

HM congratulates Tunisian President

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Kais Saied of the Republic of Tunisia on his re-election for a new presidential term. In his cable, His Majesty wished President Saied success in continuing to achieve further progress and prosperity for the people of Tunisia. His Majesty stressed the constant keenness to consolidate fraternal ties between the Sultanate of Oman and Tunisia, as well as to promote cooperation relations in various spheres to serve the joint interests.

SUNRISE - 06:02 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR - 04:47 AM

DHUHR - 11:59 PM

ASR - 03:21 PM

MAGHRIB - 05:52 PM

ISHA - 07:02 PM



P12

DJOKOVIC ROLLS COBOLLI TO MAKE SHANGHAI MASTERS LAST 16



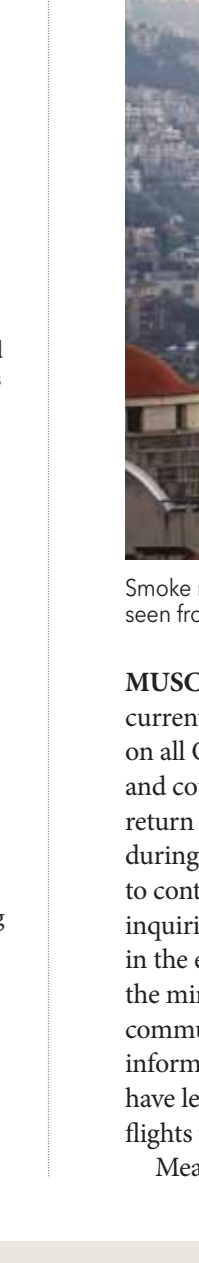
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OMANI STARTUPS WELCOME FINANCIAL INVESTMENTS FROM FFO



P20

OMANI WOMEN NAVIGATING TRADITION THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO UGANDA PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Yoweri Museveni of the Republic of Uganda on his country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to President Museveni and the people of Uganda. His Majesty also wished the Republic of Uganda further development and growth.

HM GREETINGS CONVEYED



Katerina Sakellaropoulou, President of the Republic of Greece, on Tuesday received the credentials of HH Sayyid Nizar bin Al Julanda al Said, the Sultanate of Oman's non-resident Ambassador to Greece. This took place when the President of Greece received the ambassador in the Presidential Palace. HH Sayyid Nizar conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and his best wishes of good health and happiness to President Katerina. He also conveyed His Majesty's wishes for further progress and prosperity to the government and people of Greece.

RO 82M PROJECTS IN GOVERNORATES

The Urban October conference, hosted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, entered its second day with an Investment Forum that reviewed projects from the Governorates Development Competition. The forum, held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, highlighted a range of investment opportunities in winning projects from the first and second editions of the competition (2023-2024), with total investments surpassing RO 82 million. The forum focused on promoting development across governorates. **DETAILS ON P13**

TAMPA

MONSTER HURRICANE TAKES AIM AT FLORIDA

An expanding Hurricane Milton churned towards Florida's battered Gulf Coast on Tuesday, where more than 1 million people were ordered to evacuate before the monster storm slams the Tampa Bay area. The hurricane, which rapidly intensified on Monday into one of the area's most powerful on record, was forecast to make landfall on Wednesday, threatening a stretch of Florida's densely populated west coast that is still reeling from the devastating Hurricane Helene less than two weeks ago. A direct hit on the bay would be the first since 1921, when the now-sprawling Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater area was a relative backwater.

ST REGIS AL MOUJ MUSCAT RESORT OPENS



HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, presided over the official opening ceremony of the St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort on Tuesday. The resort includes 250 hotel rooms, as well as suites, residential units and other facilities. It is expected to spur growth in the tourism and hospitality sectors in Oman.

Lebanon could face same 'spiral of doom' as Gaza, warns UN



Smoke rises in Beirut's southern suburbs after a strike, as seen from Hadath, Lebanon, on Tuesday. — Reuters

MUSCAT/GENEVA: Taking into account the current situation, the Foreign Ministry has called on all Omani citizens present in or near areas and countries witnessing tensions to immediately return to their homeland and avoid travelling there during this period. The ministry urged citizens to contact the nearest Omani embassies for any inquiries or for necessary support and assistance in the event of any emergency. Citizens can use the ministry's website or mobile application to communicate with embassies and obtain the latest information. Rising tensions in the Middle East have led to several airlines diverting or cancelling flights to some countries in the region. Meanwhile, UN humanitarian officials called

on Tuesday for urgent action to stop the escalating conflict in Lebanon from spiralling into a similar scene of devastation as seen in Gaza. "We need to do everything we can to stop that from happening," said Matthew Hollingworth, Lebanon country director for the United Nations' World Food Programme. Speaking from Beirut, he told a press

ISRAELI STRIKE TARGETS IN SYRIA'S DAMASCUS

An Israeli strike targeted a residential building in the Mezzah suburb west of the Syrian capital Damascus, Syria's state news agency reported on Tuesday. Preliminary reports indicated that the strike had resulted in injuries among civilians, Syrian state media reported. State media earlier reported that Syria's air defences had intercepted "hostile" targets in the vicinity of Damascus. Israel has been carrying out strikes against targets in Syria for years but has ramped up such raids since last year's October 7 attack.

briefing in Geneva that he spent the first half of the year coordinating WFP's operations in Gaza before taking the helm of its Lebanon office, and was deeply concerned by the similarities.

"It is in my mind from the time I wake until the time I sleep, that we could go into the same sort of spiral of doom... We shouldn't allow that to happen," he said. Israel's war in Gaza, launched after the October 7, 2023, attack inside Israel, has killed more than 41,900 people, mostly civilians, according to the health ministry in the territory. The UN has said the figures are reliable.

DESTRUCTION

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned the people of Lebanon they could face "destruction and suffering" like the Palestinians in war-battered Gaza if they don't "free" the country from Hezbollah. "You have an opportunity to save Lebanon before it falls into the abyss of a long war that will lead to destruction and suffering like we see in Gaza," Netanyahu said in a video address directed to the people of Lebanon. — **Agencies**

Master plan to restore past glory of Ruwi CBD

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The areas on both sides of the clock tower in Ruwi will be developed as per the Greater Muscat Structure Plan (GMSP), which is awaiting final approval for its implementation. It may be recalled that the CBD clock tower has been earmarked for the terminus station that will pass all the way through Sultan Qaboos Street via Al Khuwair Downtown to Sultan Haitham City. These areas have been labelled as the Blue Spine Metro corridor. According to Ahmed al Dughaisi of GMSP, the upcoming master plan calls for the need to re-develop the Central Business District (CBD) and Muttrah Business District (MBD) areas. Property owners and investors will be allowed to raise the levels of their existing apartment buildings by three to five floors from the current levels, according to the new designs prepared by urban planners. The developers will be required to prepare a structural

audit of their buildings because some of them are very old. "They will also have the option to demolish and rebuild again depending on the audit or go ahead with adding floors to the existing buildings. These decisions will depend on the agreements between property owners and investors." These plans are under the transit-oriented development that calls for integrated townships to bring people and activities together by offering near-excellent transit service to the rest of the city. The Greater Muscat Structure Plan will be developed in four phases. The Observer had earlier reported that the clock tower will get a complete facelift with the development of a boulevard, green area, walking and bicycle tracks, and other activities, in addition to using the wadi that passes through the area. The CBD in Ruwi has been a financial hub in the Sultanate of Oman for many years, but that status has changed since the emergence of new business hubs in Ghala and Airport Heights.



The CBD in Ruwi has been a financial hub in the Sultanate of Oman for many years.

Duo wins Physics Nobel for 'foundational' AI breakthroughs



STOCKHOLM: Geoffrey Hinton, known as the Godfather of AI, and physicist John Hopfield won the Nobel physics prize on Tuesday for their pioneering work on the foundations of artificial intelligence. The pair's research on neural networks in the 1980s paved the way for technology that promises to revolutionise society but has also raised apocalyptic fears. "In the same circumstances, I would do the same again, but I am worried that the overall consequence of this might be systems more intelligent than us that eventually take control," British-Canadian Hinton, 76, said via a phone interview after the announcement. Hinton raised eyebrows in 2023 when he quit his job at Google to warn of the "profound risks to society and humanity" of the technology. — **AFP**

OMAN

OMANTODAY



The three-day programme aims to enhance the skills of over 90 employees from various government agencies within the governorate

Sharqiyah South hosts training on document management

BALQEES ALORAIMI
MUSCAT, OCT 8

Under the auspices of Mohammed bin Ali Akaak, Wali of Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan, the Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, in collaboration with the National Records and Archives Authority, launched a training programme on the Modern Document Management System. The three-day programme aims to enhance the skills of over 90 employees from various government agencies within the governorate.

Ahmed bin Saif al Kiyumi, Director of the Follow-up and Technical Support Department at the National Records and Archives Authority, led the initiative with a visual presentation.

He detailed the stages involved in developing a document management system for public institutions, including the creation of classification guides and document retention schedules. The presentation also covered the objectives of the system and provided practical exercises on its implementation within work environments.

On the second day, participants will focus on intermediate document management procedures, such as transferring, registering, and shelving documents in storage facilities. These processes will include the selection and transfer of documents, as well as the review of national guidelines on document sorting and destruction. Legal regulations regarding judicial oversight for certain employees, alongside violations and crimes related to document and archive management, will also be addressed.

ASYAD TO RENOVATE CRUISE TERMINAL



‘Asyad Ports is seeking a dedicated contractor to carry out renovation works for the cruise terminal and the control tower in Port Sultan Qaboos,’ the tender stated. The last date to receive the tender document is October 17 while the bid can be submitted until October 28. The technical bid opening will be on the same day. Asyad Ports has been operating and managing the PSQ since January 1, 2018.

Dhofar International Theatre Festival to conclude today

STAFF REPORTER
SALALAH, OCT 8

The curtain will fall on the inaugural Dhofar International Theatre Festival on Wednesday with the closing performance of Al Marouj under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information.

Held from October 2 to 9, the festival has garnered considerable attention from theatre aficionados, who have filled the venues of Al Marouj, Oubar, and the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah to witness an array of extraordinary performances.

The festival’s programme featured six distinct competitive categories: Grand Performances, Popular Theatre, Children’s Theatre, Street Theatre and Open Spaces, Duo Theatre, and Monodrama.

As the festival reaches its final day, it has showcased a variety of captivating performances. The Children’s Theatre category opened with Egypt’s

production of Beauty and the Beast, followed by Romania’s Not Me in the Monodrama competition.

Canada’s Suitcase was featured in the Duo Theatre competition, while Oman contributed with Kiosk in the Street Theatre category and Mooshka in the Grand Performances competition. The final performance in the Popular Theatre competition was Palestine’s The Lady’s Dog.

Iraqi director Ahmed Al Shamali, Assistant Director of the children’s play Raindrop, offered his insights into the production: “Raindrop, presented by the Mahmoud Abu Abbas Troupe, emphasises the profound significance of even a single drop of water as the essence of life. Although it appears simple, the play conveys a deeply resonant message about how water sustains all forms of life.” He continued, “While the focus of the play is on water, its narrative carries a broader and more poignant message woven into the script.” The play Raindrop has previously been staged



As the festival reaches its final day, it has showcased a variety of captivating performances

at various children’s theatre festivals in Jordan, Baghdad, and across Iraq, receiving much acclaim.

Dr Kholoud Jabar, Director of the Institute of Fine Arts for Girls in Basra and head of the Mahmoud Abu Abbas Troupe, expressed her gratitude for the warm welcome extended by Oman. “I would like to extend

my heartfelt thanks to the people of Oman, particularly those in Dhofar, for their exceptional hospitality and for organising such a well-executed festival.” She elaborated on the themes of the play, stating, “Raindrop delves into the theme of selfishness among certain creatures. While it is framed as a children’s play, it is imbued with rich philosophical depth that speaks to audiences of all ages.” On their participation in the festival, Dr Jabar said, “We are honoured to be part of this festival’s first edition. This is our debut in Oman, and we are hopeful that our performance of Raindrop will leave a lasting impression.” She further highlighted that Raindrop is a distinguished piece in Iraqi children’s theatre, having garnered numerous prestigious awards across Iraq and the Arab world.

Tunisian director Saif Al Adeeb, who helmed the production of Salvador, expressed his delight at returning to Oman for the second

time. “Last year, we participated in the University Festival in Muscat and won seven awards. This is my first experience in Salalah, and the audience has been truly outstanding. I extend my deepest appreciation to the organising committee for their meticulous efforts and dedication.” Al Adeeb represents the Bizerte Renaissance Association, which is soon to celebrate its centenary. The association is active in various theatre fields, from children’s and youth productions to street performances, and it prides itself on fostering a spirit of collaboration and teamwork.

Omani director Mohammed bin Haider, who presented the play Prisoner of Desire in the Monodrama competition, described the play as a meditation on the elusive nature of happiness. “The core message of the play is simple yet profound: we spend our lives in pursuit of happiness, often chasing wealth and power, only to find ourselves isolated and unfulfilled.”

Khabourah’s souq centre to be hub for cultural tourism

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, OCT 8

AN AMBITIOUS Marine life development project, “Al Durrah,” which has embarked in Al Batinah North Governorate, in Al Khabourah aimed at transforming the historical centre of Al Khabourah Souq into a thriving hub for cultural tourism and urban development. This project reflects a forward look vision to boost heritage tourism while modernising the local infrastructure and promoting economic sustainability in the area.

The project includes a range of developments such as a fish market, a vegetable market, a tourist visitor centre, Al Khabourah Fort and its square, a fabric market, a handicraft training centre, an urban women’s centre, a hotel, parking areas, restaurants and cafés. In the first phase, 95 commercial shops, 15 fish stalls, 10 restaurants and cafés, two handicraft training centres, a tourist visitor centre, a marina for fishing boats, and a hotel will be constructed.

A key feature of the project is the marina area, which will include heritage markets, walking paces, a coastal road, gathering spaces, and a floating walkway. The total cost of the project’s first phase is about 9.8 million Omani Riyals. This substantial investment demonstrates the government’s commitment to enhancing infrastructure and driving sustainable economic growth in the governorate. Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North, emphasised that the project is in line with Oman’s Vision 2040, aiming to achieve comprehensive and sustainable development across the country. He noted



In the first phase, 95 commercial shops, 15 fish stalls, 10 restaurants and cafés, two handicraft training centres, a tourist visitor centre, a marina for fishing boats, and a hotel will be constructed

that the Al Durrah project will revitalise Al Khabourah’s rich heritage and strengthen its cultural identity.

Yousef bin Hassan Balhaf, the Wali of Al Khabourah, highlighted the strategic importance of the project, noting that it will enhance the town’s role as a key commercial hub on Oman’s coastline. The development of the historical centre is expected to further drive economic growth and prosperity in the coming years. He stated, “This project reflects a bold vision to develop urban facilities and enhance heritage tourism in the town.

“This development is expected to create 372 direct jobs and 750 indirect jobs, contributing significantly to cultural and economic sustainability while opening

up new investment opportunities. Khalid al Saeedi, a citizen from Al Khabourah expressing his gratitude for such ambitious project that is like a dream will come true, “this project would create new job opportunities, improve our quality of life, boost local tourism, and attract more investments to the area.

He added, “The people of Al Khabourah are proud of this achievement, and we are confident that this project will lead to further progress that is part of the national urban development strategy, which focuses on enhancing agricultural industries, boosting marine life, promoting heritage tourism, and improving the local agricultural environment.”

Salalah most sustainable tourist destination in region

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SALALAH’S sustainability as a prominent tourist hub in the Arab region is on a steady rise, thanks to its natural beauty paired with modern facilities that continue to evolve.

Once primarily known for the breathtaking three-month khareef season, this coastal city has now captured the attention of European tourists, particularly for its Winter tourism offerings. With the right strategies to harness its abundant resources, Salalah is poised to become a significant revenue generator for Oman.

This sentiment was echoed by a range of tourism experts, including officials from the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT), hoteliers, and hospitality professionals, who spoke to the Observer. They emphasised that Salalah has long been an attractive destination, even before tourism developed into an organised sector.



Known for the three-month khareef season, Salalah city has captured the attention of European tourists

A senior official from the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism highlighted the loyalty of visitors, noting, “We have had tourists who have stayed in Salalah for 1009, 600, and even 500 nights. Such commitment speaks volumes about the destination’s appeal. It’s not just the natural beauty, but the comfort, safety,

and sense of security that keeps drawing them back.” The official went on to explain that while organised tourism only began to take shape in the 1980s, Salalah was already attracting tourists, particularly from the Gulf and other Arab countries.

“Today, Salalah is firmly on the international tourism map, and tourism is now recognised as a vital sector in Oman’s Five-Year Plans and the Vision 2040 initiative,” he said.

Mehmet Tunc Mustecaplioglu, Area General Manager of Orascom Hotels Management, shared his insights on the destination’s steady growth.

“It takes time for a destination to build its reputation. However, once the infrastructure is in place and people start discovering its uniqueness, the tourist flow becomes continuous. Salalah is sustainable because it offers a rare combination — sea, mountains, and desert — all in one place.” He also underscored the significance of Salalah’s rich cultural heritage and history.

Oman and UK review defence cooperation

MUSCAT: Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Zaabi, Secretary-General at the Ministry of Defence, on Tuesday received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa Vice Admiral Edward Ahlgren, Senior Adviser to the British Ministry of Defence for Middle East Affairs, and his accompanying military delegation. During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views and discussed a number of matters of common interest.

The meeting was attended by Brigadier Ahmed bin Ibrahim Ambusaidi, Director-General of International Cooperation at the Ministry of Defence. It was also attended by a number of senior SAF officers and the Military Attaché of the



Vice Admiral Abdullah al Raisi received Vice Admiral Edward Ahlgren.

British Embassy in Muscat. Also, Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis bin Abdullah al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces, also received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa Vice Admiral Edward



Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Zaabi with Vice Admiral Edward Ahlgren.

Ahlgren, Senior Adviser to the British Ministry of Defence for Middle East Affairs, and his accompanying military delegation. During this meeting, the two sides discussed several military matters of



Vice Admiral Edward Ahlgren and his accompanying military delegation.

common interest. The meeting was attended by Brigadier Hamed bin Abdullah al Balushi, SAF Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations and Planning, a number of senior COSAF officers and the Military

Attaché of the British Embassy in Muscat. Meanwhile, Vice Admiral Edward Ahlgren and his accompanying military delegation on Tuesday visited the National Defence College (NDC). Upon their arrival at the centre, the guests were greeted by Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College (NDC). Members of the visiting delegation were briefed on the college's facilities and its strategic curricula, which focuses on preparing national competencies capable of taking strategic decisions at various levels. They also toured the NDC's departments and various halls. — **ONA**

LOCALROUNDUP



Oman, Unicef discuss cooperation in childhood development services

Oman and Unicef discuss cooperation in childhood development

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Social Development, and the Office of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (Unicef), discussed areas of cooperation in various aspects related to childhood development services. This came when Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, received at her office on Tuesday Sumaira Chowdhury, Representative of the Office of the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) in Muscat. During the meeting, the two sides discussed the draft country programme document (CPD) between the Sultanate of Oman and the Unicef and the Plan of Action for Child Protection, Early Childhood Development, Children with Disabilities and other childhood programmes to be implemented during the next phase. — **ONA**

TRAINING PROGRAMME ON AI, DIGITAL SKILLS CONCLUDES



The training programme focused on AI, machine learning, engineering and system development.

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology on Tuesday celebrated the passing out of the last batch of trainees who attended a programme codenamed "Successful" (Najih). The ceremony took place at the premises of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) in Muscat. The programme benefited 24 trainees, of whom 14 were specialised in "Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning", while 10 trainees were in "Systems Engineering and Development". During the ceremony, a presentation was made about the "AI cardiac magnetic resonance imaging project", which was submitted by the last batch and implemented at the Royal Hospital. On the sidelines of the ceremony, a workshop was held about the outcomes of the "National Initiative for Digital Skills Qualification" (Makeen). The workshop included a visual presentation about the initiative, which seeks to familiarise Omani youth about future digital skills that are most in demand in the market. The ceremony was held under the auspices of Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI). — **ONA**

Al Khuwair Downtown concept design soon

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THE CONCEPT design of Al Khuwair Downtown is currently being prepared and is expected to be completed within the next few weeks. Following this, a detailed master plan will be developed by 2026. The detailed master plan will primarily involve collaboration with stakeholders and coordination with various agencies. "The infrastructure preparation will take approximately four years, which will involve the development of utilities," stated an official from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning involved in the project. The development will progress in four stages, with each stage estimated to take two to three years. The final phase is projected to be completed by 2040, while the initial phase is expected to be finished around the mid-2030s. The project will be situated near the desalination plant, adjacent to the current Ministries Area. The Ministries Area will remain intact but will undergo remodeling over time. Zaha Hadid Architects, the ministry, and the engineering, design and advisory company Buro Happold are collaborating to implement strategies for stormwater



The pedestrian activity and cycle infrastructure will help reduce the carbon footprint by minimising the use of private vehicles

management and breakwaters. Investment firm CBRE is responsible for managing the financial aspects of the project. By 2040, the project aims to accommodate over 45,000 individuals, featuring 7,000 office units, metro railway connectivity and approximately 40-storey high-rise buildings. Emphasising Transport-Oriented

Development, the project will promote the use of public transportation with convenient connections to transit services like metro bus services and water taxis. Previous reports indicate that pedestrian activity and cycle infrastructure will help reduce the carbon footprint by minimising the use of private vehicles.

Focus on Oman's potential as green hydrogen hub

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The Sultanate of Oman's potential to become a hydrogen hub is in focus at the 'H2-diplo Decarbonisation Dialogue — Investing in Green Growth: Oman's role as a front runner in the Green Hydrogen Market' at the Crowne Plaza Muscat on October 16. H2-diplo Decarbonisation Dialogue is based on the fact that the potential of hydrogen for decarbonisation has been well established over the years by potentially replacing the usage of fossil fuels, according to the organisers. "Green hydrogen is a multifaceted solution to address climate change. It is now important to set a focus on the attendant questions on how to implement the necessary steps and policies to realise this potential to support the global strive to move away from fossil fuels," said Maria Noack, Adviser, H2-diplo Decarbonisation Diplomacy. This event is expected to showcase how Oman has already implemented necessary policies and started developing a green hydrogen sector in a very fast, structured and unique manner. Oman considers hydrogen as a



H2-diplo Decarbonisation Dialogue to be held on October 16 in Muscat

solution for the decarbonisation of hard-to-abate sectors and boosting economic development, taking in to consideration the country's role as an important energy exporter for Europe and Asia into the future. "Therefore, Oman is also a key partner for Germany to secure future hydrogen imports for its decarbonisation." The event takes place against the backdrop of a delegation visit of the H2-Global foundation and aims to facilitate the dialogue between key players from public, private and scientific institutions on the chances and challenges hydrogen poses for global decarbonisation efforts in general and specifically for Oman. The discussions are thereby contributing to a targeted effort within the broader

development and climate agenda. Tilman Enders, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Germany, will welcome the audience while Dirk Lölke, Ambassador, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany to Oman will welcome Eng Salim al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals. Abdulaziz al Shaithani, Managing Director, Hydrom will present keynote presentation "Oman's Green Hydrogen Ecosystem: A Vision for Global Energy Leadership", and Markus Exenberger, Executive Director, H2-Global Foundation will follow the presentation titled "H2Global — Unlocking the clean hydrogen market". Various panels will be held as part of the event with the first one being "The Path to Net-Zero: Kick-

Starting Green Hydrogen Trade Moderation. Dr Ruth Prelicz, Senior Advisor, H2-diplo/ AHK-Oman; Dr Firas al Abduwani, Director General, Renewable Energy and Hydrogen, Ministry of Energy and Minerals; Ghalib al Maamari, Chief Business Development, OQ Alternative Energy; Quentin Blommaert, Head Decarbonisation Office Riyadh, H2-diplo; Eiman Al Haj Hussien, Senior Economy & Trade Officer, Embassy of the Netherlands; and Thomas Schrepffer, Senior VP Business Development & Origination Natural Gas and Hydrogen, VNG will be part of the panel. The second panel will focus on 'Creating the Enabling Environment for Green Hydrogen: Skills and Financing Moderation. Maria Noack, Advisor, H2-diplo/ GIZ; Rumaitha al Busaidy, Business and ICV Development Manager, Hydrom; Pauline Raabe, Project Manager Outreach, H2-Global Foundation; Thomas Van Lith, VP Project Finance, Deutsche Bank; Prof Dr Michael Braun, Rector, GUTech; and Manish Dhameja, Head of Wholesale Banking, Sohar International Bank will join the discussions. Dirk Lölke, Ambassador of Germany to Oman will deliver the closing remarks followed by a networking session.



GREEN MOBILITY WITH BICYCLES

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ACROSS the world, including in smaller cities and towns, bicycles and small scooters are available for rent on an hourly basis. This initiative has gained momentum in recent times due to the emphasis placed on green mobility because it helps people avoid private vehicles. Cycling for an hour or two is also a good exercise option and it will help people who are usually confined to car seats and office chairs most of the day.

The same initiative should be successfully implemented on a large scale in the Sultanate of Oman, primarily by offering opportunities to small and medium businesses. Instead of depending on foreign companies, young Omanis should be provided with the infrastructure and investment to start such a business, which will surely be one of the strongest initiatives in our fight against climate change, global warming, and carbon emissions. Some may argue that the scorching sun in the Sultanate of Oman for most of the year offers a limited window of opportunity for cycle rides, but there is still some scope as both residents and citizens of the Sultanate of Oman do spend a good amount on subscription fees for gyms. Speaking to the Observer, a few citizens who just returned from vacations abroad during the summer said they wonder why we do not have bicycle rentals here when they are available in the smallest towns of most countries in Europe. Moshen, a public sector employee, is one of them. He said, “Despite the talk on eco-friendliness, people here in the Sultanate of Oman are not ready to give up their private vehicles on one side, and on the other side, there are few efforts to provide them with an efficient alternative such as electric bicycles and electric scooters for rent. The climate here does not advocate for non-air-conditioned mobility all the time, but certainly, we can provide such facilities at parks and waterfronts in the evenings through app-based payment services, as it is the trend in the world.”

CYCLING TRACKS

The authorities should also set up dedicated cycling tracks near schools in residential areas so that students can opt for bicycle rides instead of being picked up and dropped off in private cars and buses. A few years back, Muscat Municipality had initiated an O’Bike self-service bicycle service in Muttrah Waterfront, and it received a good response from youngsters in particular. “Such services should be launched on a large scale across the city, encouraging people to walk and ride during their walks.” Sources in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MoHUP) said that new upcoming townships, including the larger ones like the Sustainable Yiti Project, will have dedicated tracks that will give a boost to bicycle rental services.

Green activists argue that trips made by adults are generally for household errands and typically require less than 2 to 3 km of travel. People can be encouraged to go green by resorting to bicycles and electric bikes by placing them at strategic locations for a small price.

QUICKTAKES



Programme part of Sur, the Arab Tourism Capital for 2024

Flood and water rescue training held in Sur

SUR: As part of the executive programme for Sur, the Arab Tourism Capital for 2024, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MOHT), in cooperation with Muscat Yacht Club, is organising two training courses in open water and flood rescue in the Wilayat of Sur from October 6 to 10.

This initiative is part of a capacity-building programme aimed at empowering the local community in the tourism sector and workers in tourism establishments across various fields to enhance and develop the tourism sector.

The two training courses target 20 participants from the local community, with 10 young trainees receiving instruction on rescue skills in Wadi Shab. The course programme aims to equip trainees with the knowledge and skills related to rescue operations to reduce drowning incidents in floodwaters.

Finale of cyber security competition held



MUSCAT: Dr Said al Rubaiei, Vice-Chancellor of University of Technology and Applied Sciences, presided over the finale of the Cybersecurity Competition “Cython2024”, organised by the Ministry of Education and University of Technology and Applied Sciences at the HCT Auditorium, where winners were honoured.

Among the school section, the first-place winners were "The Defcons" team, second came the "Cyber_Flood" team, and third were "ExploitNinjas" team. From the University section, the first-place winner was "The Default" team, second came "NeonFloyd" team, and the third place came "SQU-Injection" team. Dr Ahmed al Maamari, Assistant Vice-Chancellor, delivered the University's speech at the ceremony, and praised all the efforts done by the students through their sportsmanship, expressing his satisfaction with the students' accomplishments. He said: "Our commitment in developing the Cybersecurity is rooted within our realisation for its significance in the new age of technology, the challenges of the Information Security require preparing a generation capable of facing such challenges with efficacy and solutions".

Oman comes first in Kuwait research competition

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 8

THE Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Education, "Innovation and Scientific Olympiad Department", came in first at the Arab level in the "Intermediate Stage" category in the Shaikha Fadia Al Saad al Sabah Scientific Competition for Research and Projects for Girls in Kuwait. The winning project is "Biocide from Jasmine Leaves" by Rahaf bint Walid al Shiliyah and Fatima bint Yusef al Maawliyah, grade 9 students at Durat Al Hashemia Basic Education School in Al Batinah South Governorate, under the supervision of Saad al Hasani, biology teacher.

The first day of the competition included student exhibition and dialogue sessions for a number of academics titled: Education of the Future (Innovation and Technology for Sustainability). The second day included dialogue sessions for a group of academics and specialists on Education of the Future (Creative Skills



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for Effective Sustainable Education), and a ceremony announcing the results under the auspices of Shaikha Fadia Al Saad al Sabah.

The Sultanate of Oman's participation in the competition aims to explore various global ideas, innovations, and technical projects, enhance students' skills, and develop their scientific and practical capabilities in the field of innovation, enrich their knowledge, raise efficiency and readiness, and build scientific and practical experiences according to global methodologies.

It is worth noting that the Sheikhha Fadia Al Saad al Sabah Scientific Competition for Research and Projects for Girls was launched in 1999 and is an annual scientific competition organised for female students in middle and high school. It involves presenting scientific innovations according to the STEAM approach in the environmental field in the middle school stage, and in the technical field in its broader areas for the high school stage. This year, a number of twelve countries are participating in the competition.

Walkathon themed 'No One Fights Alone' on Oct 29

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

The Oman Cancer Association's 20th annual walkathon to support cancer patients will be held on October 29 at a new venue — the Oman Automobile Association in the Wilayat of Al Seeb. OCA is aiming for more than 8000 participants this year, and the registrations have already begun.

The details were announced by Dr Wahid al Kharousi, President of OCA, and other officials at a press conference in Muscat on Tuesday. Dr Al Kharousi said the event strengthens social ties and raises awareness of the importance of early detection of cancer and appropriate treatment.

“The number one factor in the care of cancer patients is to make them feel they are not alone. In a way, we symbolise it with a hug. It shows he or she is not alone. In addition, the walkathon is a programme to educate our children on what cancer is. They need to hear the word cancer. Thirdly, the networking that happens during the event is important,” explained Dr Al Kharousi.

Over the years, in these walks, thousands of people of different ages and backgrounds have come together to participate in the group walk to raise awareness and raise funds to support research and development of treatments. The association also adopts short-term and long-term awareness programs and campaigns to educate cancer



Dr Wahid al Kharousi, President of OCA, and other officials at a press conference in Muscat Governorate on Tuesday

patients and their families.

The Oman Automobile Association has prepared a specific path for the participants to walk together, carrying an expressive symbol that symbolises hope and courage.

Sulaiman al Rawahi, Director-General of the OAA, stressed the association's social role and that it welcomes such events, as the association hosts international and local events that receive thousands of audiences. He stated that the walkathon is also an opportunity for patients and their families to communicate with the support community and share their experiences and success stories in confronting this health issue. He added that the Oman Automobile Association is also interested in such events that support the positive spirit and optimism among the participants.

Speaking to the media, Dr Manal al Zadjali,

OCA Secretary-General, highlighted the slogan of the walk, which is “No One Fights Alone.”

"OCA has branches across the country, and so we will have walks in the governorates of: Dhofar, Al Sharqiyah North, Al Sharqiyah South, Al Batinah North, Al Batinah South and Al Dakhiliyah on separate days. They are also creating awareness about cancer and its prevention. So it is not just OCA in Muscat Governorate doing the awareness; it is also there in other governorates," said Dr Al Zadjali.

“The annual walk of the Oman Cancer Association reflects the spirit of resistance, challenge, and hope. Seeing thousands of individuals walk side by side, expressing their solidarity and support for cancer patients, inspires us and reminds us of the importance of spiritual strength in the face of challenges,” said the organising team, which also has members who are fighting cancer.

The Board of Directors of the Omani Association expressed its thanks and deep gratitude to the Omani government, the sponsoring bodies, and the Oman Automobile Association. Dr Al Kharousi called on the media, civil society institutions, and public and private sector organisations to join forces to raise community awareness and support patients through global campaigns to confront cancer and, by participating in these events, to raise awareness and collect donations that enhance medical research and work to develop treatments.

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CHARGER RECALLED OVER SAFETY CONCERNS

In a step to ensure consumer safety, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has recalled the ASKSTORM 40W charger manufactured by IKEA after it was found incompatible with the required standards. In a statement, the ministry said this alert came after the Directorate-General for Specifications and Measurements (DGSM) had responded to a notification from the 'Gulf Urgent' system concerning the recall of the ASKSTORM 40W charger.



مدائن
madayn

BIDDING ANNOUNCEMENT

The Public Authority for Industrial Estates (MADAYN) is pleased to announce a tender in Buraimi Industrial City for investors, contractors and developers to construct and develop an integrated fuel station.

opportunity Number	Project Name	Last date of bidding	Date of submission	Fee (R.O)
2/2024	Constructing and Developing an Integrated Fuel Station	17/10/2024	7/11/2024	20

The following procedures apply:

1. Tender Documents can be obtained from Madayn Support Department at Buraimi Industrial City (Tel: 25657768 / 25657764) during official working hours, against non-refundable fee as mentioned above.
2. Completed bids according to the terms of the tender document shall be deposited in the Bid Box at Buraimi Industrial City administration office before 12 pm on the specified date.
3. For further inquiries, please contact us at, 25657756

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Recall

TOYOTA & LEXUS

RECALL DATE: 09/10/2024

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production*	Number of Affected Commodities#
Toyota Land Cruiser	January 11,2021 through June 19,2024	8795
Lexus LX600	July 8,2021 through May 28,2024	2503

*Not all vehicles in this production period, are affected.
#Subject to revision, based on the information received from the manufacturer, from time to time.

Recall consequence

Due to insufficient examination of the engine control software in the engine control computer, the effect of the electrical control cooling fan operation was not considered, resulting that the engine output does not meet specifications at wide-open throttle.

Recall Action

To reprogram the Engine ECU

To check the serial Numbers of the affected commodities, please visit the website for Recalls & Warnings: <http://recall.pacp.gov.sa>



SAUD BAHWAN Group

Saud Bahwan Automotive LLC
CR 1703412
Contact details: Toll free - 80073000
Working days: Sunday - Thursday
Working Time: 8:00 - 17:00 hrs.



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WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Japan's new PM Shigeru Ishiba delivers inaugural policy address, in Tokyo. — AFP file photo

JAPAN PM TO HOLD TALKS ON ASEAN SIDELINES

TOKYO: Japan's new Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba will hold talks this week on the sidelines of the ASEAN summit in Laos, a top official said on Tuesday, meeting China's premier among others according to media reports. Ishiba will visit Laos from Thursday through Saturday "to attend ASEAN-related summits", deputy chief cabinet secretary Keiichiro Tachibana said, referring to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations regional bloc.

On the sidelines of the multilateral meetings, Ishiba plans to have bilateral summits which are still being coordinated, Tachibana told reporters. Media reports said these will include talks with Chinese Premier Li Qiang, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Anthony Albanese of Australia. "ASEAN-related summits are important forums where major countries in the Indo-Pacific region gather," Tachibana said. — AFP



Bangladesh's Chief Adviser of the interim Government Muhammad Yunus speaks during a press conference, in Dhaka. — AFP file photo

YUNUS SAYS NO ELECTIONS BEFORE REFORMS

DHAKA: Bangladesh's interim leader has refused to give a timeframe for elections following the ouster of his autocratic predecessor, saying in an interview published on Tuesday that reforms are needed before polls. The 84-year-old microfinance pioneer is helping a temporary administration, to tackle what he has called the "extremely tough" challenge of restoring democratic institutions.

"None of us are aiming at staying for a prolonged time," Yunus said of his caretaker government, in an interview published by the Prothom Alo newspaper. "Reforms are pivotal," he added. "If you say, hold the election, we are ready to hold the election. But it would be wrong to hold the election first."

Yunus said he had inherited a "completely broken down" system of public administration that needed a comprehensive overhaul to prevent a future return to autocracy. "Reforms mean we will not allow a repetition of what happened in the past," he added. — AFP

India's BJP wins Haryana vote in boost of PM Modi

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) headed for a surprise election victory in Haryana state on Tuesday, reinforcing its popularity in the northern heartland a few months after stumbling in national elections.

But the main opposition Congress party, which had been projected by exit polls to win Haryana, said it would not accept the result as it

was "totally unexpected, completely surprising and counter-intuitive". The Congress reaction was unusual in the world's most populous democracy where the credibility of elections has rarely been questioned in recent decades.

Held in phases that ended on Saturday, the provincial elections posed Modi's first test of popularity since his return in June as prime minister for a record third straight term.

Provincial elections are mostly decided by local issues and the BJP was projected to lose Haryana due to anti-incumbency sentiment after ruling it for a decade.

"I salute the people of Haryana for giving a clear majority," Modi posted on X in his first reaction. "This is the victory of the politics of development and good governance. I assure people that we will leave no stone unturned to fulfil their aspirations." — Reuters



Women walk amid damaged tents following an Israeli air strike on the Bureij refugee camp. — AFP

STRIKES KILL 17 PEOPLE IN GAZA

GAZA: Gaza's civil defence agency on Tuesday said an Israeli strike killed at least 17 people at a refugee camp in the centre of the territory. "The civil defence teams recovered 17 martyrs, including children, and several others who were wounded from the three-storey home of the Abdul Hadi family, which was bombed by a missile from an Israeli warplane in Al Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza," agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal said in a statement.

Bassal said the bodies of those killed and the wounded were taken to Al Awda hospital in Nuseirat camp and to Al Aqsa Martyrs hospital in the city of Deir Al Balah. Medics at Al Awda confirmed the toll. Witnesses and rescuers also said Israeli military operations continued in Jabaliya, where troops launched a ground assault in recent days. — AFP

UN aid workers fear Lebanon warfare

UN officials voiced concern on Tuesday that the same methods of warfare used by Israel that caused high civilian casualties and widespread destruction in Gaza are now being repeated in Lebanon, calling for action to avoid the same "spiral of doom". Israeli forces have begun ground operations in the southwest of Lebanon, escalating a year-long conflict that has killed over 1,000 people in the past two weeks and prompted the mass flight of over a million people.

In the Gaza Strip, nearly 42,000 Palestinians have been killed and most of the 2.3 million population displaced in the war triggered by the October 7, 2023 cross-border attack in which Palestinian gunmen killed 1,200 people and took 250 captives.

"It is in my mind, from the time I awake until the time I sleep, that we could go into the same sort of spiral of doom, and we need to do everything we can to stop that from happening in this particular crisis," World Food Programme Country Director in Lebanon Matthew Hollingworth said in response to a question about parallels between the two conflicts.

Israel's campaign against Hezbollah aims to secure the return home of Israelis evacuated from areas near the border as a result of nearly a year of Hezbollah rocket fire into northern Israel in support of Hamas. "We need the world to be more impactful and able to make the arguments that this cannot go on," Hollingworth told a Geneva briefing by video link from Beirut.

Fears of a repeat of Gaza's upheaval are also shared by the Lebanese population and this explains why so many have fled



A child looks on while families sit in their temporary shelter in a park in the centre of Beirut. — Reuters

so quickly, Hollingworth said after visiting displacement camps.

A World Health Organization official said at the same briefing that nine hospitals in Lebanon had been shut or partially shut - a pattern that has also occurred in Gaza.

Ian Clarke, WHO's Deputy Incident Manager for Lebanon, warned of disease outbreaks in Lebanon due to crowded conditions in displacement shelters and

hospital closures as medics have fled Israel's assault.

The UN human rights office has previously said that Israeli forces may have repeatedly violated the laws of war in Gaza. Its spokesperson Jeremy Laurence said on Tuesday that the "same means and methods of warfare" are being used in Lebanon. Israel denies violating the laws of war, saying its conflict is with Palestinian groups not Palestinians in general. — Reuters

CORRUPTION CHARGE

Deputy president faces impeachment



Kenya's parliament was set to vote on Tuesday on impeaching Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua in a political drama that has exposed a rift in the governing party. Lawmakers have accused him of corruption, undermining the government and practising divisive politics. Gachagua denied the accusations, saying it was a scheme to hound him out of office. — AFP

DEMANDING JUSTICE

Sri Lanka orders new probe into bombings



Sri Lanka's new government announced a probe on Tuesday into 2019 Easter bombings that killed 279 people, saying that previous investigations had failed to identify other culprits responsible for the attack. "There have been several commissions of inquiry, but some evidence was suppressed," Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath said. President Dissanayake dismissed intelligence chief. — AFP

VIOLENCE VICTIMS

Nearly a million displaced in DR Congo



Nearly a million people within the Democratic Republic of Congo have been displaced from their homes this year, the UN human rights chief said on Tuesday. Volker Turk said the situation in the country was deteriorating by the day, and voiced alarm at the growing numbers on death row. He said the number of victims of human rights violations was continuing to rise. — AFP

MIGRATIONSURGE



People walk looking at a view of Tower Bridge in the financial district in London. — Reuters file photo

UK POPULATION RISES, DRIVEN BY IMMIGRATION

LONDON: The United Kingdom's population grew by 1 per cent in annual terms to 68.3 million as of mid-2023, mainly due to high immigration, official data showed on Tuesday. Net international migration was the main contributor to the population increase for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland - which together form the UK - in the year to mid-2023, Britain's Office for National Statistics said.

The natural change in population, which is the difference between births and deaths, fell by 16,300. Previous projections from the ONS suggested a negative reading would not occur until the mid-2030s. Britain has seen high immigration in recent years from economic migrants and those who arrive via irregular crossings in small boats - a hot political topic because of stretched public services after years of under-investment. Record immigration caused the population of England and Wales to rise by 610,000 in mid-2023, the largest annual rise in 75 years. — Reuters



MILTON ROARS TOWARDS FLORIDA

Contractors put plywood over windows at the El Encanto Building ahead of Hurricane Milton expected landfall, in Florida. — Reuters

New French prime minister faces first no-confidence motion

PARIS: France's new Prime Minister, Michel Barnier, on Tuesday faced a motion of no confidence brought by the left, which is set to underline the fragility of his government even while having little chance of succeeding.

Barnier, a right-wing former European Union Brexit negotiator, was appointed by centrist President Emmanuel Macron to bring some stability in a potentially testy "cohabitation" across the political divide after inconclusive legislative elections earlier this summer.

The veteran premier, 73, has since sought to firmly take the reins, warning that France faces finan-

cial crisis if its budget deficit is not narrowed and saying that tax rises could be in order for high earners.

Macron, whose presidential term runs until 2027, has in the last weeks taken a noticeable back seat, especially on domestic issues, while making uncharacteristically infrequent public comments. The appointment of Barnier, a patrician figure who served stints as a minister and EU commissioner, has also been a contrast for the French.

They have seen three premiers who were almost unknown before their appointment come and go in the space of four years. But Barnier and his government, named last

Hungary to hold up G7 loan to Ukraine

HUNGARY will hold up a final deal on a (\$50 billion) G7 loan to Ukraine until after the US presidential election by delaying its decision on the timing of the renewal of EU sanctions against Russia, Hungary's finance minister said. Washington needs the EU to revise its timeframe for the renewal of sanctions to every three years from the current six months for it to contribute some (\$20 billion) to the G7 loan, matching the European Union's contribution, EU officials said.

The remaining (\$10 billion) would be provided by G7 members Canada, Britain and Japan, who are already on board.

The loan, agreed in principle by G7 leaders in June, would be serviced with proceeds generated by some (\$300 billion) of Russian central bank assets frozen in the West after Moscow attacked Ukraine in early 2022.

Washington does not want to worry every six months whether the Russian assets backing the loan will remain frozen or not, the officials said. "We believe that this issue, the prolongation of the Russian sanctions, should be decided after the US elections. We have to see in which direction the future US administration is going with this issue," Finance Minister Mihaly Varga told a news conference.

The European Union has said that the proceeds from all the Russian assets frozen in the West can finance a loan of up to



Locals stand at the site of a Russian drone strike, in the city of Chornomorsk, Odesa region, Ukraine. — AFP

(€45 billion). Because most of the assets are in Europe, the EU said it can provide up to (€35 billion) for the G7 loan.

The issue will be further discussed at the G7 finance ministers meeting in Washington in late October, but Hungary's decision means that the final contributions of each of the G7 countries will only be decided after the November 5 election.

Meanwhile, Ukraine cannot win the war

with Russia on the battlefield, and communication and a ceasefire are needed to save lives, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said on Tuesday at a news conference in Strasbourg.

Orban added that both direct and indirect communication is needed between the warring parties and it was a part of international politics that a third party mediates between them. — Reuters

US expecting foreign actors to question election

US adversaries are preparing to stoke uncertainty about the validity of the Nov. 5 presidential election results after polls close, anticipating a contested vote, a senior US intelligence official said. In a briefing to reporters on the election influence activities of Russia, China, Iran and Cuba, US intelligence officials said "foreign influence actors" would likely work to sow doubt about the results.

Foreign actors would likely seek to use the uncertainty of a contested election to undermine trust in the integrity of the election and election processes and exacerbate divisions among Americans, according to the US intelligence official.

Russia sought to encourage the US public to oppose pro-Ukrainian policies, while actors linked to China's government were focused on "tens" of down-ballot races.

The US intelligence official said Beijing is seeking to influence congressional races

Foreign actors would likely seek to use the uncertainty of a contested election to undermine trust in the integrity of the election and election processes and exacerbate divisions.

with candidates regardless of their party affiliation, perceived by Beijing to threaten its core interests. The official did not provide an assessment of what impact the efforts might have.

Liu Pengyu, the spokesperson for China's embassy in Washington, called the claims "groundless speculation." "China is not interested in the US congressional election, and we have no intention and will not interfere in it," Liu said.

The intelligence community had not yet observed Iran seeking to influence state or congressional races but did assess its aim was to push voters toward supporting Vice-President Kamala Harris, the Democratic Party's presidential candidate.

That view had not changed since September when US officials also said Russia sought to denigrate Harris in favour of her Republican rival, former president Donald Trump.

Countries would seek to "launder their narratives" through witting and unwitting

American voices and stoke divisions in society on several issues, the official said.

Cuba was also likely targeting Latino and Spanish-speaking voters on social media with an aim to promote candidates it thought would be favourable to its interests.

Intelligence officials said they had delivered three times the number of "defensive briefings" to candidates, campaigns and election officials about influence operations compared to prior election cycles, including on efforts by Russia, China and Iran. But they said US voting systems and election workers were the most prepared they have ever been.

An official with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency said the US has election infrastructure that is "more secure than any prior election cycle, and we do believe the election community is more prepared for the incidents that may arise than any prior cycle."

— Reuters



month with a conspicuously right-wing tinge, could be toppled at any moment if a no-confidence motion were passed in the National Assembly, the lower house of parliament.

The left-wing New Popular Front (NFP) won the most seats of any coalition in the polls, even if the far-right National Rally (RN) emerged as the largest single party, and is still livid that Macron failed to appoint a left-winger as prime minister.

"The existence of this government, in its composition and its orientation, is a negation of the result of the legislative elections," states the motion, which is due to be put forward by Socialist Party (PS)

leader Olivier Faure.

The left has also been angered by the hardline stances of the new interior minister, Bruno Retailleau, who has said there should be a referendum on immigration, although he admitted this was not possible under the constitution. "This will be the moment of truth. We will see who opposes the government and who does not," Faure said, accusing the government of "turning its back" on the election results.

However, the motion put forward by the NFP—a coalition of Socialists, Communists, hard-leftists, and Greens—has little chance of succeeding. — AFP

OPINION

Focusing on our blessings during times of sorrow



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Hyesha is a certified Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner based in Muscat

THIS UNPREDICTABLE JOURNEY of life, intricately woven by moments of joy is also interspersed with periods of sorrow. The weighted ever-consuming occurrences can easily be devoured by anguish and pain. Not spiritually bypassing our valid feelings, but intentionally shifting our focus towards our blessings will help cultivate resilience and provide a sense of peace. On the contrary to denying the blows that hardship makes us endure, the benevolence we need to take heed in will mitigate the otherwise painful relationship we have towards adversities.

Sorrow is an integral part of the human experience. It accompanies loss, failure and change, manifesting in various forms such as sadness, grief or emotional pain. Understanding that unhappiness is a natural response to life’s tribulations can help normalise our feelings, allowing us to process them rather than suppress. Acknowledging distress is the first step toward healing, enabling us to seek a grounded perspective amid turmoil.

Gratitude is a transformative practice

that can significantly alter our emotional state. Research shows that cultivating appreciation can improve mental well-being, increase resilience while fostering a more positive outlook on life. During difficult times, making a conscious effort to reflect on what we are grateful for, even the smallest blessings can shift our mindset.

VULNERABLE MOMENTS

Sorrow can make us feel isolated, but it is essential to remember that we are not alone in our suffering. Leaning on our community can provide immense comfort. In these vulnerable moments, we often find that others are willing to share their struggles as well, creating a collective understanding that can be healing. Recognising that we have the ability to support others rekindles our sense of agency and can unveil blessings in our own lives.

Another significant way to focus on our blessings during sadness is by finding meaning within our struggles. Oftentimes, adversity can lead to personal growth, new insights and a deeper

While sorrow is an inevitable part of our journey, focusing on our blessings amidst the pain can foster healing and growth.

appreciation for life. Reflecting on the lessons learned during difficult times can lead to a newfound spirit and gratitude for both the highs and lows of life.

Key moments such as acknowledging and honouring your feelings without judgement reiterates that they are valid - as feelings need to be heard in order to heal. Finding healthy outlets of expression are vital, active communication through talking or journalling helps. Also conscious and focus breathing, present moment alertness, routine and ritual rhythms, daily structures and self-care practises will limit angst.

While sorrow is an inevitable part of our journey, focusing on our blessings amidst the pain can foster healing and growth. Through practicing gratitude, building connections, engaging in mindfulness and seeking meaning in our experiences, we can navigate through life’s challenges with grace and strength.

Through this intentional focus, we not only honour our sorrow but also celebrate the blessings that enrich our lives. Remember, healing and growth often come from messy and difficult moments.

WORLDWIDE DEFORESTATION CONTINUES APACE

Deforestation continued last year at a rate far beyond pledges to end the practice by 2030, according to a major study published on Tuesday.

Forests nearly the size of Ireland were lost in 2023, according to two dozen research organisations, NGOs and advocacy groups, with 6.37 million hectares (15.7 million acres) of trees felled and burned. This “significantly exceeded” levels that would have kept the world on track to eliminate deforestation by the end of the decade, a commitment made in 2021 by more than 140 leaders.

Forests are home to 80 per cent of the world’s terrestrial plant and animal species and crucial for regulating water cycles and sequestering CO2, the main greenhouse gas responsible for global warming. “Globally, deforestation has gotten worse, not better, since the beginning of the decade,” said Ivan Palmegiani, a biodiversity and

land use consultant at Climate Focus and lead author of the “Forest Declaration Assessment” report.

In 2023, 3.7 million hectares of tropical primary forest disappeared, a figure that should have fallen significantly to meet the 2030 objective.

“We’re only six years away from a critical global deadline to end deforestation, and forests continue to be chopped down, degraded, and set

ablaze at alarming rates.”

In 2023, 3.7 million hectares of tropical primary forest — particularly carbon rich and ecologically biodiverse environments — disappeared, a figure that should have fallen significantly to meet the 2030 objective. In high-risk regions, researchers pointed to backsliding in Bolivia and in Indonesia.

The report said there was an “alarming rise” in deforestation in Bolivia, which jumped 351 per cent between 2015 and 2023.

The “trend shows no sign of abating”, it added, with forests largely cleared for agriculture, notably for soya but also beef and sugar.

In Indonesia, deforestation slumped between 2020-2022 but started rising sharply last year.

Ironically, that is partly down to demand for materials often seen as eco-friendly, such as viscose for clothing, and a surge in nickel mining for electric vehicle batteries and renewable energy technologies.

There was better news from Brazil.

While it remains the country with the highest deforestation rates in the world, it has made key progress. The situation has significantly improved in the Amazon, which has benefited from protective measures put in place by President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. — AFP



KHALID AL SAFI AL HURAIBI
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To safeguard our future, Oman will benefit from investing in sustainable and resilient emerging tech human and technical capabilities.

FOUR CENTURIES ago, at the height of Portuguese imperialism, Oman began a defining struggle for liberation under the leadership of Imam Nasser bin Murshid al Yaarubi. This effort eventually freed Oman’s coastal towns, parts of the Gulf, and East Africa from a brutal colonisation that lasted nearly 140 years.

The scars of that era — devastated towns and the brutal treatment of Omani people — remain part of our collective memory. During a recent visit to charming Lisbon, home of the world’s largest emerging technologies Web Summit, I was reminded of this history when I saw a plaque in a lavish royal palace that read, “financed by gains from the colonies.”

The prosperity of the Portuguese empire was built on wealth extracted from its colonies, including Oman. This reminder underscores that geopolitical orders, past and present, have lasting impacts. Today, we see similar dynamics playing out, but

in different forms.

As we navigate the complexities of the 21st century, Oman finds itself in a region witnessing the emergence of a new global disorder. The expansionist ambitions of the illegal Israeli occupation as declared by the UN’s International Court of Justice, supported by Western powers, are a clear signal of a new geopolitical agenda already unfolding. These forces aim to establish long-term brutal dominance over the region.

To thrive in this emerging world order, Oman must focus on three key areas: education, emerging technologies, and regional cooperation. These pillars will be critical as we confront both unprecedented challenges and opportunities.

The new world disorder is marked by aggressive attempts to control the region through emerging technologies. By 2025, Oman and its neighbours will likely face increasing pressure on two fronts: an insistence on submitting to Israeli supremacist, colonial settler policies through edu-

cational curricula and growing reliance on Western technologies, which we learned now are compromised.

The recent cyber-attacks on Lebanon, where Israeli occupation forces exploited vulnerabilities in communication systems, serve as a stark warning of the dangers of technological dependence.

To safeguard our future, Oman will benefit from investing in sustainable and resilient emerging tech human and technical capabilities. Building reliable capabilities and securing procurement and supply chains will ensure that we are not left vulnerable to colonial, supremacist powers, again. The strategic importance of these investments cannot be overstated.

As Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy emphasised, this cycle of violence is unsustainable.

Oman’s long-standing position as a voice for peace and diplomacy is not only morally right but strategically necessary. We understand, as history has shown, that peace cannot be achieved through force alone.

Globally, we are witnessing an unprecedented rise in dissent. From Western capitals to university campuses, millions are challenging political regimes that no longer represent their people.

The digital age has empowered citizens to expose fake rhetoric about ‘working tirelessly for a ceasefire’ in real-time, and the well-documented war crimes of the genocide in Palestine and Lebanon, broadcast globally, have ignited a new wave of resistance against the illegal Israeli occupation and its accomplices in the US, UK, EU, and the our region.

For Oman, this global unrest presents both a challenge and an opportunity. On the one hand, we must remain vigilant against unwise external powers treating destabilising the region as an experimental scenario, with a total disregard for our lives. On the other, we must stand firm in our principles, just as we did against the Portuguese in 1624.

Our condemnation of illegal occupation and colonisation, whether in the past or present, reflects our unwavering commitment to international law and justice.

Parents too have a problem with screen time



SAMUEL KUTTY
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The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

PHONES ARE TOOLS that help us connect to family and friends, learn, and see delightful things about the world. But if we do not keep a balance in their use, they can turn out to be problematic on occasions.

Look at the mindless and excessive use of phones; they very often play spoilsport in the cherished relationship between parents and children. It's not just children alone struggling with too much screen time; their parents are also attached to their devices.

Many parents use the common phrase "just a minute" instead of putting the phone down for a few seconds and answering the queries of their children. The effects of such phrases are that children feel left out and not enough to be loved. It makes them sad, angry, and even lonely.

While many parents set rules to limit their kids' electronics time, sadly they do not follow any of them! They often set rules they don't always intend to follow. Keeping phones out of the bedroom is a common rule among parents, yet this rule doesn't often apply to the parents!

When children see their parents using smartphones, they need not necessarily know that they are sending some official messages, doing some banking work, ordering the groceries, or finishing off the daily work. What they see

is that their mom or dad is busy on the phone and not with them!

True, from children to older people, all need a phone. We cannot think of spending a moment without them, whether it is for scrolling through social media feeds, checking mail or messages, watching movies, playing games, etc. Unfortunately, some family members spend too much time on their phones without setting any boundaries or common sense.

According to a study, parents across the US spend nearly five hours a day on electronic devices. Those same parents spend less than four hours a day actively engaged with their kids!

"Parents who stare at their screens instead of talking to their kids aren't just modelling poor behaviour — they could be hindering their children's development," CNN reported recently, quoting new research.

A friend of mine recently told me that when he returned home from work, he found his whole family using their respective mobile phones while sitting on a bed together.

It has been common in many houses that parents give mobile phones to children so they do not irritate them when they are otherwise engaged.

They do so to distract them while they eat as well, to avoid any fussy behaviour.

Many parents use the common phrase 'just a minute' instead of putting the phone down for a few seconds and answering the queries of their children

It is not long ago that two siblings filed a case against their parents in Indian court alleging "mental harassment" due to restrictions on their screen time. The case highlighted a broader debate about the role of screen time in children's lives and the extent to which parents can control it.

Their parents were quoted by newspapers as arguing in the court that "every house is troubled by the children's addiction to mobile" and "scolding children is a normal thing. This happens in every house."

Though work and home-life duties make it difficult for parents to switch off and limit their own phone use, at least they can do it during family time, and time with children on their own is the key for happy parenting, happy children, positive relationships and strong connections.

Parents, please remember your children need attention to feel secure and confident.

After all, they learn and develop their behaviour by watching you, and this includes screen use!

Be aware of the importance of being in the moment. The people you ignore while on your phone will someday be gone. While you are immersed in calls and not answering the dear ones, do not forget that you are missing the life that is taking place in front of you.

Nobel literature jury may go for non-Western writer

NIOUCHA ZAKAVATI

The Nobel Prize in Literature has honoured predominantly Western writers since it was first awarded in 1901, but the Swedish Academy may shine its spotlight further afield this year, experts say. With no official shortlist, speculation is rife on who the Nobel committee will settle on, with their decision due to be revealed on Thursday at 1:00 pm.

Many believe Chinese author Can Xue -- the favourite on several betting sites -- will win, with Australian novelist Gerald Murnane also tipped. Often likened to Franz Kafka, Can's experimental style transforms the mundane into the surreal. The academy is known for its penchant for bringing lesser-known authors to a wider audience.

"I think they've gone to great pains to find some writer that will catch the culture commentariat with their pants down," Bjorn Wiman, culture editor at Sweden's newspaper of record, Dagens Nyheter, said. That was the case in 2021 -- when Zanzibar-born British author Abdulrazak Gurnah was chosen for his work exploring exile, colonialism and racism -- and in 2016, when US folk rock icon Bob Dylan won.

Wiman said the prize could just as easily go to a Mexican or Argentinian writer as an African author.

"I think it will be a woman from a language zone outside Europe," he said. His personal pick would however be British Indian-born author Salman Rushdie.

"But then they will be accused of honouring another middle-aged man," Wiman said.

Last year, the prize went to middle-aged Norwegian playwright Jon Fosse.

Since its creation, the Nobel Prize in Literature has been a Eurocentric, male affair.

Of 120 laureates, only 17 have been women, with eight of them in the past 20 years.

And while 30 English-language authors have won and 16 French-language ones, only one Arabic writer has won: Egypt's Naguib Mahfouz in 1988.

In the case of China, its "literature is very vast", something not reflected in the history of the Nobel, said Carin Franzen, literature professor at Stockholm University. The last Chinese author to win was Mo Yan in 2012.

One explanation for this under-representation could be the judges' lack of linguistic breadth, said Victor Malm, cultural editor at daily Expressen. He predicted a win this year for Antiguan-American Jamaica Kincaid. — AFP



NICK PERRY

The writer is a global climate reporter for the international news agency AFP and is based in Paris



The photo taken on July 6 shows an aerial view of a partially submerged Guanyin temple in floodwaters in the swollen Yangtze River, in Ezhou, in central China's Hubei province. — AFP

THE developing world needs trillions of dollars in climate aid, but who should pay for it? Wealthy nations? Big polluters? Countries that got rich burning fossil fuels? All of the above?

A fight over this question looms at crucial negotiations next month as China and other major emerging economies come under pressure to chip in for climate action in poorer countries.

It is hoped a new deal can be struck at the UN COP29 climate conference to greatly lift financial assistance to countries least able to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to global warming.

The present bill of \$100 billion a year is footed by a list of countries that were the richest and most industrialised at the time the UN climate convention was written up in 1992.

These donors — including the United States, the European Union, Canada, Japan and others — agree more money is needed, and intend to keep paying "climate finance" where it is needed most.

But they want others to share the burden, specifically developing countries that have become more prosperous and polluting in the decades since the original donor list was drawn up.

China — today the world's largest polluter

and second-largest economy — is the obvious target, but Singapore and oil-rich Gulf states could also come under scrutiny.

It is "entirely fair to add new contributing parties, given the ongoing evolution of economic realities and capabilities", the United States wrote in an August submission to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Diplomats from other developed countries have echoed this, arguing that the contributor list is based on outdated notions of rich and poor, and anyone who can pay should pay.

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTORS

Some have proposed revised criteria against which potential contributors might be judged, such as income levels, purchasing power or their emissions of planet-warming greenhouse gases.

Calls to widen the donor base are deeply unpopular and have sparked heated exchanges in the months before COP29, which is being hosted in oil-and-gas-rich Azerbaijan, itself classified as a developing country.

Donors have been accused of forcing the matter onto the negotiating table while refusing to engage on the central question of how much they intend to pay.

For some involved "this was the literal definition of negotiating in bad faith", said Is-

kanderErziniVernoitfrom the Imal Initiative for Climate and Development, a think tank based in Morocco.

It has "taken up a lot of airtime, and a lot of oxygen", he said. "For the sake of all of the poorest, most vulnerable countries of the world, it's not fair to hold the whole thing hostage."

Developing countries are pushing for the strongest possible commitment at COP29 to ensure adequate funding for clean energy projects, defensive sea walls and other climate adaptation measures.

Negotiators are nowhere near landing a concrete figure, but some developing countries are calling for over \$1 trillion annually.

In a UNFCCC submission in August, the EU warned "the collective goal can only be reached if parties with high GHG-emissions (greenhouse gas) and economic capabilities join the effort".

For developing countries, who pays is non-negotiable: the 2015 Paris climate agreement reaffirmed that developed countries disproportionately responsible for global warming to date pick up the tab.

In a joint statement in July, China, India, Brazil and South Africa strongly rejected "attempts by developed countries to dilute their climate finance legal obligations under international law".

Azerbaijan's chief negotiator Yalchin Rafiyev said in September that the gap between the United States and China over the issue was "narrowing", with a "softening" of stances on both sides.

China, like some other developing countries, actually pays climate finance, it just does so on its own terms.

Between 2013 and 2022, China paid on average \$4.5 billion a year to other developing countries, the World Resources Institute (WRI) wrote in a September paper.

This amounted to roughly six per cent of what developed countries paid over the same period, said the US-based think tank. China is not required to report this to the UNFCCC, and it is not counted towards the collective target.

Analysts say any formal additions to the donor list at COP29 are very unlikely, though some countries may agree to voluntary contributions in support of the broader goal.

SPORTS

SEASON 3



Oman GP badminton organisers address the media.

OMAN GRAND PRIX BADMINTON CHAMPIONSHIP TO BEGIN ON NOV 8

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The third Oman Grand Prix Season 3 badminton tournament, the annual championship that badminton players eagerly await, will begin on November 8 at the AMM Sports Arena in Ghala, according to the organisers. The tournament, which will continue until November 16, will see individuals and teams of elite category players from different countries in the Middle East and beyond taking part in exclusive Omani categories, kids' and adults' categories, vying for the top positions in the respective categories.

"This most sought-after tournament promises to showcase some of the best talent in badminton, providing thrilling matches and unforgettable moments. This year, we aim to further strengthen our community impact by encouraging local participation and offering special programmes to inspire the next generation of badminton enthusiasts. Participants and spectators can expect an elevated level of competition, featuring some of the world's top players to help promote the sport in our region," Muhammad Haroos, key

organiser of the event, told Oman Observer.

The Oman Grand Prix badminton tournament began in 2022 with the vision of establishing Oman as a prominent destination for international badminton. The annual tournament aims to provide a platform for talented players from around the world while encouraging local athletes and promoting badminton in the country. By hosting high-quality competitions, the tournament has contributed significantly to the growth of the sport, inspiring young players and fostering a sense of community. It also brings fans together, creating an atmosphere of excitement and celebration of athletic excellence, promising exciting matches, enhanced facilities, and an even more engaging experience for everyone involved.

MUHAMMAD HAROOS

While Season 1 in 2022 set the foundation with thrilling matches that saw talented players display their skills, Season 2 raised the bar with even more intense competition and memorable performances. The past two seasons featured incredible athletes, unforgettable rallies, and fierce rivalries, capturing the attention of fans both locally and internationally.

"We are thrilled to announce that we are now gearing up for Season 3, set to bring even more thrilling matches, fierce competition, and an incredible atmosphere to Oman. Badminton aficionados can look forward to being part of another chapter of excellent badminton action that brings world-class badminton action to the Sultanate of Oman," other organisers — Rengarajan, Rahul, Nishar Mohamed, and Akbar—who were present at the press briefing, said.

Omani sailors celebrate impressive medal haul



THE 13th edition of Oman Sail's Mussanah Race Week proved incredibly successful for the hosts with an impressive haul of 10 medals across five events. Concluding the competition with four gold, two silver, and four bronze, including overall team bronze in the Optimist event, highlights the depth of talent emerging at Oman Sail's Sailing Schools.

Once the waves had calmed and the sailors had returned to shore, the winners received their prizes at a ceremony attended by the Guest of Honour, Eng Masoud bin Said al Hashmi, Governor of Al Batinah South.

Earlier in the day, Oman's Al Moatsem al Farsi put on a masterclass in ILCA 6 sailing to claim victory and take the gold medal. Teammate Hatim al Araimi performed well too on the last day to win bronze. Othman al Hammadi from the UAE finished second to take the silver medal. In the girls' competition, Ibtisam al Salmi finished third, just behind Camelia al Qubaisi of the UAE in first and Maanya Reddy of India in second.

Husain al Jabri led all the way to the finish in the ILCA 7 competition to seal the gold medal for Oman. Teammate Abdulmalik al Hinai showed his determination by rising from third on day two to second on the final day to claim silver. Hamza al Ali of the UAE completed the top three.

Oman's Abdulatif al Qasmi put in a series of great performances to move up the ILCA 4 rankings and take gold on the final day. Ending the first day in fourth, he progressed to second, and a supreme display in the last series of races saw him take gold. Shashank Batham of India finished second, just ahead of Akshat Kumar Dohare of India in third. The ILCA 4 girls' competition was won by Marwa al Hammadi of the UAE, ahead of the Indian pair Somya Singh Patel in second and Shagun Jha in third.

In an all-Omani fleet, the four RS Venture Connect crews continued to switch places right up until the final day. The crew of Zahir al Atabi and Ahmed al Shi-



ILCA 4 Men winners



ILCA 7 overall winners

kaili reclaimed top spot to win the gold, ahead of Sultan al Wahaibi and Adil al Siyabi in second and Ghaliya al Jabri and Malik al Qartobi in third

Abdulla Yahya from the UAE continued his good form to take gold in the Optimist competition ahead of Adison Ein from Thailand in second and UAE teammate Khalifa al Romaithi, who finished third. In the girls' competition, India's Shreya Krishna Lakshminarayanan won the gold medal ahead of teammate Kommaravelly Lahari in second, with Tong Xuan Ya from Thailand completing the top three. The under-12s competition was won by Khalifa al Romaithi of the UAE, ahead of the Thai duo of Chanyacart Ittivorakul in second and Prin Kantharak.

The team racing gold went to Thailand courtesy of the four podium positions, edging the UAE into the silver medal position, while Oman settled for third place and the bronze medal.

Masoud al Hashimi said: "We are delighted to be part of this major sporting event, which brings together sailors from around the world and showcases Oman's efforts to promote maritime sports locally and internationally. Mussanah Race Week highlights the natural assets of Al Batinah South Governorate, positioning it as a prime tourism and sports destination. We commend the broad participation and the successes achieved in competition and organisation, and we appreciate the efforts of the organisers, sponsors, and partners. We look forward to maintaining this excellence in future editions, keeping Oman a top destination for sailing."

Dr Khamis Salim al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail, expressed his satisfaction with the success of the 13th Mussanah Race Week, saying: "This year saw the participation of 104 sailors, making it one of the largest editions. This annual event is designed for emerging sailors worldwide who aspire to professional sailing. The programmes combine theory and practice to sharpen participants' skills and prepare them for success in the sport."

Al Jabri continued: "These activities align with our strategy to boost sports tourism and support the national economy under Oman Vision 2040. Oman Sail has led in hosting over 34 international events, bringing substantial economic, social, and media benefits. Mussanah Sailing School is now a renowned global centre for maritime sports. We were also thrilled that the Netherlands team selected our school as their training venue, contributing to their gold medal win at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games."

"We were also pleased to host the National Judges Workshop, organised by the Asian Sailing Federation, which aimed to empower Asian women in sailing event officiating. Six female judges from Oman Sail were trained through this workshop."

EMERGING ASIA CUP



MOHAMMAD HARIS NAMED PAKISTAN SHAHEENS SKIPPER

MUSCAT: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has given the responsibility to lead Pakistan Shaheens in the forthcoming ACC Men's T20 Emerging Teams Asia Cup in Oman to experienced Mohammad Haris.

According to a PCB release, Haris, who has featured in nine T20Is and six ODIs for Pakistan, will lead Shaheens in the tournament, commencing at Oman Cricket Academy ground in Al Amerat from October 18.

The team is expected to arrive in Muscat on October 16. Prior to their travel, the squad will undergo a camp at the Hanif Mohammad High-Performance Centre in Karachi from October 11-15.

Abdul Samad, Ahmed Daniyal, Yasir Khan and Zaman Khan will represent Pakistan Shaheens for the first time.

Eight teams will participate in the event with four teams divided into two groups. Group A consists of Afghanistan 'A', Bangladesh 'A', Hong Kong and Sri Lanka 'A', while defending champions Pakistan Shaheens are slotted in Group B alongside India 'A', Oman and UAE.

Haris-led Shaheens will take on last year's finalists India 'A' in their opening match on October 19. They next play hosts Oman on October 21, followed by their final group match will be against the UAE on October 23.

The top two sides from each group will qualify for the semifinals scheduled to take place on October 25. The final will take place on Sunday, October 27.

Usman Wahla, PCB Director (International) said: "Pakistan Shaheens are excited to showcase PCB's emerging talent at the ACC Emerging Teams T20 Asia Cup.

"We commend the Asian Cricket Council for their continuous efforts to foster player development across member nations. Initiatives like the Emerging Teams T20 Asia Cup are vital for creating opportunities for young talents to grow and excel."

Shaheens squad: Mohammad Haris (captain), Abdul Samad, Ahmed Daniyal, Arafat Minhas, Haider Ali, Haseebullah, Mehran Mumtaz, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohmmad Imran Jnr, Omair Bin Yousuf, Qasim Akram, Shahnawaz Dahani, Sufiyan Moqim, Yasir Khan and Zaman Khan.

Team management: Umar Rasheed (head coach-cum-manager), Imran Farhat (batting coach), Riffatullah Mohmand (fielding coach), Usman Hashmi (analyst) and Syed Mohammad Asad (physiotherapist).

Salman hits century as Pakistan amass 556



Pakistan's Agha Salman (left) celebrates after scoring a century during the second day of the first Test against England at the Multan Cricket Stadium in Multan on Tuesday. — AFP

ENGLAND

FINISHED the second day of the first Test in Multan on a solid 96-1 on Tuesday in reply to Pakistan's mammoth 556 that was boosted by a fiery century from Agha Salman.

The tourists lost stand-in skipper Ollie Pope for a second-ball duck before Zak Crawley and Joe Root steadied the innings with 64 and 32 respectively at stumps.

It was another tough day for bowlers as an unbeaten 104 from Salman and 82 by Saud Shakeel swelled Pakistan's total, which was set up by Shan Masood's 151 and Abdullah Shafique's 102 on Monday.

Pope, standing in for injured skipper Ben Stokes, was smartly caught by a leaping Aamer Jamal who plucked an uppish pull shot off pacer Naseem Shah with one hand at mid-wicket.

He had been drafted in to open the batting after Ben Duckett injured his left thumb taking a catch at the end of the Pakistan innings.

England need another 261 to avoid a follow-on — a task eminently achievable on a pitch offering no help to bowlers.

Salman built on the good work of Shakeel and Naseem in the afternoon, reaching his third century with a single off spinner Jack Leach soon after the tea interval.

Salman, who also completed 1,000 Test runs during this knock when he reached 71, added a rapid 85 for the ninth wicket with Shaheen Shah Afridi, who scored 26.

In all, Salman cracked 10 boundaries and three sixes in his 119-ball knock — surviving a catch by Chris Woakes when the third umpire declared the fielder's foot went beyond the rope.

"It's always satisfying to hit a century and contribute to the team's total," said Salman, who hoped the pitch would take spin in the next three days.

"I think cracks will open on this pitch and that will help spinners, I see this as a result-oriented pitch as both the teams will go for a result."

Salman added an invaluable 57 runs for the seventh wicket with Shakeel, who was caught smartly by Root at slip off Bashir for 82. Shakeel hit eight fours.

Leach was the most successful England bowler with 3-160, while Gus Atkinson finished with 2-99. Woakes, Shoaib Bashir and Root took one wicket apiece.

Pace bowler Brydon Carse took 2-74 on debut after trapping Jamal for seven. His first Test wicket was Naseem, caught at leg slip by Harry Brook before lunch for 33.

Carse said England's bowlers were made to toil on an unresponsive pitch.

"The last two days were immensely tough conditions for everyone out there," he said. "To be able to pick up a couple of wickets today is rewarding."

"It's been a tough graft but credit to the players for keep coming back."

The remaining Tests are in Multan (October 15-19) and Rawalpindi (October 24-28). — AFP

Sciver-Brunt, Ecclestone power England to second win

SHARJAH: England made it two wins from two group games at the Women's T20 World Cup as Nat Sciver-Brunt's unbeaten 48 lead them to a seven-wicket victory over South Africa with four balls to spare in Sharjah on Monday.

Sciver-Brunt came to the crease in the ninth over with England on 50-2 chasing South Africa's total of 124-6.

She joined forces with Danni Wyatt-Hodge to add 64 for the third wicket before the opener, who also made 41 in England's opening win over Bangladesh, was stumped after charging down the pitch to Nonkululeko Mlaba.

Sciver-Brunt kept England on track hammering Ayabonga Khaka through the covers to secure the victory. Her 48 came off 36 balls and

England spinner Sophie Ecclestone was named Player of the Match for her miserly spell of 2-15 in four overs which helped restrict South Africa to 124-6

included six boundaries.

"We controlled the chase brilliantly, that partnership was outstanding to watch," said England captain Heather Knight.

"The way they controlled it, the way they ran, it was a proper job."

It was a small revenge for the English, who top Group B with their two victories, over a South African side that stunned them in the semifinal of last year's edition at Newlands in Cape Town.

England spinner Sophie Ecclestone was named Player of the Match for her miserly spell of 2-15 in four overs which helped restrict South Africa to 124-6.

"Sophie was back to her best," said Knight. "She seemed to get a bit of bounce, somehow, which is strange on this wicket."



England's Nat Sciver-Brunt and Heather Knight celebrate after winning the match. — Reuters

Ecclestone's two victims were the key batters in the South Africa lineup as she bowled both skipper Laura Wolvaardt, who made a brisk 42, and the dangerous Marizanne Kapp who plundered 26 from 17 balls.

"Always great to do it against the world's best. To get them out, two big wickets. Glad about the win," said Ecclestone.

South Africa, who lost to Australia in the 2023 final, face Scotland in Dubai on Wednesday and Bangladesh in Dubai on Saturday.

"Obviously the next two are must-win games for us and both could be tough in these conditions so we will have to be on our A-game," said South Africa captain Wolvaardt.

England's next match is against the Scots in Sharjah on Sunday. — AFP

SPORTS/TENNIS

STRONGSTART



A player in action at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex.

SYRIA, UAE POST WINS AT WEST ASIA JUNIOR BADMINTON CHAMPIONSHIP

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 8

The competitions of West Asia Junior Badminton Championship are underway in Muscat at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. In the opening day of the Under-17 category, Bahrain had a strong start as they defeated Iraq 5-0 while Syria secured an important 4-1 win against Saudi Arabia in the opener. The UAE managed to start with a 4-1 victory over Bahrain while Saudi Arabia beat Qatar by 4-1. Syria edged Jordan 3-2 in a well-fought match.

In the Under-15 preliminary rounds, the UAE team achieved a thrilling 3-2 victory over Iraq after a tense match while Syria dominated Bahrain with a 5-0 victory. In another game, Bahrain bounced back strongly to blank Saudi Arabia 5-0.

Speaking after the match, Waseem al Dhamad, Vice-President of the Syrian Badminton Federation and head coach of the Syrian team, praised the Syrian players for the triumph in the opening game in both categories. "I am very pleased with the team's performance in both games in the earlier matches of the tournament. Despite the lack of some key players in the women's team, the new faces managed to deliver top game," he said.

The third day's competitions of the West Asia Junior Badminton Championship in Muscat are underway at the main hall of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. Participating teams are working hard to secure their spots in the final rounds and advance to the later stages as they are aiming to compete for the top positions and win titles across various categories of the championship.

The preliminary rounds for singles, doubles and mixed doubles events in Under-15 and Under-17 age categories began on Monday and will run until Wednesday. The final rounds will commence on Thursday with the championship concluding on Saturday as the winners in all categories will be announced.

Yousef Mundher, coach of Jordan team, voiced confidence that his team is among the nominated teams for the title. "Jordan team is considered as one of the top teams in West Asian and Arab level. Our team managed to earn some titles in the previous edition particularly in the female categories where they are considered the strongest among the Arab teams," he said.

"Organising such events and tournaments for this age group of players is very essential as the junior players need to build their future through attending in more tough tournaments to develop their skills and gain more technical expertise," he added.

The tournament is being organised by the Oman Racket Sports Committee in collaboration with the Asia Badminton. The event featured participation of 58 players representing eight West Asian countries including Jordan, UAE, Bahrain, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Syria and hosts Sultanate of Oman. Competitions are being held in singles and doubles for Under-15 and Under-17 as well as mixed doubles.

Oman's junior team comprises Shihab al Hinai, Faisal al Hinai, Abdulaziz al Hinai, Ziyad al Hinai, Hamed al Buraidi, Mohammed al Maqrashi, Sultan al Azri, Ahmed al Azri and Meral al Hosni. The national team is under supervision of head coach Hamad al Maqbali.

Djokovic rolls Cobolli to make Shanghai last 16



Serbia's Novak Djokovic serves against Italy's Flavio Cobolli at the Shanghai Masters tournament in Shanghai on Tuesday. —AFP



USA's Ben Shelton hits a return to Canada's Denis Shapovalov in Shanghai. —AFP

NOVAK DJOKOVIC powered through to the last 16 of the Shanghai Masters on Tuesday, steam-rolling Italian Flavio Cobolli 6-1, 6-2 in just over an hour.

The four-time Shanghai champion completely dominated 30th-ranked Cobolli, breaking him in the second and sixth games of the first set.

"I can't complain about anything in the game, I was able to play aggressively," Djokovic said. "I'm glad to be progressing through a tournament that has meant a lot to me in my career."

Fans waved Serbian flags and screamed in delight when the former world number one wrote part of his name in Chinese characters on a camera lens at the end of the match.

Djokovic will next play Russian Roman Safiullin, who upset American Frances Tiafoe in three tight sets.

"I'm glad to finally play a match after three days of rain, it's been a hassle for a lot of players," Djokovic said.

SINNER-SHELTON REMATCH
The last 16 has almost fallen into place after days of schedule disruption due to rain.

Ben Shelton dispatched Spain's Roberto Carballes Baena 6-3, 6-4 to set up a Shanghai rematch with world number one Jan-nik Sinner of Italy.

The American knocked Sinner out of the tournament at the same stage last year. "(I have) great memories from that match last year, I probably watched the tape of that a couple times so far this year, but, yeah, I'm really looking forward to it, that will be fun," Shelton said.

Sinner's chief rival Carlos Alcaraz, who beat him in the China Open final last week, will face veteran Gael Monfils.

The 38-year-old Frenchman defeated his younger and higher-ranked compatriot Ugo Humbert 7-6 (9/7), 2-6, 6-1.

Stefanos Tsitsipas recovered from a lapse in concentration in the second set to beat France's Alexandre Muller 6-3, 7-5.

The 26-year-old will meet world number five Daniil Medvedev in the next round.

World number 10 Grigor Dimitrov is through after beating Australia's Alexei Poppyrin 7-6 (7/5), 6-2.

The Bulgarian will play Czech teenager Jakub Mensik, who already ended one top 10 player's hopes when he sent Russia's Andrey Rublev home last week. — AFP



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The vessel traffic system will not only enhance operational safety at Port of Duqm but will also elevate the port’s status as a key player in the global shipping network.

MUSCAT: An agreement was signed yesterday to enhance maritime safety at Port of Duqm. Khimji Ramdas LLC’s (KR) Special Projects Division (SPD) has partnered with the Port of Duqm Company SAOG. (PODC) to implement a cutting-edge Vessel Traffic System (VTS). This system, designed for the automatic identification of ships and high-frequency radio communication, will boost maritime safety and efficiency at the rapidly growing Port of Duqm.

The collaboration brings together international partners Radio Holland Belgium and Tidalis Netherlands, renowned for their expertise in marine electronics and advanced VTS software solutions. This marks the first VTS project in the GCC region, positioning Port of Duqm as a leader in maritime safety across the Middle East.

Rajneesh Armugham, General Manager of KR Special Projects, highlighted the project’s strategic impact: “This project marks a significant milestone for the Port of Duqm, as it reinforces the port’s capabilities in managing maritime traffic with precision and safety. Our focus has been on integrating advanced, reliable systems that not only meet international standards but also address the specific needs of Oman’s growing maritime industry.”

The VTS from Tidalis integrates more than 40 years of experience in designing systems for major ports worldwide, featuring AI-based monitoring, intuitive interface, and the ability to track vessels of all sizes to ensure optimal safety and efficiency.

Reggy Vermeulen, CEO of the Port of Duqm, remarked, “The Port of Duqm is committed to maintaining the highest standards of safety and operational excellence. In partnership with Khimji Ramdas and their global partners, Radio Holland and Tidalis, we will implement the next generation of vessel tracking systems. This technology will help ensure the safety of our waters while facilitating smoother port operations and supporting our ambition to be a key maritime hub in the region.”

RO 82 million investment
in development projects

THE Urban October conference, hosted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, entered its second day with an Investment Forum that reviewed projects from the Governorates Development Competition.

The forum, held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, highlighted a range of investment opportunities in winning projects from the first and second editions of the competition (2023-2024), with total investments surpassing RO 82 million.

The forum focused on promoting development across Oman’s governorates, showcasing a series of high-impact projects that aim to drive economic growth, enhance tourism, and improve infrastructure. Six key projects were highlighted, representing diverse sectors from tourism to residential development, reflecting the government’s commitment to balanced regional growth.

Leading the investment portfolio is Al Razzaz Boulevard in Salalah, Dhofar Governorate, a large-scale mixed-use development covering 470,000 square metres. With an estimated investment value of RO 40 million, this project is set to transform the urban landscape of Salalah, providing a hub for retail, residential, and leisure activities.

In Musandam Governorate, the Ames Bay development project in Khasab was another major highlight, covering 68,700 square metres with an investment value exceeding RO 7 million. Another significant initiative is the Ramal Park project in the Wilayat of Nakhal, Al Batinah South Governorate, which covers an area of 225,000 square metres and has an investment exceeding RO 7



Six key projects were highlighted, representing diverse sectors from tourism to residential development, reflecting the government’s commitment to balanced regional growth.

Highlights

A major milestone of the conference was the signing of

77 USUFRUCT agreements, covering more than one million square metres and attracting over RO 20 million in investment.

million. The Al Durra project in the Wilayat of Al Khabourah, Al Batinah North Governorate, spans more than 60,000 square metres and carries an investment value of over RO 9.8 million.

Focused on enhancing local tourism, Al Durra will feature environmentally conscious development designed to attract both domestic and international tourists.

In Al Hamra, the Jabal Shams “Grand Canyon” facade project covers an area of 148,000 square metres and boasts an investment of more than RO 7.7 million. Finally, the Ibri View project in Al Dhahirah Governorate covers over two million square metres, with an investment value exceeding RO 10.8 million.

RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS AND INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the key projects, the forum announced eight new investment opportunities in integrated residential plans and neighbourhoods.

Five of these opportunities are designated for residential projects in the wilayats of Al Hamra, Bahla, Bidiyah, Jaalan Bani Bu Ali and Liwa, covering a total area of more than 1.3 million square metres.

Meanwhile, three integrated residential neighbourhoods will be developed in the wilayats of Izki, Samayil and Al Buraimi, covering a combined area of 379,000 square metres. These developments are expected to provide housing for over 9,000 families, addressing the growing demand for affordable, modern living spaces in Oman’s governorates. A major milestone of the conference was the signing of 77 usufruct agreements, covering more than one million square metres and attracting over RO 20 million in investment. These agreements span various sectors, including commercial, residential-commercial, and industrial developments. Notably, 14 contracts were signed in the commercial sector, covering 83,000 square metres with investments exceeding RO 6.6 million.

Advancing safety: 8th Oman fire, security and safety exhibition begins

MUSCAT: The eagerly anticipated 8th Oman Fire, Security and Safety Exhibition 2024, organised by Muscat Expo Company, commenced yesterday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, spanning over two days.

The event was inaugurated by Shaikh Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ). He emphasised the exhibition’s critical focus on various aspects of security and safety for both facilities and individuals.

Notably, this year features a diverse array of participating companies from numerous countries



A comprehensive plan is currently being implemented in the Sohar Free Zone and other areas, integrating security and safety requirements from project initiation through to construction, renovation, and operation.

DR ALI BIN MASOUD AL SUNAIDY
Chairman, OPAZ

and highlights the involvement of Omani youth who own and manage businesses in this sector.

A significant presence of volunteer teams and young volunteers also underscores the event’s community engagement.

Al Sunaidy underscored the necessity of training and qualifying human resources to adeptly utilise modern technologies in security and safety. He highlighted the Royal Oman Police and the Ministry of Labour’s roles in regulating standards and specifications for devices within facilities.

He also noted the paramount importance of security and safety in the Public Authority for Economic



Zones and Free Zones.

A comprehensive plan is currently being implemented in the Sohar Free Zone and other areas, integrating security and safety requirements from project

initiation through to construction, renovation and operation.

Many young individuals in industrial zones receive training at private centres or those affiliated with the Royal Oman Police and Oman Oil Development Company.

This year’s exhibition features over 80 local and international companies from more than 20 countries.

They are showcasing cutting-edge solutions, technologies, and cost-effective products catering to sectors such as government, private enterprises, aviation, construction, transportation, manufacturing, oil and gas and public utilities.

ADVERTORIALS

AL MOUJ MUSCAT
AWARDED
PRESTIGIOUS
TRIO TYHA
ACCREDITATIONS



MUSCAT: Oman's premier waterfront lifestyle destination, proudly announced its accreditation by The Yacht Harbour Association (TYHA) as a superyacht ready marina, adding to its esteemed 5 Gold Anchor and Clean Marina certifications.

This prestigious trio of accolades places Al Mouj Marina among an elite group of marinas globally, recognised for adhering to the highest standards of luxury, sustainability, and service excellence.

Al Mouj Marina boasts state-of-the-art facilities designed to accommodate transient vessels, including 165 modern floating berths, on-water lounge areas, and fuel stations. It offers 24-hour surveillance, comprehensive maintenance, waste removal services and more.

Additionally, facilitating immigration and customs services, ensuring a streamlined process for international visitors. Its strategic location in Muscat combines enhanced security with a unique blend of luxury and convenience, making it the ideal destination to explore Oman's clear blue waters.

Nasser al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said, "We are proud of our recent TYHA Superyacht Ready accreditation. This recognition solidifies our position as one of the prime destinations for superyachts and stands as a testament to our commitment to delivering exceptional experiences for maritime visitors.

Our marina serves as the gateway to Oman's wonders, offering a range of amenities and seamless services that cater to the highest standards of luxury, convenience and a deep connection to the nation's beauty.

We are dedicated to providing a secure and welcoming environment where visitors can embark on their journey along Oman's breathtaking shores and rich cultural heritage, further cementing our standing as a leading destination in the region's marine tourism sector."

In addition to its TYHA accreditation, Al Mouj Marina is officially recognised as a point of entry, enabling transient vessels to offload passengers directly at Al Mouj Muscat, granting immediate access to world-class amenities, luxury resorts and Oman's captivating landscapes. Visitors can explore over 85 retail and dining experiences, unwind on a two-kilometre stretch of pristine beach, and enjoy luxurious stays at the Kempinski Muscat or The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort.

Beyond the marina, Oman's diverse landscapes beckon, from clear waters and vibrant coral reefs that attract divers and yachting enthusiasts to the excitement of dolphin and whale watching.

MG Motor Oman unveils
100-year anniversary offer

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS of automo-
tive heritage, MG Motor Oman is marking this momentous occasion with exclusive offers and exciting rewards for car buyers. As a tribute to the century-long journey of excellence, customers can now enjoy unmatched prices on MG's popular models, along with a chance to win exciting prizes.

This limited-time offer allows customers to drive home MG's popular vehicles with prices starting as low as RO 7,285.

Available models and their celebratory prices include: MG ZS from RO 7,285, MG RX5 from RO 7,618, MG RX8 from RO 8,570, MG HS from RO 9,523, MG GT from RO 7,299 & MG T60 from RO 9,332.

In celebration of this historic milestone, MG Motor Oman is also offering customers the chance to win 1 out of 100 fantastic prizes.

These include fuel cards, smartphones, smartwatches & travel vouchers. Plus, simply test driving an MG vehicle gives you the chance to win a smartphone!

Each purchase includes insurance, registration, service, and comprehensive roadside assistance, ensuring a stress-free ownership experience for all the vehicles mentioned above, except the T60, which includes registra-



Available models and their celebratory prices include: MG ZS from RO 7,285, MG RX5 from RO 7,618, MG RX8 from RO 8,570, MG HS from RO 9,523, MG GT from RO 7,299 & MG T60 from RO 9,332.

tion only. This special anniversary campaign reflects MG Motor Oman's commitment to delivering more than just great cars, but also exceptional value and peace of mind.

Since its inception in 1924, MG has been at the forefront of design, innovation, and performance. This 100-year anniversary represents MG's rich history and its future vision of providing drivers with exciting, high-quality vehicles around the world.

MG's journey from a small British marque to a global automotive leader continues to inspire, with this special campaign highlighting the brand's enduring legacy.

Mohsin Hani Bahrani, CEO, MHD ACERE, remarked "As we

celebrate MG's 100-year legacy, I'm excited to introduce this special anniversary offer to our customers in Oman.

MG's journey from a British marque to a global automotive leader has been built on innovation, quality, and value.

This limited-time offer reflects our ongoing commitment to delivering exceptional vehicles and rewarding ownership experiences."

Customers are encouraged to visit MG showrooms across Oman to take advantage of these limited-time offers. The expert sales team is ready to help you find the perfect MG model that suits your needs and lifestyle. For more information, visit [www.mg-om.com](#) or call 800 80111.

OMAN ARAB BANK WINS CITIBANK'S STP EXCELLENCE AWARD

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) proudly announces its receipt of the 'Straight Through Processing' (STP) Excellence Award from the Citibank.

This recognition, consistently earned since 2018, highlights OAB's leading position in the financial industry, emphasising its excellence in secure transaction processing and automotive processes.

Sulaiman al Harthy, Chief Executive Officer of OAB, expressed his gratitude, stating, "We are honoured to be recognised by Citibank for our excellence in STP. This award underscores our commitment to customer service and achieving 100 per cent accuracy and efficiency on Treasury Payments and 99.8 per cent for Customer Payments." Asma al Zadjali, Chief Operations Officer added, "The accelerated pace of processing



times is a notable advantage arising from OAB's embrace of automation. This enables transactions to be executed much faster than traditional manual

processes." OAB's innovations in automation lead to smoother experiences for its customers, including modification-free rates, instant transactions, and highly accurate outcomes.

The STP Excellence Award from Citibank serves as a testament to how OAB leverages operational and technological excellence to deliver high-quality customer experience. This award signifies OAB's strategic foresight in adopting and investing in STP technology, aligning with its goal to stay ahead in the competitive financial market.

The bank's focus on process reengineering and automating processes not only addresses the current needs of the banking sector but also positions OAB for future advancements in financial services, reinforcing its dedication to delivering top-tier customer experiences.

Global expansion in full swing at Malabar Gold & Diamonds

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the world's 6th largest jewellery retailer with an expansive presence of over 360 showrooms across 13 countries, has further strengthened its retail presence in Kuwait & the UAE with the relaunch of two of its flagship showrooms in the region. The launches are a part of the ambitious expansion plan that the brand has unveiled to launch 20 showrooms globally in October.

In Kuwait, the brand's showroom at Lulu Hypermarket in Al Rai, which has been expanded and renovated to meet the evolving preferences of jewellery lovers in the region, was inaugurated by Bollywood actor and brand ambassador of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Anil Kapoor in the presence of Shamlal Ahamed, MD-International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Abdul Salam K P, Vice-Chairman of Malabar Group, Afsal K M- Zonal Head of Malabar Gold & Diamonds in Kuwait, other senior management team members, customers and well-wishers.

In the UAE, Malabar Gold & Diamonds renovated and restyled showroom in Dubai Gold Souq,



Our global expansion plan of opening 20 new showrooms in October aligns with Malabar Gold & Diamonds' larger vision of becoming the world's leading jewellery retailer.

M P AHAMMED
Chairman, Malabar Group



which is also the largest jewellery showroom in the Gold Souq area, was inaugurated by Malabar Group Chairman, M P Ahammed in the presence of Shamlal Ahamed, MD-International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Abdul Salam K P, Vice-Chairman of Malabar Group, other senior management team members, customers and well-wishers. The ambitious global expansion plan that Malabar Gold & Diamonds has charted for the month of October is in full swing, with showrooms

at Rohini in Delhi, Sambalpur in Odisha, Boduppal in Telangana, Sangli in Maharashtra, and Sarjapur Road in Karnataka already launched in India last week.

"Our global expansion plan of opening 20 new showrooms in October aligns with Malabar Gold & Diamonds' larger vision of becoming the world's leading jewellery retailer.

Over the last 30 years, we have significantly expanded our global presence, driven by our unwavering

commitment to delivering exceptional quality jewellery in a sustainable and responsible manner. While the expansion plans for this month are undoubtedly ambitious, we are confident in our ability to achieve them.

The five new showrooms we've already launched in India, along with the relaunch of our showrooms in Kuwait and the Gold Souq, stand as a testament to our dedication and progress.

Though this is a momentous time for the brand, I am particularly excited about the upcoming openings, especially the launch of our flagship showroom in Los Angeles, US.

As we continue to reach new milestones, I want to take this opportunity to thank our loyal customers around the world for their trust and support, which has made all of this possible", commented M P Ahammed, Chairman of Malabar Group.

Among the upcoming inaugurations, the most prominent will be Malabar Gold & Diamonds' flagship showroom in Los Angeles, US. This will be the brand's 5th and largest showroom in the USA.

GCC-NEW ZEALAND
TRADE VOLUMES
REACH \$3.3 BILLION



An FTA between the GCC and New Zealand is expected to strengthen economic ties.

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, OCT 8

The volume of trade between member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and New Zealand amounted to \$3.3 billion in 2021, according to data from the GCC Secretariat.

Exports from the GCC made up over 60 per cent of this figure, amounting to \$2.1 billion, which represents a 70-per cent jump in exports of \$1.3 billion during the previous year.

Minerals, fuels, oils and waxes made up 81.9 per cent (corresponding to \$1.72 billion in value) of exports, followed by fertilisers worth \$180 million (8.6 per cent), miscellaneous goods valued at \$90 million (4.2 per cent), plastics and plastic articles worth \$60 million (2.9 per cent), glass and glassware worth \$30 million (1.4 per cent), and aluminium products valued of \$20 million (1 per cent of total exports).

Meanwhile, the value of imports from New Zealand into the GCC amounted to \$1.2 billion in 2021, representing a 3.7-per cent decrease from the previous year's total of \$1.3 billion.

Dairy products and honey worth \$860 million accounted for over 70 per cent of imports, followed by meats worth \$130 million (10.8 per cent share), miscellaneous items valued at \$110 million (9.1 per cent), fruits and nuts worth \$50 million (4.2 per cent), medical and optical equipment worth \$30 million (2.5 per cent), and wood and charcoal products valued at \$20 million (1.7 per cent).

New Zealand currently ranks as the GCC's 42nd largest trading partner as of 2021, while the block is New Zealand's eighth-largest trading partner and the country's seventh-largest export destination, according to the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Both parties have been renegotiating a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) since 2022, following the suspension of previous negotiations in 2009.

According to the Secretary-General of the GCC, Jasem Mohamed al Budaiwi, the agreement will strengthen economic relations between the two parties and broaden investment opportunities.

Omani start-ups welcome
investments from FFO

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 8

A NUMBER of Omani-based start-ups, offering everything from e-services, drone-based operations and B2B digital marketplace operations, have lauded pledges of funding assistance from Future Fund Oman (FFO), a new investment fund launched recently under the auspices of Oman Investment Authority (OIA).

As many as 16 start-ups and small businesses, focusing in areas related to food, health, technology, financial technology and e-commerce, were named as beneficiaries of funding assistance announced by FFO last week.

They were among a total of 19 project initiatives that received a total of RO 836 million in investment pledges committed by FFO along with its regional and international investment partners last week.

Notable among the beneficiaries is SERB, an Omani-based provider of innovatedronemanagementsolutions. The tech start-up is credited with supporting the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) of the Sultanate of Oman in operating the country's UnmannedTrafficManagement (UTM) System.

SERB's advanced UTM platform



Omani tech firm SERB was among the first batch of beneficiaries of financial investments announced by FFO.

As many as 16 start-ups and small businesses, focusing in areas related to food, health, technology, financial technology and e-commerce, were named as beneficiaries of funding assistance announced by FFO last week.

provides operators, managers and regulators with the tools and capabilities to enable safe and efficient drone operations.

"Last week marked a major milestone for SERB, as we proudly announced the latest investment through the Future Fund of Oman (FFO), via Omantel. This investment, part of FFO's first batch, strengthens our mission to transform the drone technology landscape and deliver innovative solutions," said Anwar al Hinai, Co-founder and CEO – SERB, in a post.

Another beneficiary is Monak e-services, billed as an all-in-one digital platform that offers a range of solutions to job migrants in the Middle East. The start-up has partnered with multiple service providers that provide manpower,

flight tickets, visa medical, financial services, SIM cards and other services through its app. It is also designed with the latest financial technology, online payment solutions and digital wallets, making it easy and secure for customers to manage their transactions.

Welcoming Future Fund Oman's investment, Monak stated in a post: "Securing funding from the Future Fund Oman – Omantel is a turning point for us, as it will accelerate our growth and contribute to empowering unbanked communities in the Sultanate of Oman, allowing us to play a role in the Oman Vision 2040.

"Future Fund Oman – Omantel provided us with more than just financial support; they have become partners in our mission, and we are excited about the next steps ahead."

Oman to host first Oman-Pakistan business conference

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, OCT 8

The Sultanate of Oman will host the first Oman-Pakistan Business Conference, welcoming more than 65 top industrialists from Pakistan. The event will be held on October 13 and 14 at the Intercity Hotel in Al Khuwair.

The business delegates represent a wide range of sectors, from agro-products, food and textiles to leather, pharmaceuticals, construction and IT solutions. Other sectors represented at the two-day event include sports, art and media management, real estate, salon supply, industrial chemicals and marble industries.

"We are expecting more than 500

Reports indicate that over the past five years, Pakistan's exports to Oman have increased at an annual rate of 32%, growing from \$120 million in 2017 to \$479 million in 2022

potential customers out of the thousands of visitors anticipated to visit the pavilions at the hotel, organised as part of the first Oman-Pakistan Business Conference. Entry is free, and individuals or business representatives are welcome to visit, network and establish mutually beneficial business ties," the organisers said.

Oman is the closest Arab country to Pakistan, and they share a maritime boundary, which has helped strengthen trade relations, according to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP). The ministry further noted that Oman's proximity to Pakistan's Gwadar port, a key part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), offers significant opportunities

for expanding trade routes and economic collaboration.

Oman exports a variety of goods, including crude petroleum (\$32.8 billion), petroleum gas (\$12.7 billion), refined petroleum (\$4.24 billion), nitrogenous fertilisers (\$4.14 billion) and semi-finished iron (\$3.44 billion).

On the other hand, Oman imports textiles, food and agricultural products from Pakistan. Other imports include iron reductions worth \$158 million, semi-finished iron (\$100 million) and rice (\$49.6 million).

Reports indicate that over the past five years, Pakistan's exports to Oman have increased at an annual rate of 32%, growing from \$120 million in 2017 to \$479 million in 2022.

Al Wusta e-portal to boost digital transformation

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, OCT 8

AL WUSTA Governorate has launched a new electronic portal in support of its digital transformation efforts. This initiative was unveiled in the presence of Shaikh Ahmed bin Musallam al Kathiri, Governor of Al Wusta, along with various officials from the governorate and its affiliated divisions.

In an interview with the Observer, Dr Hashim al Balushi, Director-General of Administrative and Financial Affairs at Al Wusta Governorate and Head of the Digital Transformation Program Team, stated that the digital transformation systems represent a qualitative leap in delivering services. This includes the services offered on the electronic portal and the Office System designed for employees and staff within the governorate.

Additionally, the launch featured the promotional visual identity of

The launch featured the promotional visual identity of Al Wusta Governorate, which aims to enhance marketing efforts to attract more investment and engage a larger segment of visitors and guests.



Mementoes handed out to those who helped put together the e-portal and other digital transformation systems of Al Wusta Governorate.

Al Wusta Governorate, which aims to enhance marketing efforts to attract more investment and engage a larger segment of visitors and guests.

The governor emphasised the importance of digital transformation and its strategic role in providing a qualitative shift in delivering digital

services, targeting both internal staff and all beneficiaries of the services offered through the electronic portal and its various applications.

Among the most notable aspects launched is the visual identity of the governorate, inspired by the map of Al Wusta and its four wilayats, both through the symbolism of colours and the components for which the wilayats are known: the yellow colour, representing the golden sands of the Wilayat of Haima and the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary; the green colour, symbolising the greenery and fertile land of the Wilayat of Mahout, as well as the mangrove trees; the blue colour, referring to the Wilayat of Duqm, known for its economy and seaports; and the red colour of the Wilayat of Al Jazir, which is characterised by vibrancy, arts and pink lakes as part of the tourism components of the wilayat.

The electronic portal features several services for visitors and

users through various sections, including: an overview of the governorate, electronic services, Discover Al Wusta, the media centre, the open data section, and Contact Us. The mobile application for the electronic portal was also launched.

As part of the internal digital transformation systems, the Office System related to employees was launched, with launching the system by sending the first message to all employees, congratulating them on the system's launch and wishing them success, hoping that this system will facilitate work and increase productivity.

Several video clips showcasing the visual identity, electronic portal and its various services were presented, along with the issuance of a special guide for using the visual identity of the governorate. These systems will be available for use and benefit from their services by everyone starting from the launch day.

OPINION

Fintech chief ‘very keen’ on London listing



ANDY JALIL
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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

THE chief executive of Thought Machine, one of Britain’s most valuable fintechs, has thrown his weight behind a London IPO (Initial Public Offering) but admitted he is under pressure to list in New York. Paul Taylor, who founded the London-based banking software provider in 2014, said that Thought Machine was “definitely going to IPO” and gave his clearest public indication yet that the capital is management’s preferred destination.

“London is our home, and all other things being equal, we would be very keen to list in London,” Taylor, a former Google executive, said. “But it’s not just a decision that only I can take — our existing investors would have a strong voice in that. There is a lot of momentum behind New York.”

Last valued at \$2.7 billion in a May 2022 funding round, Thought Machine’s IPO would be a much needed win for the London Stock Exchange (LSE).

Recent years have seen the bourse left in the dust by US markets, where deeper pools of capital and a less cumbersome regulatory environment have drawn in major British names like chip designer Arm.

A slump in IPO’s and string of big players ditching their London listings have spurred the UK government and regulators to pro-

pose sweeping reforms aimed at boosting Britain’s capital markets.

Taylor said the LSE had been “fantastic in terms of encouraging people to list here” and praised the Financial Conduct Authority’s overhaul of listing rules in July, designed to make it easier for companies to float in London.

He hailed Raspberry Pi’s June IPO, which valued the computer firm at £542m, as an example of recent “local successes” in the UK market. “I think most of the tech companies in London would like to list here if we could,” he added.

However, Taylor warned the UK needed “a change in the investor sentiment, and for the pension funds and people like that to be happier to invest in higher-risk, high-growth stock”.

“It’s slight tragedy that some of the most active money in the London stock market is not UK money, it’s international investors,” he said. “That’s good in the sense that we have got inbound investment, but it means British people, funds and companies are not owning British stocks.” While firm on London as his “first choice” location, Taylor was less clear on the possible timing of a Thought Machine float.

“There are a bunch of companies that went too early in 2021, so I think we are

Last valued at
\$2.7 BILLION
in a May 2022 funding round, Thought Machine’s IPO would be a much needed win for the London Stock Exchange (LSE)

taking a very sensible route,” he explained. “We’re going to IPO when the time is right, so it will not be next year or the year after at least. Possibly it could be 2027, possibly it could be 2028, but you would lock in a date about 12 months before. You just need to grow the business as much as possible before then.”

Thought Machine is not alone. It is one of a crop of British fintech “unicorns” founded in the 2010s that are now weighing IPOs in what will be a test for London’s allure. They include digital banks, Revolut, Monzo and Starling, and buy-now pay-later provider Zilch.

Thought Machine sells cloud-based banking infrastructure and has deals with major leaders including JPMorgan, Lloyds and Standard Chartered, as well as neobanks like Atom Bank. Lloyds and JPMorgan are also investors, alongside the likes of Morgan Stanley, Singapore-based Temasek and Italian bank Intesa Sanpaolo.

With some 550 staff and offices in London, New York, Singapore, Sydney and Melbourne, the company’s growth underscores the wider emergence of Britain’s banking software-as-a-service market.

RIO BOSS MAY BE ABOUT TO EAT HIS M&A WORDS

JAKOB Stausholm’s own words may be coming back to haunt him faster than expected. Rio Tinto’s CEO is in talks to buy Arcadium Lithium, the two companies confirmed on Monday after media broke the news on Friday.

It comes barely two months after he laid out for investors his bottom line on dealmaking: synergies “would have to exceed the premium or else it doesn’t make sense”.

That may be a struggle to pull off in this instance. Arcadium would fit well with Stausholm’s existing plans for mining lithium, a crucial element in batteries needed for the energy transition. The \$118 billion Rio wants to develop a mine in Serbia after overcoming local political opposition and is about to start production in Argentina.

Its target already operates mines and facilities in Australia, Canada and elsewhere, makes money and is a top-five player that counts Tesla and BMW as customers.

It’s also a good time to pounce. The two companies that created Arcadium were worth almost \$11 billion together when they unveiled their tie-up in May last year.

But the combined business’s market value is just \$3 billion today thanks to a mix of oversupply and slowing growth in electric-vehicle sales.

Stausholm should be able to find a decent slug of costs to cut, too: some of his target’s operations are close to the Rincon lithium project Rio is developing in Argentina. At the time, the two companies that became Arcadium identified around \$125 million,

or 18% of combined global expenses, to trim in their marriage.

Rio’s lithium operations are still at an early stage, but let’s assume it were able to lop off 20% of its quarry’s roughly \$850 million of annual outgoings.

Those would currently be worth some \$1.2 billion to shareholders once

taxed at 30% and capitalised. That would allow Stausholm to offer an equity premium of up to 40%. Using Thursday’s share price close as the undisturbed price, that implies a market value of \$4.2 billion. On its own, that sounds pretty generous. Trouble is, the price tag for Arcadium’s shares could be between \$4 billion to \$6 billion, or higher, according to media, citing a source close to the talks. And one Arcadium investor, Sydney-based Blackwattle Investment Partners, is already arguing that it’s worth at least \$8 billion, based on stabilising lithium prices and the miner’s medium-term growth targets.

Unless he can find even more costs to cut, Stausholm may now face an unpalatable choice: walk away from a deal that fails his M&A test, or pay up and try to explain why he’s crossing his own red line. — Reuters



MARYAM AHMED AL NOFLI

The author is a researcher, academic faculty and head of the Continuous Education and Community Service Department at UTAS — Musandam



The existing natural gas infrastructure can store and utilise this renewable methane, making it a viable solution for energy storage and grid stabilisation.

SYNTHETIC methane, or e-methane, is produced via the Power-to-Gas (PtG) process, where renewable electricity is used to generate green hydrogen through electrolysis. The e-methane production process blends green hydrogen with collected carbon dioxide (CO2) from various processes.

The existing natural gas infrastructure can store and utilise this renewable methane, making it a viable solution for energy storage and grid stabilisation. Green hydrogen and synthetic methane are both essential components of the global shift to cleaner energy.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) projects that by 2050, the need for hydrogen will have multiplied sixfold, with green hydrogen being essential to achieving climate targets.

Global announcements revealed nearly 520 green hydrogen projects as of 2023, with a projected \$240 billion investment by 2030. Synthetic methane, a product of green hydrogen, is also gaining popularity, particularly in Europe and Asia.

By 2030, the European Union wants to manufacture 10 million tonnes of hydrogen per year in addition to large-scale attempts to produce synthetic methane in nations like South Korea and Japan. These accomplishments illustrate the importance of Oman’s audacious approach in this quickly expanding sector and the global trend toward sustainable energy solutions.

Fossil fuel deposits dominate Oman’s energy landscape, which has historically

supported the country’s economic growth. The International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates that Oman’s oil production in 2020 was close to 971,000 barrels per day.

But with primary energy consumption expected to rise by 3.1% a year until 2040, Oman is keen on mitigating the environmental impact through innovative technologies like synthetic methane production.

Oman is making significant strides towards sustainability and carbon neutrality with its ambitious plans for synthetic methane and green hydrogen production. Oman’s Vision 2040, which aims for carbon neutrality by 2050 and significant contributions from non-oil sectors to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), drives this strategic shift. By 2030, Oman plans to produce more than 250,000 tonnes of synthetic methane annually, reducing approximately 1.5 million tonnes of CO2 emissions per year. This ambitious goal fits in with Oman’s larger plans of achieving carbon neutrality and fostering a sustainable future.

Furthermore, green hydrogen production is critical to Oman’s energy transition. With between \$30 billion and \$50 billion in investments, Oman aspires to produce more than a million tonnes of green hydrogen by 2030.

Oman expects its output to reach 8.5 million tonnes annually by 2050, necessitating an investment of nearly \$120 billion. The inauguration of the Ibri Solar Power Plant in January 2022, the Sultanate of Oman’s largest renewable energy project with a 500 MW capacity and an investment cost of RO 155 million (\$403 million), highlighted

Oman’s commitment to green hydrogen.

Furthermore, the Sur solar desalination plant, inaugurated in November 2023, can produce green electricity exceeds 32,000 megawatt-hours annually. This output will meet 100% of the 17 megawatts desalination plant’s daily energy needs. The Dhofar 2 wind power plant, expected to become operational in 2026, will have a capacity of 100 to 200 megawatts.

Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWP) has partnered with international technology providers to deploy PtG facilities across the country. Collaborations with Siemens Energy and OQ, Oman’s global integrated energy group, are exploring green hydrogen and synthetic methane production.

The green hydrogen plant in Duqm, expected to produce 50,000 tonnes of hydrogen annually, exemplifies such innovative projects. Leading the way to achieve carbon neutrality is Oman’s Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology, which has a comprehensive strategy to cut emissions by 3% by 2030, 34% by 2040, and 100% by 2050.

This strategy calls for promoting the use of biofuels, hydrogen for heavy transportation, electric cars, and technology to reduce emissions. Oman’s abundance of renewable energy resources, especially solar and wind power, which are crucial for the PtG process, puts it in a unique position to manufacture synthetic methane.

Because the country’s extensive desert regions receive some of the highest solar radiation levels in the world, solar energy is an essential resource for electrolysis, which produces green hydrogen.

Furthermore, Oman’s coastal governorates have a lot of wind potential, which adds more renewable energy to the process of producing synthetic methane.

Oman can easily incorporate synthetic methane for grid stabilisation and energy storage into its energy system because it already has a robust natural gas infrastructure in place. Additionally, Oman can absorb and combine carbon dioxide emissions from industrial sources, such as oil refineries, with green hydrogen to form a closed-loop process that aids in achieving carbon neutrality.

In March 2023, Oman LNG partnered with Japan’s Hitachi Zusen and Hitachi Innova to explore synthetic methane production, aiming to cut Oman’s carbon emissions and boost its natural gas infrastructure with renewables.

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ART/LIFE



C U L T U R E

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ART ATTACK

Masterpieces from US-German collector Berggruen on show in Paris



Works collected by US-German art dealer Heinz Berggruen from the most important painters and sculptors of the 20th century went on display on Wednesday in France's capital, where his artists lived and where Berggruen had his gallery.

With nearly 90 key works by Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Paul Klee, Henri Matisse, Alberto Giacometti and Paul Cézanne, the touring collection from Berlin's Berggruen Museum is now making a stop at the Musée de l'Orangerie in the French capital.

Under the title "Heinz Berggruen - A Dealer and His Collection," the exhibition focuses on his relationship



with his artists, especially Picasso and Klee. The two artists account for the majority of the works presented in Paris, with over 40 and 20 pieces respectively.

Paris represented the most important professional stage in the life of Berggruen, a native Berliner who is considered one of the most significant German gallery owners and art collectors of the 20th century.

In 1947, he founded his gallery there, which became one of the world's most renowned for modern art. In 1980, he gave it up to devote himself entirely to collecting works from a few select masters.

Since the beginning of the renovation works at the Berggruen Museum in Berlin in 2022, the collection has been on tour.

However, it is being shown in Paris for the first time in this scale. The exhibition is due to be on view until January 27, 2025.

The reopening of Berlin's Berggruen Museum is planned for 2025-26. — dpa

Q U I C K F E A T U R E S

LIFESTYLE

A woman uses a sieve to separate rice grains from husk at a wholesale grain market in Amritsar. — AFP

ENTERTAINMENT

Members of French theatre troupe "La Compagnie des Quidams" perform the play "Herbert's Dream" with a street parade in Skopje. — AFP

MUSIC

US singer Jason Derulo attends the 38th Carousel Of Hope Ball at the Beverly Hilton hotel in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP

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Earth Had a Ring
466 Million Years
Ago, Study Says



If you were to look up from Earth some 466 million years ago, you might have seen a gleaming ring stretching across the sky, some scientists say.

A study links an uptick in impact craters during the Ordovician Period, an era before animals lived on land, to a ring made of asteroid debris that encircled our planet for millions of years.

Scientists have long speculated about the origin of the Ordovician meteor event, when Earth was bombarded by space rocks at a high rate, producing dozens of craters and sediments packed with meteorites. Previous research implicated a large asteroid that broke apart in the main belt between Mars and Jupiter and sent shrapnel into the inner solar system, where it pelted our planet.

But what if this ancient

object burst into pieces at our doorstep? Researchers led by Andy Tomkins, professor at Monash University in Australia, envision an asteroid that passed within thousands of miles of Earth, close enough to be ripped apart by the planet’s gravity. The debris from the breakup then coalesced in a ring around the equator.

Tomkins and his team mapped out where on Earth 21 craters from the Ordovician would have been located at that time. If the debris had come from the asteroid belt, the craters should have been distributed all over the planet. But the craters were clustered around the equator, hinting that they were made by meteorites falling from an equatorial ring.

For now, it’s captivating to imagine a bygone Earth, inhabited almost entirely by marine life. — NYT



Mark Zuckerberg
tries his hand
at fashion

Yes, between running Meta, making AI-enhanced spectacles, raising three children and all that MMA training, the 40-year-old Facebook founder has found time to tack yet another title onto his CV: clothing designer

MARK ZUCKERBERG would like us all to know that learning is best achieved through suffering. And how is he telling us this? Through a T-shirt, of course.

“I’ve kind of started working on this series of shirts with some of my favourite classical sayings on them,” Zuckerberg said in mid-September during a taping of the “Acquired” podcast at San Francisco’s Chase Center.

He was wearing a boxy, black tee printed in plump white letters with the Greek phrase “pathei mathos.” Loose translation? “Learning through suffering.” It was, according to Zuckerberg, “a little family saying.”

Another historical pearl was imparted through the T-shirt he wore at a Meta keynote presentation weeks later. This time, Greek was swapped for Latin. Kinda. His tee (again boxy, again black) read “aut Zuck, aut nihil,” an English-ified contortion of the Latin “aut Caesar, aut nihil” or, roughly, “either a Caesar or nothing.”

It took more than a Zuck to create these wide-as-they-are-long tees. As he explained in the podcast, they were made in partnership with Mike Amiri, a Los Angeles-based fashion designer.



Marcus Folch, associate professor of classics at Columbia University. “It articulates a desire for power.”

It doesn’t take much imagination to see how Zuckerberg, guiding a millions-strong nation-state of app users, could fancy himself as a tech-age Tiberius. After all, he isn’t just quoting a Caesar in these shirts, he’s likening himself to him.

Zuckerberg may have entered the imperialist phase of his glow-up, but the meaning of the quotes might be getting lost between text and the T-shirt. John Noël Dillon, a senior lector in Yale University’s classics department, pointed out that “aut Caesar, aut nihil” is commonly ascribed to Italian cardinal Cesare Borgia, the inspiration for Niccolo Machiavelli’s book “The Prince.” In the end, enduring power eluded him, and he was stabbed to death at 31.

According to scholars, “pathei mathos” is, at least, less directly egotistical. It’s a “very deep, kind of profound” quote stemming from Aeschylus’ mythological play on Agamemnon, said Folch. That text isn’t exactly obscure — if you’ve taken a Greek literature course in college, you likely read it — but it flashes a richer historical expertise than wearing a tee splayed with “veni veda vici” (“I came, I saw, I conquered”).

But what to make of the Amiri-Zuck production tees? Are these oversized shirts objects of high design?

Andrew Groves, professor of fashion design at University of Westminster, said they are.

“Where it differs from your standard \$10 tee is in the materiality, cut, construction and silhouette, all of which are far more thoughtful and deliberate,” he said, describing how their drop shoulders, baggier fit and longer sleeves nudge the custom shirts into “statement-piece” territory.

For now, like an app in early development, the shirts aren’t available for public consumption, though Zuckerberg has hinted in Instagram comments that a “limited drop” might be incoming. No clues were shared on pricing, but similar Amiri tees sell for \$750. A princely sum, indeed. —NYT

Ablohs before him, he’s making his own tees.

But what’s with all the Greek and Latin? Through a representative, Zuckerberg declined an interview request for this article. But Zuckerberg does appear to fit the bill of an Ovid reading, “Gladiator” streaming, millennial man preoccupied with Roman might.

He took Latin as far back as high school. He honeymooned in Rome and named one of his daughters August (get it? Like Augustus). He commissioned artist Daniel Arsham to make an imposing statue of his wife, Priscilla Chan, proclaiming on Instagram that he was “bringing back the Roman tradition of making sculptures of your wife.”

“If you step back and look at the reasons why people — especially young men — seem to quote the classics, it’s a desire for power,” said



Omani women navigating tradition through social media

The balance between tradition and modernity is a central theme for many Omani women on social media. Through Instagram, X, Snapchat and YouTube, Omani women are using their voices to discuss traditional roles while respecting the rooted values of their culture.

BY SIHAM AL SAIDI

IN OMAN, social media has become more than just a platform for sharing pictures and following trends. For many women, it's a space where they navigate cultural boundaries, express their identities and advocate for change. Through Instagram, X, Snapchat and YouTube, Omani women are using their voices to discuss traditional roles while respecting the rooted values of their culture.

"I feel that social media gives me a voice I didn't have before," shared Sal Balushi, a young professional and social media influencer from Suhar. "Before, it was difficult to discuss certain issues openly, especially as a woman. Now, I can share my thoughts and connect with others who feel the same way and share the same interests and feelings."

Al Balushi uses her Instagram platform to talk about everything from career challenges to social expectations of women. "I don't just post pictures; I want to have meaningful digital content. Many women in Oman are struggling with the same issues, balancing work, family and societal expectations. Social media helps us connect to the world and support each other as professional women."

For many, like Al Balushi, social media offers a space to share their experiences in a way that was not possible through traditional media. It's a way to challenge the status and a means to find solidarity and validation from others navigating similar cultural dilemmas.

While some women use social media as a platform for personal expression, others are more direct in addressing societal issues. "I talk about gender equality, not because I want to fight tradition, but because I want our society to grow," says Lamia, a coach and women's consultant.

Lamia's X tweet is filled with discussions on women's rights, workplace equality and the importance of women pursuing higher education. "Our culture is rich and valuable, but that doesn't mean we can't grow or change. Social media allows women like me to raise important issues, while still showing respect

for our traditions."

She believes that platforms like X and Instagram give women the freedom to be vocal about issues like gender roles and societal expectations, subjects that are still often considered strange in more formal settings.

The balance between tradition and modernity is a central theme for many Omani women on social media. This balance is exemplified by Aidaal Hosni, a lifestyle blogger who regularly posts about fashion and family life. "I love our culture and traditions, but that doesn't mean I can't be modern too," says Aida.

Aida's posts often mix traditional Omani clothing with other fashion trends, symbolising the fusion between old and new. "I get messages from young women who say they feel inspired to express themselves while still honouring their heritage. I think that's the beauty of social media and you can embrace both."

Aida is not the only one who has this. Many women are finding ways to reinterpret their roles in a way that maintains cultural respect while promoting individuality and empowerment. For these women, social media is not about ignoring and fighting against tradition but evolving with it.

Dr Halima al Maqbali, a lecturer at a university, highlights the significance of these changes: "Social media is reshaping the way we see women in Oman. It's giving women the platform to showcase their success, talents, ideas and contributions to society. This visibility is essential in breaking down gender stereotypes and creating new possibilities for the next generation of women."

As more Omani women join social media platforms, the conversation around cultural norms and gender roles is evolving. What was once planned to be discussed in private circles is now being openly debated and redefined. Through their online presence, these women are building a future where tradition and progress coexist, and where every woman has the right to choose her own path. Such issues raised blend personal stories with cultural analysis, showcasing the role of social media in empowering Omani women.