan al Riyami, Director of the Oman Hydrogen Centre, said: "To foster development and scientific progress, we must collaborate locally and globally, drawing upon the collective wisdom of our global network. Education is a cornerstone of technological advancement, driving innovation, ensuring that we keep in view new and advancing transformative technologies."

Abdullah al Harthy, Chairman – Birba, added: "Through this inspiring initiative, we look forward to sharing know-how and exploring opportunities in Oman and highlighting how Oman's Vision 2040 is creating the conditions where more than ever investors in our country can grow, succeed and thrive."

Saud Bahwan Automotive and Oman Shell sign contract for 16 Toyota Mirai hydrogen vehicles



MUSCAT: Recently, Saud Bahwan Automotive and Oman Shell signed a contract for the purchase of 16 Toyota Mirai Hydrogen vehicles.

The event was attended by Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, Managing Director – Corporate, Saud Bahwan Group as well as Walid Hadi, Oman Shell's Senior Vice President and Country Chairman, besides other Senior Management officials from Oman Shell. This milestone is part of Oman Shell's '6th Gift to the Nation' initiative — a Green Hydrogen for Mobility project.

Towards this, Oman Shell has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Oman Airports Management Company (Oman Airports) where Oman Shell will provide Oman Airports with 15 Toyota Mirai Hydrogen vehicles for

corporate usage. This project comes in line with Oman Vision 2040 priorities related to decarbonisation and supporting Oman's energy transition.

The project will include development of hydrogen production units that will be powered by photovoltaic solar plants and installing it at a state-of-the-art fuelling station near Muscat International Airport.

The Toyota Mirai is a hydrogen vehicle that has advancements to its core. The purest expression of elegance, the Mirai – a premium rear-wheel drive sports-luxury Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle (FCEV) boldly displays exceptional craftsmanship in every detail. While consistently delivering an exciting zero emissions drive.

The Toyota Mirai is a fully electric vehicle that produces

electricity for its own usage through an onboard Fuel Cell which converts hydrogen and oxygen into electricity, which in turn powers the electric motor.

This exciting introduction builds on Toyota Motor Corporation's proven and reliable Hybrid architecture.

This architecture replaces the fuel tank and engine with hydrogen tanks and a fuel cell stack, respectively.

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FHO 2023 to focus on innovation, sustainability and excellence

MUSCAT: Acknowledging the multiplier effect the food and hospitality sector has on the tourism industry and the role it plays in supporting economic growth, the Sultanate of Oman is ready to host Food and Hospitality Oman (FHO), Oman's largest international business event for the food and hospitality sectors. Now in its 16th edition, FHO is scheduled to run from September 18 to 20 September at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Organised by CONNECT (Oman Exhibitions Organizing Company LLC) and held under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the event will be inaugurated on September 18 by Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources of Oman.

Taking the helm as the Host Organisation is Oman Air Catering, a prominent leader within the aviation catering domain that accommodates meal production and logistics capability of over eighteen thousand meals per day.

FHO is further enhanced through its valuable partnership with A'Saffa Foods SAOG, Oman's number one poultry choice, as the Poultry Sponsor.

Commenting on their association with FHO, Al Waleed bin Zaher al Abri, General Manager – Commercial Affairs, Oman Air Catering, said, "At Oman Air Catering, we are committed to providing unparalleled services by adopting the highest standards of excellence and innovation. Our support for Food and Hospitality Oman reflects the diligent efforts of the Oman Air Catering team to showcase the richness that the Sultanate of Oman enjoys in the food and hospitality sectors."

We always aspire to continue leading the catering sector and embodying Omani culture through our distinguished services."

Reflecting on the significance of FHO to Oman's hospitality sector, Hamdoon al Suqri, Chief Commercial Officer, A'Saffa Foods SAOG, said, "We are delighted to participate in Food and Hospitality Oman as it represents the significance of the food industry in the Sultanate of Oman."

It helps to develop market relationships and find new and diverse sources and business in the food and hospitality industry. We also invite guests to visit our platform and learn more about A'Saffa Foods products."



Crude oil prices surging to 10-month highs, experts say it's time to beckon

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT, SEPT 16

A crash in share prices, oil prices surging all-time high in the past ten months and shareholders feeling the pinch are all currently on top of the corporate table, prompting experts to comment on the same.

A Saxo Bank report released recently suggests that investors were not impressed by the iPhone 15 and Apple Watch Series 9 reveal, causing Apple's shares to drop 1.8 per cent and affecting the Nasdaq 100, which fell 1.1 per cent.

Joining the bandwagon, Adobe's stock too declined by 4 per cent and Oracle shares plummeted 13.5 per cent on weak cloud sales. The S&P500 shed 0.6 per cent. Meanwhile, Opec's forecast of a tight oil market led to crude oil prices surging to 10-month highs.

Opec is anticipating a significant 3.3mb/d supply deficit in the last quarter of 2023, one of the largest in over a decade. CAD outperformed in the G-10, while EUR made gains following an ECB leak about potential inflation forecast increases.

The focus has then been shifted on the US CPI report.

"Reuters reported that according to an unnamed source, the ECB's new 2024 inflation projection to be above 3 per cent vs 3 per cent in June, firming case for interest rate hike. ECB also to cut 2023 and 2024 economic

growth projections broadly in line with market expectations," said the Saxo report.

Vijay Valecha, Chief Investment Officer, Century Financial, in his comments on crude oil, gold updates says that global oil markets are expected to tighten further in H2 of 2023.

"Despite the rise in crude production, the demand for refined products remains subdued. According to the Energy Information Administration, crude consumption is expected to surpass global supplies by 230,000 barrels daily in Q4 2023," Vijay adds.

Further, the Opec data forecasts a 3.3 million barrel shortfall per day next quarter as Saudi extends production cuts — marking the tightest supply in a decade. As a result, oil is seeing a golden cross on the technical charts for the first time since 2020.

On the technical front, the short-term trend for gold prices is currently experiencing a decline, with the nearest target being the support level at \$1,906 pivot level.

In the event that this level is breached to the downside, the target becomes the support at the Super-trend at \$1,896.05.

New resistance levels have emerged namely the resistance at \$1,918.2 – \$1,920.09 which corresponds to 3 major SMAs, 20-, 50-, and 200-Day, if this resistance is broken, resistance could be seen at \$1,930 level corresponding to 100 EMA level.

OQ to divest 40% stakes in Oman Blocks 60 & 48 for RO 548 million

Sale Purchase Agreement:
Completion of transaction
targeted by year-end

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT, SEPT 16

OQ, the wholly Omani government-owned integrated global energy group, says it aims to wrap up the execution of a transaction linked to the sale of a 40 per cent stake in its flagship upstream asset, Block 60, as well as its exploration licence, Block 48, before the end of 2023.

It follows a significant decision by the OQ Board and shareholders granting approval for the partial divestment of a 40 per cent interest in the wholly-owned and operated Blocks.

The transaction, stemming from a sale-purchase agreement signed on August 22, 2023, is currently awaiting approval from the regulatory authorities, OQ announced recently 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 (January 1, 2023) and the date of the Royal Decree.

Management anticipates executing the transaction before the end of 2023," it further added.

It's the latest in a series of divestments planned by OQ Group, among other affiliates of its parent holding company Oman Investment Authority, in line with the latter's commitment to mobilise financial resources to



bolster the government's annual state budget.

The most recent divestment in support of this goal was the partial privatisation of OQ-owned Abraj Energy Services via a public subscription on Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX).

Likewise, OQ Gas Networks — the national gas transporter — is also preparing to go public with a 49 per cent divestment of its share capital in the coming weeks.

Block 60, the acquisition of which in 2011 heralded the launch of OQ's Exploration & Production (E&P) arm (then known as Oman

Oil Company E&P), is presently the most prolific of the Group's operated upstream assets.

Last November, OQ E&P celebrated the commissioning 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.

As a result of these new flows from the Block, OQ Group now ranks among the largest hydrocarbon producers in the Sultanate of Oman with a combined contribution of 219,000 barrels of oil equivalent

per day (boepd), representing 12.6 per cent of the country's total hydrocarbon output.

Block 48, on the other hand, is a roughly 3,000 sq km exploration licence 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 E&P currently has interests in a total of 11 upstream assets distributed across Oman.

Oman produces 377,066 tonnes of dates in 2022



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's production of dates increased by the end of 2022 by 2,734 tonnes, to reach 377,066 tonnes, compared to 374,332 tonnes at the end of 2021, according to the statistics issued by the National Center for Statistics and Information.

The highest amount of date production was in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, with 90,200 tonnes, followed by Al Batinah North, where the quantity reached 57,923 tonnes, then Al Batinah South Governorate, with 54,715 tonnes.

The production of dates in the

Al Sharqiyah North Governorate reached 52,586 tonnes, while the production in Al Dhahirah Governorate of dates reached 46,204 tonnes, the production in the Al Sharqiyah South Governorate reached 30,237 tonnes, and the production in the Al Buraimi Governorate reached 19,257 tonnes. Production in the Muscat Governorate reached 12,832 tonnes, in the Dhofar Governorate 6,584 tonnes, in the Musandam Governorate 6,396 tonnes, and in the Al Wusta Governorate 132 tonnes. — ONA

Tethys Oil produces 265,848 barrels of oil in August

MUSCAT: Swedish energy company, Tethys Oil's share of the production, before government take, from Blocks 3&4 onshore the Sultanate of Oman, in August 2023 amounted to 265,848 barrels of oil, corresponding to 8,576 barrels of oil per day.

The Official Selling Price (OSP) for Oman Export Blend Crude Oil for the month of August 2023 was \$74.78 per barrel. The OSP, as published by Sultanate of Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals, is the benchmark price for Tethys Oil's monthly oil sales excluding trading and quality adjustments.

Tethys Oil AB, through its wholly owned subsidiary Tethys Oil Block 3 & 4 Ltd, has a 30 per cent interest in Blocks 3&4. Partners are Mitsui E&P Middle East B V with 20 per cent and the operator CC Energy Development S AL (Oman branch) holding the remaining 50 per cent.



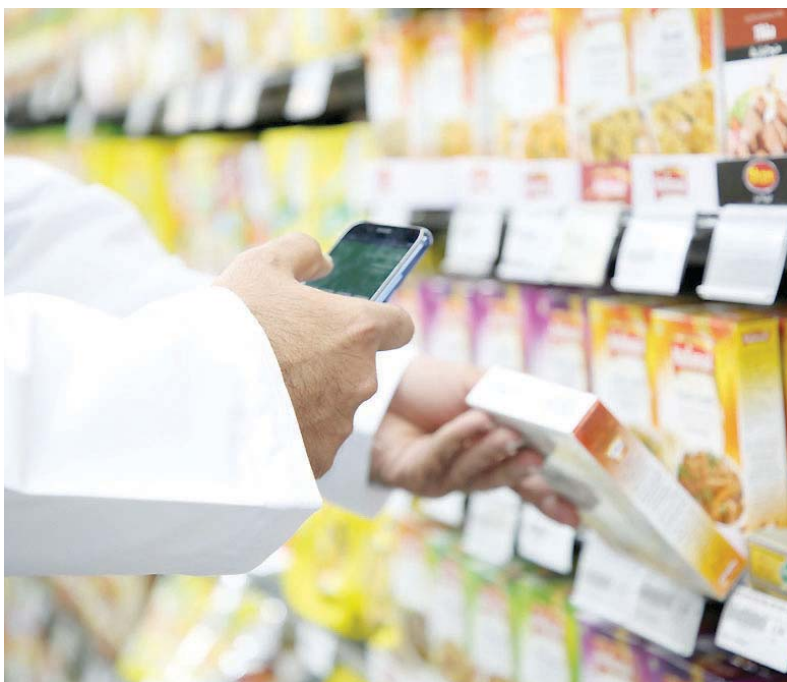
Oman annual inflation rate reaches 0.82 per cent

MUSCAT: The annual inflation rate in the Sultanate of Oman reached 0.82 per cent at end of August 2023, according to data from the monthly survey of consumer prices issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). The inflation rate was driven by an increase in most of the main groups that make up the consumer price index, led by foodstuffs and non-alcoholic beverages, which rose by 2.9 per cent.

The increase was due to an increase in the prices of most of the components of the group, led by fish and seafood, by 11.65 per cent, and milk, cheese, and eggs, by 8.87 per cent, vegetables by 5.5

per cent, oils and fats by 4.92 per cent, other foodstuffs by 4.07 per cent, sugar, jam, honey, and sweets by 3.49 per cent, bread and cereals by 1.82 per cent, non-alcoholic beverages by 0.93 per cent, and fruits by 0.4 per cent, while meat prices decreased by 1.64 per cent.

The prices of furniture, fixtures, household equipment, and regular home maintenance rose by 2.63 per cent, miscellaneous goods and services by 2.61 per cent, restaurants and hotels by 2.46 per cent, tobacco by 2.36 per cent, culture and entertainment by 1.41 per cent, health by 0.63 per cent, education by 0.05 per cent, clothing and shoes rose by 0.35 per cent, and housing, water,



electricity, gas and other fuels rose by 0.03 per cent.

The transportation group prices decreased by 1.54 per cent and communications by 0.2 per cent.

The inflation rate rose by 0.28 per cent compared to the previous month, as a result of an increase in food and non-alcoholic beverages groups by 1.11 per cent, restaurants and hotels by 0.15 per cent, furniture, fixtures, household equipment, and regular home maintenance by 0.08 per cent, culture and entertainment by 0.04 per cent, and clothing and shoes by 0.01 per cent.

Meanwhile, there was a decrease in transportation group prices by 0.05 per cent.

The prices of tobacco, housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels, health, communications, education, and miscellaneous goods and services remain stable.

Dhofar Governorate recorded the highest inflation rate among the governorates at 1.01 per cent, compared to the lowest inflation rate in Al Buraimi Governorate at 0.4 per cent.

Muscat Governorate recorded an increase in inflation of 1 per cent, while Al Batinah North Governorate recorded 0.93 per cent, Al Dakhiliyah 0.73 per cent, Al Dhahirah 0.6 per cent, and the governorates of Al Sharqiyah North and Al Sharqiyah South by 0.47 per cent. — ONA

Sustainable business practices in Oman



STEFANO VIRGILLI
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In recent years, the global business landscape has undergone a profound transformation. No longer is success solely measured in terms of profits and market share. Instead, there is a growing emphasis on sustainability and corporate responsibility. This shift towards sustainable business practices is not only a global trend but also a pathway to prosperity right here in Oman.

Oman, with its rich history and natural beauty, is poised to leverage sustainability as a driver of economic growth. The Sultanate of Oman has always recognised the importance of preserving its natural resources, and this ethos can be seamlessly integrated into its business culture.

Oman’s unique geographical location offers a strategic advantage in terms of renewable energy. With ample sunlight

and wind, the country has the potential to become a regional leader in clean energy production. Initiatives like the “Oman Vision 2040” highlight the government’s commitment to sustainability, aiming for economic diversification and a reduction in dependency on oil.

Sustainable business practices encompass a broad range of activities, from reducing carbon emissions to implementing ethical supply chains. But why should Omani businesses embrace sustainability? Here are some compelling reasons:

Global market access: Sustainability is increasingly becoming a criterion for global trade. Businesses that align with sustainable practices are more likely to access international markets and attract responsible investors.

Cost savings: Implementing sustainable practices often leads

to cost savings in the long run. Energy-efficient technologies, waste reduction, and sustainable sourcing can all contribute to improved operational efficiency.

Enhanced reputation: Consumers today are more conscious of their environmental and social impact. Companies that adopt sustainable practices build trust with their customers and enhance their brand reputation.

Regulatory compliance: As global regulations tighten around environmental and social responsibility, businesses that proactively adopt sustainable practices are better positioned to comply with future regulations.

Attracting talent: Young professionals increasingly seek employers with a commitment to sustainability. Embracing sustainable practices can help businesses attract and retain top talent.

Several Omani businesses are already leading the way in sustainable practices. For instance:

Duqm Refinery: This flagship project in Oman’s oil and gas sector is focusing on energy efficiency and emissions reduction, showcasing a commitment to sustainability.

Nama Distribution: It is actively investing in renewable energy projects, such as solar and wind farms, to reduce the carbon footprint of electricity generation.

PDO’s Nimr Water Treatment Plant: The Nimr Water Treatment Plant recycles and reuses water, reducing the environmental impact of oil and gas operations.

To fully harness the potential of sustainable business practices in Oman, it is imperative for companies to integrate sustainability into their core strategies. This includes setting clear sustainability goals,

measuring progress, and reporting transparently on their efforts.

Collaboration between government, businesses, and civil society is crucial. The government can provide incentives and regulations that encourage sustainable practices, while businesses can invest in innovation and education to drive the sustainable agenda.

In conclusion, sustainability is not just a buzzword but a tangible path to prosperity for Oman. By embracing sustainable business practices, Omani companies can position themselves as leaders in the global marketplace, contribute to economic diversification, and ensure a better future for the nation and its people.

As Oman charts its course toward a sustainable and prosperous future, it is clear that businesses will play a pivotal role in this transformative journey.

Sri Lanka’s dangerous debt restructuring



JAYATI GHOSH

The writer, Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, is a member of the Club of Rome’s Transformational Economics Commission.



KANCHANA N RUWANPURA

The writer, Professor of Development Geography at the University of Gothenburg, is a member of the coordinating collective of the virtual and voluntary initiative Institute of Political Economy in Sri Lanka.

More than a year after the mass protest movement known as the ‘Aragalaya’ ousted Sri Lanka’s President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his brother, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, Sri Lankans have once again taken to the streets.

The impetus for the resurgence of public discontent is the recent bailout agreement between the International Monetary Fund and President Ranil Wickremesinghe’s government.

The deal, which aims to address the country’s ongoing balance of payments crisis, offers Sri Lanka less than US\$3 billion over four years – a tiny fraction of what the country needs to meet its debt-servicing requirements and just one-sixth of its foreign-exchange earnings, which amounted to roughly \$18 billion in 2022.

In exchange for this emergency loan, the IMF imposed a series of conditions that have significantly exacerbated Sri Lanka’s wage and cost-of-living crises.

The mandated shift to market exchange rates, in particular, immediately led to a sharp currency devaluation, causing imported fuel and food prices to skyrocket and contributing to a 165 per cent increase in electricity tariffs between June 2022 and February 2023.

As fiscal restraints were imposed, the economy continued to spiral down, with GDP shrinking by 7.8 per cent in 2022 and 11.5 per cent in the first quarter of 2023.

This has had an adverse impact on employment, livelihoods, and the viability of small and medium enterprises. Consequently, real wages fell by 30 to 50 per cent in 2022 and have remained stagnant.

Despite paying lip service to the importance of combating corruption and curbing illicit financial flows, the IMF plan falls short of tackling these issues effectively. Although it includes a modest increase in corporate income taxes, it neglects the possibility of imposing wealth taxes.

THE RECENT BAILOUT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND AND SRI LANKA FAILS TO ADDRESS THE ECONOMY’S STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS. INSTEAD, IT FOCUSES ON HIGHLY REGRESSIVE MEASURES THAT DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECT THE WORKING POOR AND ARE LIKELY TO EXACERBATE THE COUNTRY’S ONGOING DEBT DISTRESS.



A man shows a thousand rupee note in this illustration photo. – Reuters

Moreover, its focus on highly regressive measures, such as nearly doubling the value-added tax to 15 per cent, means that the bulk of additional revenues will be generated through indirect taxes that disproportionately affect ordinary people.

The current wave of protests is partly a reaction to the government’s decision to comply with the IMF’s demand to restructure both external and domestic debt. Instead of focusing on lowering the external debt to a sustainable level, however, the agreement aims to bring down total debt, thereby reducing the haircut imposed on foreign creditors to just 30 per cent.

DIFFICULT TO JUSTIFY This has exacerbated the crisis and is difficult to justify. In countries that do not issue global reserve currencies, there is a clear distinction between domestic and external debt. Governments can and do service domestic debt using their own currencies, the supply of which is controlled by their central banks.

By contrast, foreign currency-denominated debt necessitates either foreign exchange earnings or new borrowing. Sri Lanka’s crisis is largely the result of the country’s inability

to service its external debt due to insufficient foreign currency reserves.

Since 2016, the government has preferred to take on new international loans, primarily from private lenders, to repay its foreign creditors, including bilateral and multilateral lenders. In early 2022, the government chose to default on its foreign loans rather than explore alternative solutions.

But restructuring domestic debt in an economy already in decline is both painful and unnecessary.

Sri Lanka’s domestic debt is held by various entities, including the central bank, commercial banks, and pension funds. Given that the country’s banking system is already severely weakened, pension funds will almost certainly bear the brunt of the expected adjustment.

This will have a significant impact on the retirement savings of workers who have already been hit by massive price increases. By reducing the interest rates on sovereign bonds held by Sri Lanka’s largest pension funds from more than 20 per cent to 12 per cent, and then to nine per cent from 2025 until maturity, the government

aims to reduce its interest burden by 0.5 percentage point of GDP annually.

Recent estimates by Ahilan Kadirgamar suggest that this will result in a 30 per cent decline in the value of retirement funds a decade from now. Moreover, these pension funds, often holding the only financial assets of working people, will be subject to a 30 per cent tax on their returns – higher than the tax rate applied to many in the corporate sector.

ALARMING DECLINE Many workers whose life savings are invested in these retirement funds earn wage incomes well below the minimum taxable rate.

This includes workers who face numerous intersecting deprivations stemming from gender and ethnic discrimination, such as women employed in the garment industry and tea-plantation workers, especially those from minority Tamil groups.

These groups have already experienced an alarming decline in living standards.

Nearly 56 per cent of Sri Lanka’s 22.2 million people are now grappling with multidimensional vulnerabilities, with women and girls being the

hardest hit. Official estimates suggest that roughly 43 per cent of children under the age of five suffer from malnutrition, as do a growing number of pregnant and lactating women.

By targeting the meagre pension funds of Sri Lanka’s wage workers, the government’s domestic debt restructuring plan is likely to exacerbate existing class, gender, and ethnic inequalities. With their hard-earned savings eroded, poverty-level workers will be pushed further into destitution.

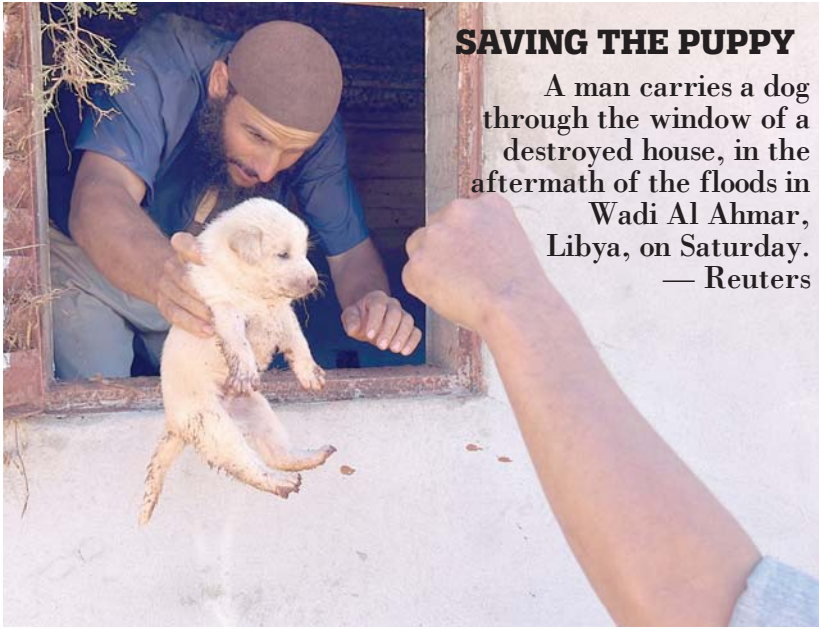
Meanwhile, the adjustment process relies heavily on the unpaid labour of women who continue to provide care in the face of austerity and diminishing social services. The plight of working-class Sri Lankan women underscores the clearly gendered effects of the county’s debt crises and the government’s approach to tackling them.

A genuine resolution to Sri Lanka’s prolonged economic crisis would require a dramatic change in strategy. To bring about a robust economic recovery, the government and the IMF must focus on improving the lives of working people, rather than imposing on them the burden of adjustment.

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Classifieds

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SAVING THE PUPPY
A man carries a dog through the window of a destroyed house, in the aftermath of the floods in Wadi Al Ahmar, Libya, on Saturday. — Reuters



RUGBY FAN
A Wales fan wearing daffodil fancy dress outside the stadium before the rugby World Cup 2023 (Pool C) match between Wales and Portugal, in Allianz Riviera, Nice, France, on Saturday. — Reuters



MARTIAL ART
A Sikh man performs martial art known as ‘Gatka’ during a procession from Gurudwara Ramsar to Akal Takht Sahib at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, India, on Saturday. — AFP



ROYAL GESTURE
King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia wave at the crowds at the Royal Palace in Stockholm, Sweden, on Saturday, in connection with the 50th anniversary celebrations of King Carl XVI Gustaf’s accession to the throne. — Reuters



MILITARY PARADE
A member of the Mexican armed forces holds a bird of prey amid preparations for a military parade celebrating Independence Day, in Mexico City, Mexico, on Saturday. — Reuters

art & life

SUNDAY | SEPTEMBER 17, 2023 | RABEE AL AWWAL 1, 1445 AH | OMAN OBSERVER | www.omanobserver.om | features@omanobserver.om

BY KHALID AL BALUSHI

In Oman, five out of seven turtles find refuge and solace on its coastline. Like ancient mariners, these gentle creatures journey here silently to lay their eggs. The peaceful shores of the Sultanate of Oman have become a safe haven for turtles, with Oman ranked as one of the top three turtle nesting sites in the world and the second largest in terms of area for rare Rimani turtles, only behind Florida’s famed turtle sanctuary. As a result of this international recognition, Oman is at the forefront of turtle conservation efforts, making it a focal point for the observation, study, and monitoring of these magnificent animals.

The escalating challenges facing turtles in Oman have amplified the urgency of safeguarding these vulnerable creatures. Increasing visitor numbers have disrupted turtle nesting habitats and threatened their populations. As a result of this alarming trend, the “Turtle Commandos” were created.

“Turtle Commandos” is the brainchild of Environment Authority employee Manar al Riyami and represents a pioneering approach to turtle conservation. This dedicated team of volunteers recognised the dire need for enhanced protection and monitoring. Their mission: to restore order and balance to the lives of Oman’s turtles.

The “Turtle Commandos” programme has harnessed the power of community engagement and volunteerism to enforce regulations, nurture environmental stewardship, and inspire visitors to actively participate in marine conservation efforts. Through their unwavering commitment, they have become the guardians of Oman’s natural heritage, ensuring that these gentle giants can continue to grace our shores for generations to come.

As the “Turtle Commandos” continue their vital work, Oman’s turtles are finding renewed hope in the face of adversity. With every nest protected and every visitor educated, these remarkable creatures are inching closer to a brighter future where their significance in preserving the



We are diligently working towards securing a brighter tomorrow for turtles. Our efforts are geared towards creating awareness.

The guardians of Oman’s turtles

ocean’s delicate harmony is celebrated and safeguarded.

“In light of the significant influx of visitors to the area, along with their widespread presence on the beach, the turtles refrained from emerging due to perceived threats and the disturbances caused by children and the general public,” shared Mohammed al Balushi, a dedicated turtle ranger.

He added, “The turtles, apprehensive of potential harm to their eggs, exhibited a cautious behaviour as they cautiously peered from the water’s edge, assessing the readiness of the environment for them to come ashore and lay their eggs. When the turtles sense danger, they

choose an alternate location for nesting.”

The implementation of this programme, initially intended solely for reserve staff members, turned out to be a fortuitous decision. It successfully harnessed the enthusiasm of young volunteers who lacked prior experience. Our involvement in this initiative offered an invaluable opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of turtles and their conservation. Through collective efforts and a substantial number of participants, we embarked on a journey to reevaluate if any turtles required assistance in this vast area,” Al Balushi explained.

TURN TO P19

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



soulful__captures

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OMANI DATES



thamooooor84
Salalah, Oman

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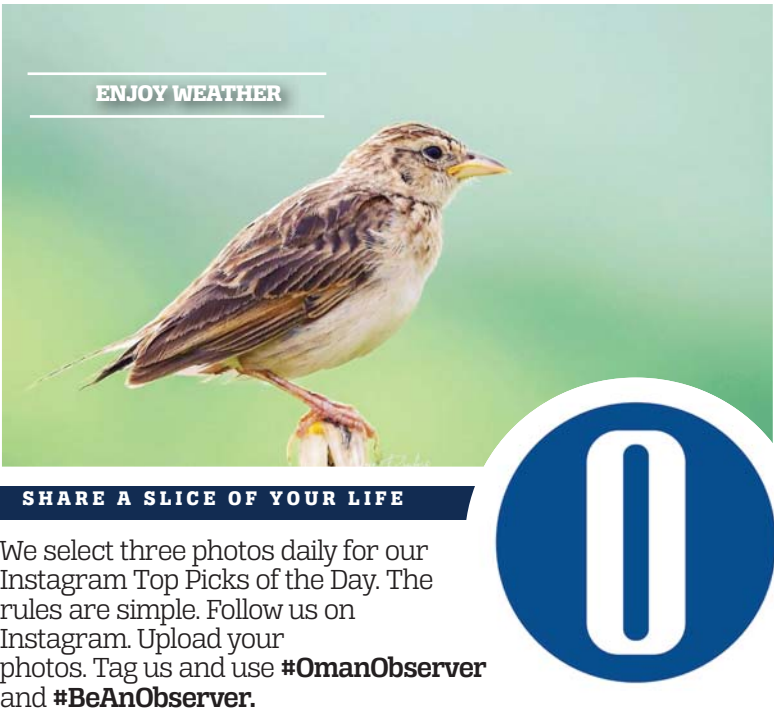
TIME TO WALK



jojo_paulose
Salalah, Dhofar, Sultanate of Oman

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Guardians of Oman's turtles



FROM PAGE 18

Mohammed further emphasised, "The proper management and preservation of our wealth is essential, and Oman possesses a wealth that demands our collective stewardship. Some may question why we limit access to tourists, but our aim is precisely to enable tourists to appreciate and observe these turtles in their natural habitat. Without protective measures, these magnificent creatures risk further disturbance and may never return to our shores. We are committed to safeguarding this precious heritage for ourselves and future generations."

Juhina al Hassani, a dedicated turtle ranger, emphasised the importance of raising awareness about these magnificent creatures. She shared, "We are diligently working towards securing a brighter tomorrow for turtles. Our efforts are geared towards creating awareness so that people can witness positive outcomes in the future. We wholeheartedly extend an invitation to everyone to join us in our mission to protect turtle life."

Al Hassani was heartened by the commitment displayed by individuals who set aside their annual vacations and travelled from distant regions to participate in this programme. She expressed his gratitude, acknowledging, "We deeply appreciate these individuals who are contributing their time and energy to the preservation of this remarkable species."

Al Hassani's commitment to turtle conservation led her to affirm, "We are focused on spreading awareness because we've observed that many people lack knowledge about how to interact with turtles and ensure their preservation. Promoting awareness is pivotal, as it's impossible to eliminate threats to turtles entirely. Therefore, we call upon everyone to collaborate with environmental authorities to safeguard these magnificent creatures."

The perils facing turtles are numerous and come from both human and natural sources. Al Hassani elaborated, "Turtles are confronted with the looming threat of extinction, driven by factors such as over-fishing in certain regions and the pervasive menace of pollution. Significant hazards include the irresponsible disposal of plastic bags into the ocean, vehicular activity on nesting beaches, camping and excessive lighting."

Recognising the delicate balance of nature, Nasser al Zadjali commented, "It's crucial to understand that small turtles on the beach face a myriad of natural predators, including wild foxes, seabirds and crabs. We refrain from intervening in this natural food chain, allowing nature to take its course."



TURTLE COMMANDO PROGRAMME

Each morning, participants eagerly gather, forming groups under the watchful eye of their supervisors. Their mission is to scour the shores for lost or trapped turtles amidst the rugged rocks and ensure their safe return to the sea.

Volunteers work tirelessly, backfilling countless pits and fortifying them with sturdy rocks, ensuring that these gentle creatures won't find themselves trapped again. Juhinah, one of the team's leaders, emphasises the importance of these efforts, stressing that their actions make a significant difference in preserving marine life and the environment.

As evening descends, the entire team shifts their focus to beach cleaning. Spread out across various stretches of shoreline, they toil until the sun sets. Mohammed reminds everyone that leaving no trace of their presence is essential.

Juhinah adds her perspective, emphasising the responsibility of visitors and families who come to enjoy the beach. "Dispose of your garbage in the designated areas," she insists. "We even have a unique project — collecting discarded shoes found along the coast. It's astonishing what we've amassed. The beach reveals many surprises when you take a closer look."

The team doesn't stop at cleaning; they are also passionate about raising awareness. Tourists and locals alike benefit from their educational efforts, gaining insights into the significance of preserving this natural habitat. As night falls, the Turtle Commandos embark on a special mission: searching for small turtles that have lost their way due to the harmful



effects of light pollution.

These young turtles instinctively follow the moonlight to find their way to the sea. However, any white light source misleads them, causing them to veer off course. The Commandos intervene, ensuring these tiny travellers safely return to the ocean.

To mitigate light pollution, no cars are allowed on the beach, a rule supported by most visitors and locals. However, there are some who resist cooperation, frustrating the Commandos' efforts. Al Balushi shares a sobering perspective, recounting a scenario where three turtles were stranded on the same rocky ledge, highlighting the critical role their team plays in protecting these vulnerable creatures.

Despite their large numbers, the Commandos do their best to participate in all events. Yet, on particularly busy days with an influx of tourists, it becomes challenging to cover all the vital areas.

As a special treat, the team has set up viewing points where tourists can witness the little turtles they've rescued. Containers brimming with these tiny wonders provide a heartwarming and educational experience. Juhinah's words will make you shocked: "We have a project to collect the shoes that we find on the coast. Anyone who sees it will be shocked. We made a container full of it. There is a lot here that will truly astonish you."

In their tireless efforts, the Turtle Commandos prove that with dedication, teamwork and a deep love for marine life, they are the guardians of these pristine shores, ensuring that both turtles and the environment thrive in harmony.

ENTERTAINMENT

Taylor Swift, Shakira shine at MTV Video Music Awards



TAYLOR SWIFT CLEANED up at Tuesday's MTV Video Music Awards and won the evening's top trophy, as Shakira accepted the night's prestigious Video Vanguard honour with a hip-shaking, career-spanning performance.

Swift continued her global reign by scooping awards including Best Song, Best Pop and Best Direction, as well as the top competitive award for Video of the Year, which she won for her hit "Anti-Hero."

Turn-of-the-millennium teen heartthrobs NSYNC reunited onstage for the first time in a decade to present her with the Best Pop award, leaving Swift, who is poised to post the first billion-dollar tour, fanning her cheeks.

"This is unbelievable," Swift said as she accepted the night's top prize, which she also took home in 2022. "I just want to say that the fact that this is a fan-voted award means so much to me."

But she didn't perform on the night known far more for its spectacle than its awards, instead getting drinks as artists including Olivia Rodrigo, Anitta and Doja Cat took the stage.

The made-for-broadcast show, held this year

in Newark's Prudential Center, frequently panned to Swift who was seated near the main stage next to Ice Spice, the viral Bronx rapper who has collaborated with the pop phenom and who won the evening's prize for Best New Artist.

A camera operator was reportedly tasked with filming Swift for the show's entire duration.

The nearly four-hour show that included some 20 performances ended without handing out awards in a number of categories, however, including for Artist of the Year, which for the first time was an all-women slate including Swift, Shakira and Beyonce.

Lil Wayne opened the show in a nod to this year's 50th anniversary of hip hop, and Sean Combs — known by his stage names Puff Daddy, Puffy, P. Diddy and Diddy — delivered a career-spanning performance as he accepted the night's Global Icon lifetime achievement award.

"This is so surreal," said the 53-year-old from Harlem. "I started out as a paper boy."

And it was Shakira who scored the night's most prestigious honour for lifetime achievement, the Video Vanguard award that celebrates music video innovations. —**AFP**

Cross-cultural exchanges from Vietnam, Ethiopia, the Caribbean

Big, globe-leaping historical art shows are still scarce post-pandemic. But the Metropolitan Museum of Art persists in doing them, and no one does big and global better. I have high expectations for "Africa and Byzantium" (November 19-March 3, 2024), a roots-and-routes exhibition that promises to illuminate cultural exchanges made between medieval African kingdoms in Egypt, Nubia, and Ethiopia and the Byzantine Empire across the Mediterranean. There are sure to be surprises and beauties beyond compare.

Relatedly, I'll be heading to Baltimore to catch "Ethiopia at the Crossroads" at the Walters Art Museum (December 3-March 3, 2024), which has a superlative collection of Ethiopian religious art. When the Walters-organised exhibition "African Zion" appeared at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem in 1994 it blew me away. Three decades later, some of the same treasures will be supplemented by examples of outstanding work being made in Ethiopia today.

The fall will be rich in contemporary solo museum exhibitions. I've been waiting for someone to organise a survey of photographer An-My Lê, who was born in Vietnam and came to the United States as a refugee in 1975. Her subtle images of a world soaked in militarism (Vietnam War reenactments staged on what were once Confederate battlefields) will be included in the Museum of Modern Art's "An-My Lê: Between Two Rivers" (November 5-March 16, 2024), the two rivers of the title being the Mekong and the Mississippi.

"Charles Gaines: 1992-2023" at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami (November 16-March 17, 2024) will pick up where an earlier Studio Museum in Harlem retrospective of this pioneering conceptualist's work left off. And his art — politically charged, harmonically infused — has become more varied and imaginative year by year into the present. (His monumental 2022-23 sculpture, "Moving Chains," installed on Governors Island, Manhattan, was a stunner.)

Another protean, long-standing contemporary career in full flower will be documented in "Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons: Behold" at Brooklyn Museum (September 15-January 14, 2024). Born in Cuba in 1959, and educated there before coming to the United States, Campos-Pons' experimental interweaving of photography, painting and performance filters references to the island's colonial past and the living tradition of Afro-Cuban Santería through the prism of her own life.

I look forward to "Michael Richards: Are You Down?" at the Bronx Museum of the Arts (September 8-January 7, 2024), a survey of a Brooklyn-born artist of Jamaican and Costa



Rican descent who died at 38 when he was trapped in his studio high in the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. He was a talent of tremendous promise and significant early accomplishment. His 1999 sculpture "Tar Baby vs. St. Sebastian," a memorial to a Tuskegee airman — based on a cast of the artist's body — pierced by small fighter planes, is a now-classic image of desire, death and transcendence.

We'll enter fully into the mystic with "William Blake: Visionary," a gathering of the otherworldly 19th-century artist's paintings and prints of

heaven and hell, and Earth in between, which will be winging its way into the Getty Center, Los Angeles from London (October 17-January 14, 2024).

And we'll find a potent dose of homegrown uplift in "Fragments of a Faith Forgotten: The Art of Harry Smith" at the Whitney Museum of American Art (October 4-January 2024), a first institutional overview of the experimental film-maker and music ethnologist (1923-1991), whose compilations of American folk music sparked a national craze in the 1950s and whose cosmologically charged films and collages anticipated

psychedelic developments in the '60s.

I plan to be first in line for the opening of "Impossible Music" at the Miller Institute for Contemporary Art at Carnegie Mellon University, in Pittsburgh (September 30-December 10), an exhibition of sound, video, drawing and performance designed to test the boundaries of "visual arts" as a descriptive category. In 2016, one of the show's curators, Raven Chacon, made an audio recording of a silent vigil by women protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline near Standing Rock, North Dakota. Only the sounds of

breathing, rustling bodies and the whir of surveillance helicopters are audible. Never has "silence" been more resounding. (Chacon went on to win the Pulitzer Prize in music last year.)

My 2023-24 go-to list includes other potentially horizon-expanding group shows, all historical. During the "global" moment a few decades back New York museums, large and small, regularly gave us valuable introductory samplings of unfamiliar (here, anyway) contemporary work from Asia. "Only the Young: Experimental Art in Korea, 1960s-1970s" at

the Guggenheim Museum (September 1-January 7, 2024) is in the line of such shows and welcome in the present international spotlighting of Korean culture.

Revising history is one of the mandates driving two shows. "Out of Bounds: Japanese Women Artists in Fluxus" at Japan Society (October 13-January 21, 2024) will be the first exhibition to consider the contribution made by women to the New York-based international avant-garde Fluxus movement of the 1960s. Shigeko Kubota (1937-2015), Yoko Ono, Takako Saito and Mieko Shiomi are the marquee players. And "Groundswell: Women of Land Art" at the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas (September 23-January 7, 2024), featuring a dozen women — Alice Aycock, Beverly Buchanan, Agnes Denes and Maren Hassinger head the roll-call — will critically rewrite long-standing textbook versions of another movement of that era — this one once dominated by big-boys, and big-footing.

Speaking of history and how it gets told, Brazil's São Paulo Museum of Art, or MASP, will open the latest in its series of remarkable omnibus "Historias" exhibitions this fall (October 20-February 25, 2024). Past editions have tackled histories of sexuality, feminism, childhood and the Afro-Atlantic world. (A version of its "Afro-Atlantic Histories," very different from the MASP original, has been travelling the United States.) The latest entry, "Indigenous Histories," will approach its theme through the eyes of Indigenous curators and artists from Oceania, South America, North America and Europe. The subject is vast and loose, the project politically tricky, but potentially fascinating.

"A Long Arc: Photography and the American South Since 1845" is coming to the High Museum, Atlanta (September 15-January 14, 2024). As a Boston teenager in the 1960s, I took an impromptu Greyhound bus trip through the South, which permanently changed and shaped my view of America and its history. I have a sense that this exhibition of images dating from the Civil War to the civil rights era, to the present, will offer a similarly eye-widening journey through American time.

And one last revisionist entry, this one recently opened and long-running. We often look to New York City, and the presence of the Young Lords in its East Harlem barrio, as the main stage for Latino, and specifically Puerto Rican, activism during the civil rights years. But, in fact, the Young Lords, who modeled themselves on the Black Panthers, formed in 1968 in Chicago. "Entre Horizontes: Art and Activism Between Chicago and Puerto Rico" at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (through May 5, 2024) tells that origin story, introduces us to artists we should know, and draws a clear horizon line between Lake Michigan and the Caribbean. —**NYT**