

HIS MAJESTY RECEIVES CREDENTIALS OF AMBASSADORS

AMBASSADORS CONVEY GREETINGS OF THEIR COUNTRIES' LEADERS

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received, separately, at Al Barakah Palace on Wednesday credentials of Ambassadors of several countries appointed to the Sultanate of Oman.

His Majesty the Sultan received credentials of the following ambassadors: Noralizan Abdula Momin, Ambassador of Brunei Darussalam to the Sultanate of Oman; Hajer Amr Al Nami, Ambassador of Libya to the Sultanate of Oman; Dr Liane Saunders, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Sultanate of Oman; Christophe Ceska, Ambassador of the Republic of Austria to the Sultanate of Oman; Dirk Lölke, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Sultanate of Oman; Raul Hernandez, Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines to the Sultanate of Oman; Dr Mohammed Ali Boughazi, Ambassador of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria to the Sultanate of Oman; and Fatma Mohammed Rajab, Ambassador of the United Republic of Tanzania to the Sultanate of Oman.

During their side meetings with His Majesty the Sultan, the



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik receiving the credentials of Noralizan Abdula Momin, Ambassador of Brunei Darussalam to the Sultanate of Oman.

ambassadors conveyed greetings of their countries' leaders and their best wishes of good health, happiness and a long life to His Majesty. They also wished the Omani people further progress and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Majesty.

They also expressed their great honour and delight at presenting their credentials to His Majesty the Sultan. They affirmed to exert sincere efforts to promote relations of their respective countries with Oman in various spheres in a manner that serves the joint interests of the Omani people and their countries' citizens.

His Majesty the Sultan welcomed the ambassadors, expressing his gratitude for their leaders' greetings and best wishes. His Majesty affirmed that they would receive all support from him, the Government and the Omani people to facilitate carrying out their duties. The credentials presentation ceremony was attended by the Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, the Foreign Minister, the Commander of the Royal Guard of Oman, the Head of the Royal Protocols and the Military Aides to His Majesty the Sultan.

— ONA **SEE ALSO P2**

ON BEHALF OF HIS MAJESTY

Sayyid Shihab to attend GCC-Asean Summit



HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said

MUSCAT: On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, will leave on Thursday for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to head Oman's delegation at the GCC-Asean Summit, due to be held in Riyadh on Friday.

HH Sayyid Shihab will be accompanied by an official delegation comprising Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, and HH Sayyid Faisal bin Turki al Said, Ambassador of Oman to Saudi Arabia. — ONA

Gaza takes stock after deadly hospital strike

GAZA CITY: Gazans combed through the debris of the devastated hospital, collecting the bodies of the dead in the battered enclave on Wednesday, hours after a strike killed hundreds sheltering at the facility.

Alongside rows of charred vehicles, volunteers recovered corpses and limbs that were placed in body bags, while the remains of others were covered in white shrouds and blankets.

"This is a massacre," Ahmed Tafesh, who assisted in the recovery effort, said, saying he had collected the eyes, arms, legs and heads of the deceased. "I have never seen anything like this in my life."

Health authorities in Gaza said the explosion killed 471 people at the Ahli Arab Hospital and was caused by an Israeli air strike, one of the thousands it has launched in retaliation.

At the nearby Shifa hospital in Gaza City, residents gathered to identify the dead at the hospital's mortuary and take other bodies for burial.

Yahya Karim, 70, was among those searching for clues about the fate of his relatives.

"I don't know how many of them died and how many are still alive," said Karim, admitting that he had planned to shelter in the hospital before the strike. **SEE ALSO P6&7**



People protest against the bombing in Gaza outside the Chancellery in Berlin on Wednesday. — AFP



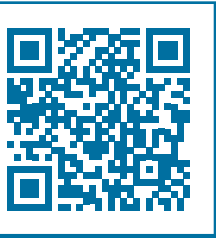
NEED FOR UNITED VISION ON AUDIT

HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, on Wednesday received heads of GCC Audit and Accounting Authorities who are holding their 20th meeting in the Sultanate of Oman. HH Sayyid Fahd underscored the significant role of GCC audit and accounting institutions in implementing the member states' plans and programmes and unifying visions with a view to upgrading performance and extending standard services to citizens in a manner that secures public funds. HH Sayyid Fahd stressed the need to enhance joint coordination between GCC regulatory bodies, benefit from their expertise and apply the outcome of relevant research and studies. **DETAILS ON P3 (PHOTO BY MOHAMED AL RASHDI)**

753,690 to vote in Shura elections

MUSCAT: Omani voters based abroad will start casting their ballots to elect members of the 10th Term of Majlis AshShura via Intakhib application on Sunday. Voters in the Sultanate of Oman will cast their ballots on Sunday (October 29), the Ministry of Interior said on Wednesday.

A total of 753,690 registered voters are eligible to exercise their franchise to elect their favourite candidates for the 10th Term of Majlis AshShura through Intikhab application or on the election website elections.om. The Ministry of Interior seeks to introduce the latest technologies to save voters' time and effort through the Intikhab application which only requires a smartphone equipped with the Near Field Communication (NFC) feature, an Internet connection, a valid ID card beside that the voter must be registered in the electoral register. The voting application is equipped with the highest security and secrecy standards. — ONA



HM receives credentials of Ambassadors



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received, separately, at Al Barakah Palace on Wednesday credentials of Ambassadors of several countries appointed to the Sultanate of Oman.



Hajer Amr Al Nami, Ambassador of Libya to the Sultanate of Oman.



Dr Liane Saunders, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Sultanate of Oman.



Christophe Ceska, Ambassador of the Republic of Austria to the Sultanate of Oman.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received, separately, at Al Barakah Palace on Wednesday credentials of Ambassadors of several countries appointed to the Sultanate of Oman. During their side meetings with His Majesty the Sultan, the ambassadors conveyed greetings of their countries' leaders and their best wishes of good health, happiness and a long life to His Majesty.

They also wished the Omani people further progress and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Majesty. They also expressed their great honour and delight at presenting their credentials to His Majesty the Sultan.

They affirmed to exert sincere efforts to promote relations of their respective countries with Oman in various spheres in a manner that serves the joint interests of the Omani people and their countries' citizens.



Dirk Lölke, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Sultanate of Oman.



Raul Hernandez, Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines to the Sultanate of Oman.



Dr Mohammed Ali Boughazi, Ambassador of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria to the Sultanate of Oman.



Fatma Mohammed Rajab, Ambassador of the United Republic of Tanzania to the Sultanate of Oman.



Follow us on **facebook**
omanobserver

Sayyid Fahd receives heads of GCC audit, accounting authorities



The meeting touched on key topics on the agenda of the 20th meeting of heads of GCC financial audit and accounting institutions. **Photo by Mohamed al Rashdi**

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, received on Wednesday Heads of GCC Audit and Accounting Authorities who are holding their 20th meeting in the Sultanate of Oman.

After a welcoming note, HH Sayyid Fahd underscored the significant role of GCC audit and accounting institutions in implementing the member states' plans and programmes and unifying visions with a view to upgrading performance and extending standard services to citizens in a manner that secures public funds.

HH Sayyid Fahd stressed the need to enhance joint

coordination between GCC regulatory bodies, benefit from their expertise and apply the outcome of relevant research and studies.

He pointed out that the State's Audit Institution (SAI) is accorded full support by the Omani government. He underlined the effective contribution of SAI which, he said, acts in cooperation with other establishments to promote integrity.

The meeting touched on key topics on the agenda of the 20th meeting of heads of GCC financial audit and accounting institutions.

The GCC meeting seeks to support and develop regulatory and accounting bodies, enhance their

efficiency, upgrade the level of their performance and encourage research, studies and training to meet the aspirations of the leaders and peoples of the region.

For their part, the heads of GCC financial audit and accounting institutions expressed thanks to Oman for hosting their meeting. They lauded Oman's constant support of the GCC march.

The meeting was attended by Shaikh Ghosn bin Hilal al Alawi, Chairman of State Audit Institution, Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, and Sultan bin Nasser al Suwaidi, GCC Assistant Secretary-General for Legislative and Legal Affair. — ONA

GCC Information Ministers back Palestine

MUSCAT: The GCC Ministers of Information on Wednesday held their 26th meeting via videoconferencing under the chairmanship of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, Chairman of the current session.

The meeting covered various issues of common interest in the field of media in the GCC states. The ministers discussed means of developing a strategy to raise awareness about dealing with social media platforms, with a view to addressing their negative impacts in the upbringing of young people.

They laid emphasis on urging children to stick to good manners. They also called for preserving family values and maintaining a civilised moral identity.

The meeting touched on ways to forge common determinants for sound electronic media content, digital advertisements and licences in social media. It underscored the need to activate the role of GCC missions abroad



During the meeting, the Sultanate of Oman emphasised the key role of the media in supporting the Palestinian people and disclosing the violations carried out against them. — ONA

and draw up a media plan that enables them to highlight the integrated Gulf action.

The ministers also discussed a proposal to develop a joint electronic app for news agencies that showcases their media services.

The meeting also discussed the serious developments in Palestine, notably Israel's escalating military operations against the Palestinian people in Gaza Strip.

The ministers affirmed GCC state's firm stance — in backing Palestine — that was expressed in the extraordinary session of GCC foreign ministers held in Muscat on Tuesday.

During the meeting, the Sultanate of Oman emphasised the key role of the media in supporting the Palestinian people and disclosing the violations carried out against them. This situation led to a major humanitarian crisis that left thousands of Palestinians dead or injured. — ONA

EA cameras spot three Arabian leopards

SALALAH: For the first time since it started monitoring wildlife, the Environment Authority reported that its cameras spotted three adult Arabian leopards walking together in one of the mountains of Dhofar Governorate.

Those in charge of the project stressed that, over the past few decades, it was difficult to monitor Arabian leopards in the wild, due to the declining numbers of the species.

This prompted the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to classify Arabian leopards as "critically endangered animals".

The recent camera shots indicate many factors. They evidence the success of Oman's



The recent camera shots indicate the success of Oman's efforts to preserve Arabian leopards. — ONA

efforts to preserve Arabian leopards. They prove the local community's awareness and cooperation in promoting the wild life conservation approach. They also indicate the soundness of the region's ecosystem and its ecological diversity. — ONA



AUCTION

Auction for the Sale of International Renewable Energy Certificates (I-RECs) from Dhofar Wind IPP

Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (Company), a member of Nama Group, has recently completed its registration with the International Renewable Energy Certificate (I-REC) Standard for the 50-megawatt (MW) utility-scale wind power project located in Dhofar, the Sultanate of Oman. The Company is commencing its first auction for the sale of the I-RECs of the Dhofar wind farm whereby local entities will have the opportunity to purchase I-RECs to demonstrate that they are meeting their own renewable energy procurement requirements or reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

Auction Publication Date	22 nd October 2023
Auction Deadline	16 th November 2023
Instructions to Auction	The auction instruction documents can be accessed electronically, following a registration process, through the Company website:
Queries	For any queries about the auction process please e-mail: procurement.officer@Omanpwp.nama.om
Additional Information	- Local entities who are interested in bidding for I-RECS will need to register on the Company e-tendering system - Auction submission is electronic and to be done through the Company e-tendering system - Local entities who submit their bid will be required to provide an original cheque to the Company, which should be delivered and addressed to: c/o Procurement Officer 5th Floor, Building 5, Muscat Grand Mall, Tilal Complex Tel.: +968 24508400



Empowering entrepreneurs with interactive games

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
afrah@albalushia

In a remarkable collaborative effort, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) and Alizz Islamic Bank are joining hands to foster a culture of entrepreneurship among children and school students. This exciting initiative, part of the Promising Omani Start-ups Programme, aims to achieve this by creating and enhancing an electronic educational game for mobile phones and smart devices. The game focuses on imparting knowledge about entrepreneurship and start-up companies to children, with the target age group ranging from six to twelve years old.

The rationale behind this initiative is multi-faceted. It seeks to bolster children's skill sets, equipping them to confront future challenges while cultivating an educational environment that encourages creativity and innovation. Additionally, the programme aspires to ignite a passion for entrepreneurship among the younger generation, arming them with the essential skills and knowledge required to thrive as entrepreneurs.



The memorandum of cooperation was officially signed by Halima bint Rashid al Zaria and Ali bin Saif al Maani

Ultimately, it aims to nurture a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, paving the way for a brighter entrepreneurial future.

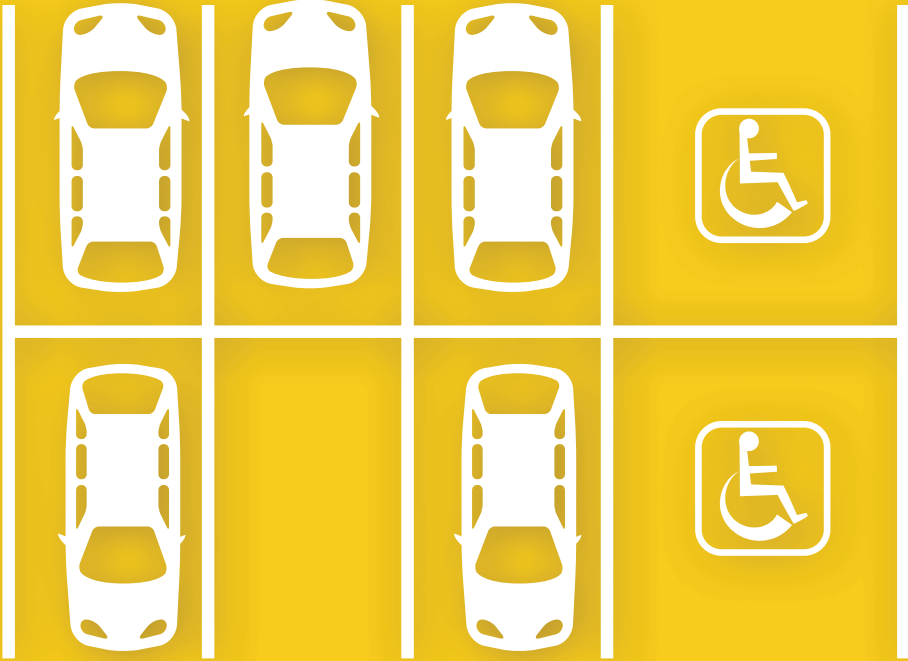
The memorandum of cooperation was officially signed on behalf of SMEDA by its Chairperson, Halima bint Rashid al Zaria, and on behalf of Alizz Islamic Bank by its CEO, Ali bin Saif al Maani. This partnership is integral to the capacity-building aspect of the Promising Omani Start-ups Programme, overseen by HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said. SMEDA jointly implements it strategically with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the Ministry of Economy, and the Omani Communications and Information Technology Group (Izkaa).

SMEDA remains steadfast in its mission to collaborate with government agencies and private sector institutions to advance the small and medium enterprises sector. They are committed to reaching diverse demographics, including children, young adults and students at all educational levels, through partnerships with both public and private educational institutions. Furthermore, SMEDA continues to play a pivotal role in providing comprehensive support packages, incentives and exceptions while adapting to innovative methods that enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem in line with global trends in the field.



1

SOME STUDENTS ARE FORCED TO PARK THEIR CARS FAR FROM THE STUDY PREMISES, REQUIRING THEM TO WALK A CONSIDERABLE DISTANCE



2

THE PARKING CRISIS FORCES SOME STUDENTS INTO IMPROPER PARKING



3

IN SOME CASES, STUDENTS SPEND HALF OF THEIR ALLOWANCES TO PAY FOR TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS

STUDENTS SEEK SOLUTION TO PARKING WOES ON CAMPUSES

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 18

University and college students are grappling with a pressing issue - the scarcity of parking spaces on their campuses. This problem has been aggravated due to the surge in student enrolments and the subsequent increase in vehicles, causing significant delays in attending lectures and a surge in traffic violations.

Frustrated by the persistent parking challenges, students call upon the university administrations to liaise with the relevant traffic regulatory authorities to mitigate the escalating congestion. Their collective appeal includes a plea to establish ample parking spots adjacent to educational institutions, accounting for the rising number of students. Additionally, they emphasise the importance of close collaboration with traffic management authorities to tackle the growing problem of unauthorised parking.

Ahmed al Mahrouqi, a student at Sultan Qaboos

University, says that the traffic crisis at the university has been unresolved for years, especially with the frequent lack of parking spaces near the colleges and lecture venues. He emphasised that the university's proposed solutions to the congestion problem are temporary, mainly due to the need for a clear plan to mitigate this problem, especially considering that the number of students increases every semester.

Mahrouqi added that it is difficult to find a parking spot, especially near buildings E and F. Most of the time, we have to park far away, and the nearest parking spot is a 15-minute walk. He also mentioned the traffic congestion when leaving campus at 4 o'clock, where we face significant waiting times to exit the university.

Mohammed Hussein, a University of Technology and Applied Sciences student, stated that students' vehicles exceed the currently available parking spaces. Many students are forced to park in areas that violate traffic laws, leading them to receive traffic violations weekly or daily. He added that some students now allocate half of their allowances to pay for these traffic violations due to improper parking, highlighting the urgent need

to solve this problem quickly. Mohammed added that students are willing to fully cooperate with the university administration in implementing any solution that would help resolve or mitigate the negative impact of this issue. He emphasised the importance of addressing this issue from all angles and ensuring the rapid implementation of comprehensive solutions. Mohammed also urged the university authorities to find quick solutions to this problem by proposing short-term solutions until plans are developed to accommodate the increasing number of vehicles.

Among the solutions proposed by the students to solve this crisis that concerns them is the creation of many parking spaces near the colleges. Additionally, increasing the number of designated parking spaces near colleges and educational facilities to meet the needs of students is essential.

Moreover, coordinating with the traffic department regarding traffic violations and establishing mechanisms to coordinate with the traffic department to reduce traffic violations related to parking in unauthorised areas are also recommended.





GCC countries can save over 2,000 lives annually with safer roads: Report

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

GCC countries can significantly reduce road fatalities and drive economic growth by meeting global road safety performance targets, according to a recent report.

The report by Strategy & Middle East, a part of the PwC network, and the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) on the journey to safer roads in the Middle East, said that achieving a single target of the 12 road safety targets outlined in the UN General Assembly's Decade of Action for Road Safety resolution — Target 4 will ensure 75 per cent of travel adheres to recommended safety standards for all road users.

It will also enable GCC countries to save 2,800 lives annually, marking a 22 per cent reduction in road fatalities, and will also contribute \$250 billion to boost the economy over the next 20 years, advancing the "Vision Zero" goal of zero road deaths or serious injuries.

It may be noted that the Sultanate of Oman reported 532 traffic-related deaths and 1072 injuries from 988 accidents in 2022, compared to 233 deaths from 820 accidents in 2021 and 198 deaths from 702 accidents in 2020.

A majority of these accidents were due to driver negligence,



GCC countries to save 2,800 lives annually, marking a 22 per cent reduction in road fatalities

bad behaviour, overtaking. The report said that safety measures are essential for the development of the GCC countries, which include smart vehicles, connectivity, empowered commuters, efficient operations, robust enforcement, supportive policies, and improved driver education and awareness.

The impact of crashes on families, communities, livelihoods, and national economies is significant.

However, through the implementation of readily available technologies and a concerted effort across policy

and infrastructure development, GCC countries can make a real difference in saving lives," FIA President, Mohammed Ben Sulayem said, noting that this report will create a framework for the federation's Member Clubs to support governments in their journey towards a safer mobility.

Despite achieving significant progress in enhancing road safety, GCC countries continue to experience higher incident rates and fatalities in comparison to many other regions, according to Hicham Fadel, Partner with Strategy & Middle East.

LOW PRESSURE COULD DEVELOP INTO TROPICAL DEPRESSION

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

The weather condition that has been developing over the southeast Arabian Sea has been classified as low pressure as per the latest weather charts and analysis of the National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre.

The formation indicates that it is likely to develop into a tropical depression during the next 48 hours.

Currently the system is centred on latitude 10.5 degrees North and longitude 68.3 degrees East. It is 1,440 km from the nearest coast of Oman.

As of now the system is expected not to have any direct impact on Sultanate of Oman's weather within the coming four days. The initial forecast shows the movement of the tropical system towards the coasts of Oman and Yemen with expected advection of clouds and heavy



rain from Sunday afternoon over Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates.

Cumulus cloud activity continued on Wednesday and scattered rain was reported in most of the mountainous areas of the governorates of Al Sharqiyah South, Al Sharqiyah North, Al Batinah South, Al Batinah North, Al Dakhiliyah and Muscat, with wadis flowing in strength.

The wilayats of Nakhal, Qurayat and Izki saw wadis running in full strength. A strong storm was experienced in the east of Wadi al Jizzi.

By 5.45 pm, heavy flow of Wadi

Al Hajer was observed in the Wilayat of Dima W'attayeen in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate.

Dense fog was noticed on Wednesday morning in the Wilayat of Al Duqm in Al Wusta Governorate.

On Thursday, mainly clear skies are expected over most of the governorates with chances of convective cloud development and isolated rain occasionally thundershowers associated with downdraft over Al Hajar Mountains and adjoining areas towards afternoon. Chances of low clouds or fog patches are expected at late night.

Construction of RO 75m Al Suwaiq Hospital's main building completed



The completion rate in the construction structure of the main building of the hospital has reached 100 per cent, while the total completion rate for all work has reached 50 per cent. — ONA

AL SUWAIQ: Construction work is underway on Al Suwaiq Hospital in the Governorate of Al Batinah North, which is being implemented by the Ministry of Health at a cost of RO 75 million.

The completion rate in the construction structure of the main building of the hospital has reached 100 per cent, while the total completion rate for all work has reached 50 per cent.

Hamad bin Hareb al Alawi, Project Manager of Al Suwaiq

Hospital said that the project is being built on a land area of 287,000 square metres, while the building area is 47,357 square metres, with a total of 550 parking spaces.

He pointed out that the structural work for the main building has been completed and work is underway to complete the supporting buildings, such as the services building, a warehouse for medical gases, and another for waste, in addition to mechanical

and electrical works.

He added that the hospital includes many departments and specialities, such as the adult intensive care unit, the neonatal intensive care unit, the care unit for premature infants, the dialysis unit, the rehabilitation department, the dental unit and the cardiac care unit, in addition to many departments, clinics and service facilities.

Once completed, the number of beds in the hospital will stand at 256. — ONA

Special camping expo to come up soon

ZAKIYA AL HUSSAINI
MUSCAT, OCT 18

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) joins hands with Al Ethar Projects for Organising Exhibitions and Conferences and Heroes Club to set up a dedicated exhibition for camping-related activities.

Named 'Kashtat Zawaya', the expo will attract people with interest in tours equipment, domestic tourism,

resorts owning, greenhouses, crafts enterprises, 4x4 accessories, auto repair, and outdoor seating arrangement.

The ministry invites corporates and firms specialised in camping to take part in the expo, scheduled to be held from October 30 to November 4, at Mall of Muscat.

The inaugural ceremony will be held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Firas bin Fatik bin Fahr al Said.



Named 'Kashtat Zawaya', the expo will attract people with interest in tours equipment and domestic tourism

SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF HEALTH
ANNOUNCEMENT

The Directorate General of Khoula Hospital invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders:-

Tender Ref.	Description	Last Date for Collection of Tenders Document	Bid Submission Closing Date on/ Before 09:00 am Wednesday	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
MOH/DGKH-39/3951/2023	Supply, Installation and User Training for Electromyography System at Directorate General of Khoula Hospital	31/Oct/2023	22/Nov/2023	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	R.O 25.000

- Tenders should be submitted online on <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.
- For any Clarification, you may contact via Telephone: 24402200, Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om

OFA awards 'Inspirational Women of Oman'



MUSCAT: The Omani French Friendship Association recently announced the fifth edition of the 'Inspirational Women of Oman' awards ceremony in honour of Omani Women's Day.



A view shows the site of Israeli strikes on houses in the central Gaza. – Reuters

IN A MASSACRE DAY FOR GAZA, DOCTORS RECOUNT HORROR OF HOSPITAL BLAST

GAZA: Gaza’s health ministry spokesman said an Israeli air strike on Tuesday killed hundreds of people at a hospital in the Palestinian enclave.

The death toll was by far the highest of any single incident in Gaza during the current violence.

The Palestinian Authority’s health minister, Mai Alkaila, accused Israel of “a massacre” at Al Ahli Al Arabi Hospital. The strike killed hundreds of people and occurred during Israel’s intense 11-day bombing campaign in Gaza.

The health ministry spokesman, Ashraf al Qudra, said early on Wednesday that hundreds were killed and that rescue workers were still removing bodies from the rubble.

News of the hospital strike and high death toll prompted condemnation from many countries on the eve of US President Joseph Biden’s visit to Israel. Russia and the United Arab Emirates demanded a UN Security Council meeting and



People inspect the remains of a destroyed building following Israeli bombardment in Khan Yunis in the southern of Gaza Strip. – AFP

clashes erupted in the West Bank. Earlier on Tuesday, the United Nations said an Israeli strike had hit one of its schools where at least 4,000 people were sheltering. The agency said six people were killed and dozens injured by the strike. Health authorities in Gaza said

prior to Tuesday’s incident at least 3,000 people had been killed in Israel’s 11 days of bombing since October 7. Displaced people fleeing the Israeli bombardment have flocked to hospitals, seeking refuge around them in hopes they will be safer.

Israel has cut off all power, water, food, fuel and medicine supplies into Gaza since the Hamas attack, intensifying an existing blockade of the enclave.

The head of orthopedic surgery at Al Ahli Al Arabi Hospital in Gaza, Fadel Naim, had just finished a procedure when he heard a huge explosion and his department filled with people screaming for help.

“People came running into the surgery department screaming help us, help us, there are people killed and wounded inside the hospital,” he said. He found the hospital full of dismembered bodies and wounded people.

“We tried to save whoever could be saved but the number was too great for the hospital team,” he said.

On Tuesday, people seeking shelter from the fiercest fighting by the Israeli military walked into the hospital to their deaths.

The toll was by far the highest of any single incident — **Reuters**

EU ‘CANNOT ACCEPT’ ISRAEL ILLEGALLY HALTING WATER

STRASBOURG: The European Union “cannot accept” Israel stopping water supplies to Gaza’s population, which “clearly” violates international law, the bloc’s foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said on Wednesday. “Suspending the water supply to a community under siege is contrary to international law. But we can’t accept that,” he told the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

That was the EU’s position when it came to Ukraine, where Russian forces besieged communities and cut off water, and it should be the same when it came to Gaza, he added.

“It is clearly stated that depriving a human community under siege of a basic water supply is contrary to international law -- in Ukraine and in Gaza.

“And if we are unable to say so,

for both places, we lack the moral authority necessary to make our voice heard,” Borrell said. His comments come amid mixed messages in the European Union over developments in the Mideast conflict. There was widespread and repeated condemnation of October 7 assault on Israel near Gaza. But EU countries, officials and lawmakers have differed in their reaction to Israel’s retaliatory military action against Gaza. Most emphasise that Israel has to comply with international humanitarian law, which prohibits collective punishment of populations, the targeting of civilians and disproportionate actions. But Borrell was more explicit in saying that Israel cutting water violated international law. – **AFP**



Palestinians gesture as they chant during a protest in support of Gaza in Nablus city in the West Bank. – AFP

Palestinians protest

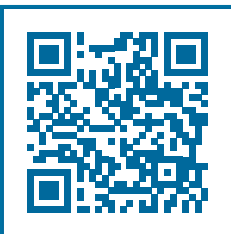
NABLUS: Palestinian protesters took to the streets in the occupied West Bank on Wednesday, blaming Israel for a strike on a hospital in war-torn Gaza that killed hundreds.

Hundreds of protesters in Nablus, many draped in Palestinian flags and some holding banners, chanted slogans against Israel.

“I care about my people, I care about my city, I care about Gaza and Gaza people. So this is why I, perhaps in years I haven’t spoken out,

I’m speaking now,” said Ferial, 50-year-old Nablus resident. A similar sized protest took place in Ramallah, the seat of the Palestinian Authority, where the crowd chanted in support of Hamas and against with Israel. During the demonstration, a small group of Palestinians blocked a road and set tyres ablaze near a group of Israeli soldiers. Some threw stones, while others cobbled together Molotov cocktails. The demonstration was held late on Tuesday in Ramallah,





KILLED AT AL AHLI ARABI BAPTIST HOSPITAL AIRSTRIKE



Children sit in the back of an ambulance at Shifa Hospital after an Israeli air strike hit the nearby Al Ahli Al Arabi Hospital, Gaza Strip. — Reuters



A woman reacts as people gather at the site of the Al Ahli Al Arabi Hospital in central Gaza. — AFP



People gather at the site of Al Ahli Al Arabi Hospital in central Gaza. — AFP

WHO URGES AGAINST HEALTHCARE CENTRE ATTACKS

COPENHAGEN: The World Health Organization on Wednesday urged against any attacks on healthcare centres, a day after a Gaza hospital strike that killed at least 500 people.

"We call ... at a minimum to stop any attacks on healthcare facilities," the head of the WHO's European branch, Hans Kluge, said in an interview, listing it as a top priority.

"Number two is to protect civilians and children, and number three is to get humanitarian access from Rafah inside Gaza, because all our supplies are based there already but there is no border opening yet," he said.

Kluge said the WHO was "very, very worried" about the situation.

Massive number of people were killed on Tuesday in a strike on the Al Ahli Arab Hospital in central Gaza, the health ministry in the Palestinian territory said.

Following the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, the WHO has registered 140 attacks on health centres: six in Israel, 77 in the West Bank and 57 in Gaza.

Kluge said "the only solution is to stop the fighting".

He called for "a negotiated peace that ensures the right to health for everyone."

"Our motto is Health for All, both for sides."

— AFP

EGYPT REJECTS DISPLACEMENT OF PALESTINIANS, SAYS SISI

CAIRO: Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi said on Wednesday that Egyptians in their millions would reject the forced displacement of Palestinians.

"Egypt rejects any attempt to resolve the Palestinian issue by military means or through the forced displacement of Palestinians from their land, which would come at the expense of the countries of the region," el Sisi said.

Sisi said the Egyptian people would "go out and protest in their millions... if called upon to do so" against any displacement of Gaza's residents to Sinai.

Jordan, which shares a border with the Israeli-occupied West Bank and absorbed most of the Palestinians who fled or were driven from their homes after the creation of the state of Israel, has also warned against Palestinians being forced off their land.

Egypt has been trying to channel humanitarian relief through its Rafah crossing with Gaza, but aid has been piling up on the Egyptian side because Egypt says Israeli bombardments on the Gaza side have made the crossing inoperable.

The United States has said it is working with Israel on a plan for sending in aid, and White House spokesperson John Kirby said they were getting close to a framework for the plan. The plan is likely to involve the evacuation of some foreign passport holders from Gaza, but Egyptian officials say that has to be



Egypt rejects any attempt to resolve the Palestinian issue by military means or through the forced displacement of Palestinians from their land

ABDEL FATTAH AL SISI
Egyptian President

accompanied by the delivery of aid.

Two Egyptian security sources said that talks had faltered, blaming Israeli obstinacy on allowing the crossing to operate safely.

Volunteers waiting on the Egyptian side of Rafah performed a funeral prayer for those killed in the blast, many of them dressed in black. — Reuters

PUTIN CALLS BLAST AT GAZA HOSPITAL A CATASTROPHE

BEIJING: Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday that a blast at a hospital in Gaza that killed hundreds of Palestinians was a terrible catastrophe that showed the conflict should be ended through negotiations.

Palestinian officials blamed an Israeli air strike for the blast at Al Ahli Al Arabi Hospital, which it said had killed as many as 500 people.

"As for the strike on the hospital, the tragedy that happened there is a terrible event," Putin said after talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing. "Hundreds of dead and hundreds of wounded are of course a catastrophe."

"I really hope this will be a signal that we need to end this conflict as soon as possible. In any case, we need to focus on

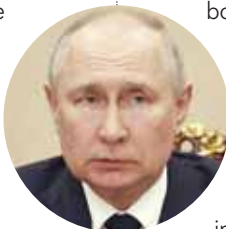
the possibility of starting some contacts and negotiations."

Russia, which has relationships with major powers as well as with the Palestinians and with Israel, has repeatedly said the United States and the West have ignored the need for an independent Palestinian state within 1967 borders.

In those talks, Putin said he had formed the impression that no major players wanted the conflict to escalate.

"I have the impression that no one wants this to continue, for the conflict to develop and for the situation to worsen further," Putin said.

"In my opinion, I have the impression that there are practically nobody is ready to develop the conflict into a large-scale war," Putin said. — Reuters



in West Bank after the hospital strike

I care about my people, I care about my city, I care about Gaza and Gaza people. So this is why I'm speaking now

FERIAL
Nablus Resident

a short while after the hospital blast.

Health authorities in Gaza said the explosion killed at least 471 people and was caused by the latest in a wave of Israeli air strikes.

"The death toll of the largest and most violent massacre committed by the criminal Israeli occupation inside the Baptist Hospital reached 471 martyrs, and 28 critical cases remain, in addition to 314 people with various injuries," the ministry said in a statement.

At least 3,478 people have been killed in the Gaza Strip since Israel began bombarding the coastal enclave, the health ministry said on Wednesday.

More than 12,000 others have been wounded in Israel's response to attacks launched on Israel on October 7.

Ahead of the expected ground invasion, Israel gave one million residents of northern Gaza 24 hours to flee south.

Some 20 medical facilities have been told to evacuate. Electricity, water and fuel

supplies have been cut.

International alarm has grown about the devastating impact of the war on Palestinian civilians.

According to World Health Organisation figures, there have been more than 100 attacks on hospitals, ambulances and other health care assets since October 7.

The Palestine Red Crescent Society said hundreds died in Tuesday's blast, including women, children, staff and "internally displaced people seeking safe shelter". — AFP

Bullying: from school to the workplace



Karim Easterbrook

The author is an education counsellor. k.easterbrook@yahoo.com

As the former Principal and owner of two schools in Cambridge, UK, I implemented a strict zero-tolerance policy against bullying. Any student found guilty of continual bullying faced warnings and reminders of my schools’ policy. If the behaviour persisted, expulsion without appeal followed. Parents were kept informed about relevant events and were aware of the consequences for rule violations in relation to bullying. My unwavering stance against bullying may have seemed severe to some, but personal experiences with my own daughters being bullied at different UK schools fuelled my commitment to proactive anti-bullying measures.

Parents, take heed: bullying can have a profound impact on mental health, affecting both children and adults. Research shows that individuals bullied as children may be twice as likely to experience mental health issues as adults.

Bullying, if left unaddressed, adversely affects academic progress and can lead to enduring

emotional and psychological trauma well into adulthood. This article is primarily concerned with bullying in educational institutions but acknowledges parallels with workplace bullying. Workplace bullies not only harm employees emotionally but also hinder their performance, sometimes causing the loss of valuable personnel. Promoting a bully to a managerial position can be detrimental to a company’s bottom line. Bullying is detrimental to business, and companies must have well-documented employee grievance policies to protect victims.

Bullying can be overt (easily visible or audible) or covert (subtle and difficult to spot). Covert bullying is often more insidious due to its lasting emotional and psychological effects. The emotional trauma caused by covert bullying should not be underestimated, as it has led to tragic outcomes, including suicide. The internet and social media platforms provide bullies with additional avenues to pursue their harmful activities, emphasising the importance of addressing “internet bullying” alongside in-person bullying.

BULLYING, IF LEFT UNADDRESSED, ADVERSELY AFFECTS ACADEMIC PROGRESS AND CAN LEAD TO ENDURING EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA WELL INTO ADULTHOOD.

Common examples of covert in-school bullying include social exclusion, spreading rumours, derogatory comments, and racism. Covert bullies are discreet and use methods that allow them to deny any intention to harm. Victims of covert bullying may fear retaliation and are often reluctant to report it.

So, how can you identify if you are being bullied at school or college? Understand that bullying is not a one-time event; it involves repeated negative behaviour directed at you. While overt bullying is more apparent, recognising covert bullying can be challenging. When dealing with a covert bully, document incidents, including what was said, frequency, circumstances, and dates. Seek support from friends or family and approach school authorities if necessary.

No one should have to endure bullying. If you suspect you are being bullied, speak out, and seek support. Don’t suffer in silence. It is crucial for schools and workplaces to have well-documented anti-bullying policies to create safe environments where no one tolerates bullying in any form.

‘Ghost of Boris’ looms over bellwether UK poll

HELEN ROWE

UK voters go to the polls on Thursday in a bellwether local poll that could make it clear just how serious a challenge Prime Minister Rishi Sunak’s Conservatives face at the next general election.

The vote in the Mid-Bedfordshire constituency follows the resignation of MP Nadine Dorries, a key ally of ousted ex-premier Boris Johnson.

Dorries held the seat, a Tory stronghold since 1931, with a huge 24,000 majority in the 2019 general election.

If the Conservatives lose it this week, it will be one of the biggest collapses of support in English by-election history.

Sunak’s party — battered by a bruising cost of living crisis, stubbornly high inflation and the fall out from a series of political scandals under Johnson — is currently trailing in the polls behind Keir Starmer’s main opposition Labour Party.

But with recent surveys showing Labour’s poll lead narrowing after Sunak announced populist policies, the poll is being closely watched.

Retirees in the mainly rural constituency in central England said they expected the Conservatives to hold the seat but that without Johnson they would flounder in the national ballot, expected next year.

Some younger voters said they were so fed up with politicians of all stripes they wouldn’t be voting in either poll.

Nursery nurse Leigh-Ann Munn said she hadn’t decided who to vote for yet but that the biggest issue for her was spiralling costs.

The 31-year-old mother of a toddler from the small town of Ampthill said the rise in food, energy and housing costs had hit her family “big time”. Labour is hoping on Thursday’s result will mirror the drubbing meted out to the Conservatives in July in the northern Selby and Ainsty local election, where the opposition overturned a 20,000 majority.

Voters on the same day, however, narrowly backed the Tories in Johnson’s former Uxbridge and South Ruislip constituency in a local poll dominated by contentious plans by London’s mayor to extend a scheme taxing the use of the most polluting vehicles.

Retired museum worker Maureen Dunlop, 75, said she thought “getting rid of Boris” had been a mistake for the Tory Party.

Johnson won a landslide election victory in 2019 with an 80 seat majority in parliament.

The resounding win was partly due to so-called “red wall” voters, former Labour supporters who backed the Conservatives for the first time. — AFP

The decline of the Pax Americana



Paul Krugman

When Hamas attacked Israel, Republicans knew whom to blame: President Joe Biden. Donald Trump asserted that the attack wouldn’t have happened if he were still in the White House; Mike Pence, while condemning Trump for praising Hezbollah, asserted that Biden was somehow endangering US interests by “projecting weakness.”

Like much of what the American right says these days, these smears were both vile and infantile. No, the US president isn’t like the Green Lantern, able to shape world events through sheer force of will. And Biden has in fact taken remarkably tough positions on foreign affairs, much more so than his predecessor.

More generally, it’s striking how both the far left, which has no significant influence on the Democratic Party, and the far right, which largely runs the GOP, are American solipsists. They blame US leaders for everything bad that happens in the world, denying foreigners any agency.

That said, even serious students of international affairs are noting that the world seems to be becoming more dangerous, with many local cold wars turning hot, and suggesting that we may be witnessing the end of the Pax Americana, the long era in which US economic and military dominance limited the potential for wars of conquest.

But why is the Pax Americana in decline?

You might be tempted to engage in economic determinism, saying that the United States has lost influence because it doesn’t dominate the world economy the way it once did. But while there was a big decline in America’s share of world gross domestic product between 1960 and 1980, since then that share hasn’t had a clear downward trend, although it has fluctuated with the foreign exchange value of the dollar.

Indeed, our strong recovery from the Covid recession, combined with the stumbles of some geopolitical rivals, makes US economic dominance look more durable than it has for a long time. Notably, many observers are now suggesting that China’s GDP, measured in dollars, may never overtake America’s. (China’s economy is already larger in terms of domestic purchasing power, but this is less relevant for global influence.)



The US flag on a pole flutters and fades away in Nashville. – NYT file photo

Oh, and despite all the hype about de-dollarisation, the US dollar seems, if anything, to be more central to the world economy than ever.

Furthermore, changes in the world economy have arguably given the United States new ways to exercise economic power. International relations experts Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman recently published “Underground Empire: How America Weaponised the World Economy,” a revelatory book that describes how modern globalisation —

HOW MUCH CAN ANY NATION TRUST US ASSURANCES OF SUPPORT? HOW CAN WE EXPECT FOREIGN ENEMIES OF DEMOCRACY TO FEAR AMERICA WHEN THEY KNOW THAT THERE ARE POWERFUL FORCES HERE THAT SHARE THEIR DISDAIN?

which creates far more complex forms of interdependence than traditional international trade — has put America “at the heart of an international web of surveillance and control.”

And the Biden administration hasn’t been at all shy about using US power. Aid to Ukraine, while fairly minor relative to the US budget, has been a major factor in frustrating Russian war. America has also aggressively deployed both its financial and its technological power to apply sanctions against the Putin regime. In the latest crisis, Israelis, including Benjamin

Netanyahu, have praised Biden for his prompt support, which probably explains why Trump has lashed out at a former political ally.

Furthermore, Biden has taken a remarkably hard line on Chinese technology. Where Trump huffed and puffed ineffectually against Chinese trade surpluses (which were never the problem), Biden has imposed sanctions that the Center for Strategic and International Studies calls a “policy of actively strangling large segments of the Chinese technology industry — strangling with an intent to kill.”

If this is “projecting weakness,” what would projecting strength look like?

Yet it seems safe to say that the world no longer trusts US promises, and perhaps no longer fears US threats, the way it used to. The problem, however, isn’t Biden; it’s the party that reflexively attacks him for anything that goes wrong.

Right now America is a superpower without a fully functioning government. Specifically, the House of Representatives has no speaker, so it can’t pass legislation, including bills funding the government and providing aid to US allies. The House is paralysed because Republican extremists, who have refused to acknowledge Biden’s legitimacy and promoted chaos rather than participating in governance, have turned these tactics on their own party. At this point it’s hard to see how anyone can become speaker without Democratic votes — but even less extreme Republicans refuse to reach across the aisle. And even if Republicans do somehow manage to elect a speaker, it seems all too likely that whoever gets the job will have to promise the hard right that he will betray Ukraine.

— The New York Times

Women don't come with manual of instructions

The empowerment of women is multifaceted. The several layers, from intellectual development to looks and attitude, show the complexity of the species. Women live in bubbles of their own. They are mysterious, yet they function as magnets.

Contextualising women's image can be a challenge. Not every woman is the same. Women do not come with an instruction manual. One day, they are happy, and the next day, they are sad. Today they are brave; tomorrow they act like cowards. Women can hide emotions and show happiness from the outside when they are sad on the inside. These are characteristics that work in different circumstances. They are multitaskers. They can change their roles from an angelic mother to a devilish wife. Women's pretty smiles can hide payback. And, oh, yes, do not cross a woman's path in the wrong way.

The complexity of defining women, as if this is possible, involves not only biological development but everything else, from political attitudes, social roles, education, and women's autonomy. These together make them different. Surely, women have their misadventures and inadequacies. A flaw or a wrinkle can throw them into a panic!

In October 2009, during the Royal 'Meet-the-People Tour', late Sultan Qaboos in Suhar declared the Omani Women's Day to be celebrated on October 17. This was such an important announcement. Grown-up women, schoolgirls, college students, working mums, each female I came across (and there were many), was delighted with the declaration.

In Oman, there had been women's associations for decades before the announcement, where women from different villages would gather to support one another with assistance, arts and crafts, small businesses, health awareness, and whatever else was within their local capacity. One of the main objectives of the associations has been to improve women's economic and social standing. So, declaring Omani Women's Day came as an endorsement of their previous efforts



SONIA AMBROSIO @ambrosionelson

The writer is journalist, academic, researcher in media studies

and provided opportunities for future ventures.

Looking back after all these years, I see more girls entering the workforce, travelling abroad to continue their studies, engaging in scientific research and being entrepreneurs. They have embraced all the opportunities made available to them. Some hold prestigious jobs in both the public and private sectors. They contribute to political and economic development but do not share political power. Despite the advancements, there are still women and girls far inside the country's interior who do not yet have access to the same opportunities, mobility, available resources, and cosmopolitan lifestyle as those living in the big cities.

Untangling the complexity of women, the expansion of beauty salons, spas, cosmetic clinics, and cosmetic dentistry is a reflection of the appreciation of and desire for beauty. A line of inquiry points out that beauty, intelligence and positive characteristics go hand in hand with opportunities in life. It is a type of cognitive bias. It goes further because women's desire to be beautiful goes along with a process that involves social comparison, social competition, and emotional and behavioural attitudes. Doors are being opened for them. The absence of beauty can lead to damaging social bias and, therefore, fewer opportunities. Many could argue one way or another about this. Women are not essentially complicated! Social and cultural norms and other elements may have an impact on how they behave. Therefore, women may as well play with the adversities as a buffer by wrapping a range of circumstances around their fingers and turning restrictions into opportunities.

Conceptual arguments about women's development, feminism, use of technology, sexuality and well-being can lead to a variety of areas for research, but none of these studies would undermine women's value to society. Women are capable of telling compelling stories. Give them lemons, and they will make lemonade and sow the seeds! Happy Women's Day in Oman!

DECLARING OMANI WOMEN'S DAY CAME AS AN ENDORSEMENT OF THEIR PREVIOUS EFFORTS AND PROVIDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE VENTURES

FREEDOM FOR PRISONERS



A woman holds a placard as she takes part in a rally by relatives of Ukrainian Azov regiment war prisoners calling for their quick exchange with Russian prisoners of war at St Sophia Square in Kyiv, on Wednesday, amid Russian war on Ukraine. - AFP

Compensating community-health workers

LENNIE BAZIRA AND PROSSY MUYINGO

At least six million women worldwide provide unpaid or grossly underpaid labour in community-health centres, often in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Many work as community-health workers. But, though this is a skilled job that should be salaried, only 34 countries offer CHWs accreditation, training and salaries, leaving the majority exploited and therefore less effective for their patients. If we are serious about making "health for all" a global priority, this must change.

CHWs are crucial to strengthening health systems at the national level: they have been proven to improve maternal- and child-health services, expand access to family planning, and support prevention and care for both non-communicable and infectious diseases. Deploying CHWs who consistently provide just 30 lifesaving health services in countries with the highest disease burden would save as many as 6.9 million lives annually and reduce child mortality by almost half. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated how resilient community-health programmes can provide essential services even in the face of great adversity.

But such programmes will reach their full potential only with service design that adheres to evidence-based best practices. That means treating CHWs as professionals who require training, fair



Lennie Bazira is Policy Director of the Community Health Impact Coalition



Prossy Muyingo is a community-health worker in Uganda and was named a 2023 Heroine of Health by Women in Global Health

pay, and safe working conditions. When used as a stopgap solution or a source of cheap labour, CHWs are less effective than their well-resourced counterparts.

In Africa, up to 85 per cent of CHWs are unpaid, and, worldwide, CHWs' essential medicines are out of stock one-third of the time. In Uganda, our home country, there is a shortage of healthcare workers, so CHWs have stepped up to fill the gap. Though these workers provide vital services to their communities, performing many of the same tasks as their salaried supervisors, they often receive little or no pay.

Why are CHWs, who are often women of colour, expected to work and save lives without recognition or remuneration? It is clear that this is also a gender-rights issue. Patriarchal norms and power dynamics condition women to accept no or low wages for what should clearly be paid work. For example, women from low-income households and with low levels of education often view this type of unpaid work as an opportunity that might lead to paid work or an asset like a mobile phone or bicycle. Unpaid work in healthcare can also bring women social recognition. In many contexts, it is seen as honourable work that families will approve of for a woman. As a result, CHWs tend to juggle these positions with piecemeal paid jobs and family responsibilities.

These women face an unenviable dilemma: If they give up their work as CHWs to find full-time employment that can support them, who will provide much-needed healthcare for their communities? Backed into a corner by systemic inequalities and traditional gender roles, they often continue to overextend themselves, sacrificing stability, economic security, career progression, and their own well-being in the process.

To redress this entrenched social and economic injustice, professional CHWs must become the norm, not the exception. At minimum, CHWs must be accredited to ensure that certain standards are met; paid a

competitive wage; continuously trained and supported by a dedicated supervisor; and integrated into health systems, including primary healthcare facilities and wider monitoring and evaluation systems. That way, they can be proactive in surveillance and see patients without point-of-care user fees. In short, CHWs must be salaried, skilled, supervised and supplied.

After years of being marginalised and isolated, CHWs are now organising and establishing in-country networks, largely using digital technology, to achieve these goals. More than 5,000 CHWs and aligned health organisations across 40 countries have come together via the Community Health Impact

Coalition to translate shared research and advocacy work into policy change at the national level. Our shared mission is to ensure that all LMICs, including Uganda, adopt policies for professional CHWs.

The global community must decide whether it will fairly compensate those who, for decades, have propped up health systems in LMICs, or continue to exploit a largely female workforce. The moral choice is clear. Countries that professionalise CHWs and integrate them into a robust health infrastructure will be in the best position to make progress towards "health for all" — including for the women delivering the bulk of the care. @Project Syndicate, 2023



In Africa, up to 85 per cent of CHWs are unpaid.

sport



England's Harry Kane scores their third goal past Italy's Gianluigi Donnarumma. — Reuters

England thump Italy to clinch Euro 2024 spot

HUNGARY MISS CHANCE TO SECURE SPOT AT FINALS

DENMARK GIVEN SAN MARINO SCARE

FRANCE ENJOY EASY WIN OVER SCOTLAND IN FRIENDLY

PARIS: Classy England beat Italy 3-1 at Wembley to become the latest country to book a berth at next year's European Championship after Tuesday's round of qualifiers but Hungary's hopes were held up by a draw away to Lithuania.

England and Hungary were the only teams with the opportunity on Tuesday to secure their places at the finals in Germany next June with Gareth Southgate's side coming from behind to beat the European champions and make sure of top spot in Group C.

Defeat for Italy, who led through Gianluca Scamacca before England overtook them with two goals from their all-time record scorer Harry Kane - the first a penalty -- and one from Marcus Rashford, leaves the visitors in a precarious third place.

Ukraine moved into second spot as they beat Malta 3-1 away after Paul Mbong had put the hosts ahead in the 12th minute. An own goal and then a penalty had Ukraine ahead by half-time and they added a third near the end from Mykhailo Mudryk.

Ukraine conclude their qualifying campaign next month with a home game against Italy that will have to be played at a neutral venue because of the conflict with Russia.

Hungary would have qualified had they won in Lithuania, who they had beaten five times in six previous meetings, but went two goals down in Kaunas before fighting back to draw 2-2.

Lithuania, who had won only one game in Group G, led at the break with goals from Fedor Cernych and Pijus Sirvys but



England's Harry Kane celebrates scoring their third goal against Italy. — Reuters

Hungary fought back through captain Dominik Szoboszlai's 67th minute penalty and a Barnabas Varga header eight minutes from time.

Hungary pressed for a winner but must now wait until next

month to claim a place at Euro 2024. They lead by one point after second-placed Serbia beat neighbours Montenegro 3-1 in Belgrade on the back of a double from Aleksandar Mitrovic.

Denmark and Slovenia were

both away winners in Group H to move to the cusp of qualification.

SAN MARINO SCARE DENMARK
The Danes had a scare in San

Marino where the tiny republic scored their first goal of the campaign but the visitors still won 2-1, while Slovenia were 1-0 victors over Northern Ireland in Belfast, where Adam Cerin netted after five minutes.

The results left Kazakhstan with slim hopes of automatic qualification despite upsetting Finland 2-1 away in Tuesday's early match as Bakhtiyar Zaynutdinov scored twice, the first from the spot in the 77th and then an 89th minute winner.

France secured a convincing 4-1 victory over Scotland in a friendly in Lille, where the kickoff was delayed by 10 minutes to allow fans time to get safely into the ground, given the enhanced security measures in place.

Both teams had already secured their places in the Euro 2024 finals and Scotland led briefly with a goal by Billy Gilmour after 11 minutes, but Benjamin Pavard equalised five minutes later and scored a brace before half-time.

Kylian Mbappe converted a penalty for France just before the break, after Liam Cooper was penalised for a shirt tug on Olivier Giroud and Kingsley Coman completed the scoring when he netted a rebound in the 70th minute.

Already booked for the finals are Germany (hosts), Austria, Belgium, France, Portugal, Scotland, Spain, England and Turkey.

The final round of group qualifiers are next month and the tournament will be held from June 14-July 14.

— Reuters

EURO 2024 QUALIFYING RESULTS ON TUESDAY:

GROUP C
England 3 (Kane 32-pen, Rashford 57, Kane 77) Italy 1 (Scamacca 15)
Malta 1 (Mbong 12) Ukraine 3 (Camenzuli-og 38, Dovbyk 43-pen, Mudryk 85)

GROUP G
Serbia 3 (Mitrovic 9, 73, Tadic 77) Montenegro 1 (Jovetic 36)
Lithuania 2 (Cernych 20, Sirvys 36) Hungary 2 (Szoboszlai 67-pen, Varga 82)

GROUP H
Finland 1 (Taylor 28) Kazakhstan 2 (Zainutdinov 77-pen, 89)
Northern Ireland 0 Slovenia 1 (Gnezda Cerin 5)
San Marino 1 (Golinucci 61) Denmark 2 (Hojlund 42, Poulsen 70)

ON MONDAY

GROUP B
Greece 0 Netherlands 1 (Van Dijk 90+3-pen)
Gibraltar 0 Republic of Ireland 4 (Ferguson 8, Johnston 28, Doherty 60, Robinson 80)

GROUP F
Azerbaijan 0 Austria 1 (Sabitzer 48-pen)
Belgium v Sweden - abandoned at half-time

GROUP J
Iceland 4 (G Sigurdsson 22-pen, 49, Finnbogason 44, Haraldsson 63) Liechtenstein 0
Bosnia and Herzegovina 0 Portugal 5 (Ronaldo 5-pen, 20, Fernandes 25, Cancelo 32, Felix 41)
Luxembourg 0 Slovakia 1 (Duris 77)

ON SUNDAY

GROUP A
Georgia 4 (Kiteishvili 46, Kvaratskhelia 58, Shengelia 82, Mikautadze 90+5-pen) Cyprus 0
Norway 0 Spain 1 (Gavi 49)

GROUP D
Turkey 4 (Akgun 58, Tosun 84, 90+2, Akturkoglu 88) Latvia 0
Wales 2 (Wilson 47, 60) Croatia 1 (Pasalic 75)

GROUP E
Poland 1 (Swiderski 53) Moldova 1 (Nicolaeescu 26)
Czech Republic 1 (Soucek 76-pen) Faroe Islands 0

GROUP I
Switzerland 3 (Shaqiri 28, Akanji 89, Amdouni 90) Belarus 3 (Ebong 61, Polyakov 69, Antilevski 84)
Romania 4 (Stancu 23, Hagi 28, R. Marin 44-pen, Coman 50) Andorra 0
Kosovo v Israel - postponed

Messi double helps Argentina stay perfect

NEYMAR INJURED AS BRAZIL SLUMP IN WC QUALIFIERS

MONTEVIDEO: Lionel Messi scored two goals as Argentina extended their perfect start to South American qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup on Tuesday with a 2-0 victory over Peru.

The Inter Miami star took his international goal tally to 106 with strikes in the 32nd and 42nd minutes at Lima's Estadio Nacional.

Messi's first-half brace left reigning world champions Argentina on top of the South American qualifying table with

12 points from four games, five points clear of Uruguay, Brazil and Venezuela, who all have seven points.

Restored to the starting line-up after coming off the bench in last Thursday's 1-0 win over Paraguay, Messi showed no sign of the injuries that have recently limited his appearances in Major League Soccer.

The 36-year-old crashed home an emphatic opener just after the half-hour mark, then added a second 10 minutes later after



Argentina forward Lionel Messi controls the ball during the 2026 Fifa World Cup South American qualification match between Peru and Argentina at the National Stadium in Lima. — AFP

good work by Enzo Fernandez down the left flank.

The win leaves Argentina firmly on track to return to the World Cup finals in 2026.

The top six teams in South America's 10-team qualifying competition will be guaranteed a place at the finals.

Meanwhile, Brazil suffered a nightmare 2-0 defeat in Montevideo, crashing to a first loss against Uruguay in 22 years.

The defeat was compounded by the sight of veteran forward

Neymar being stretched off just before half-time with what appeared to be a knee injury.

Uruguay's Darwin Nunez struck with a bullet header on 42 minutes to open the scoring in a dour first half at the Estadio Centenario. The Liverpool striker then played a pivotal role in Uruguay's second, holding up the ball well from a throw-in and cutting back for Nicolas de la Cruz to fire past Brazil goalkeeper Ederson on 77 minutes, sealing a 2-0 victory. — AFP

OFA supports Saudi bid to host Fifa World Cup 2034



AFC President Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa chairs the meeting.

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, OCT 18

The Oman Football Association (OFA) along with other Asian Football Confederation members have voiced support for Saudi Arabia's bid for 2034 World Cup during an online meeting of the AFC Exton Wednesday.

Qutaiba al Ghailani, a member of OFA, Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Yahmadi, Secretary-General, and Farah bint Hamad, Director of International Relations, represented Oman Football Association.

The meeting was held to select the presidents, vice-presidents and members for the Disciplinary and Ethics Committee, AFC Appeals Committee and the AFC Entry Control Body.

AFC President Shaikh Salman bin Ibrahim al Khalifa said that the Asian football body has emerged as a model of excellence: "The AFC has evolved into an excellence model in upholding ethical standards in recent years, so even as we elect our new members, we must take a moment to thank all those who have served Asian football with distinction, I have every faith that those elected today will continue to build on their proud legacy."

In a clear view of Asian solidarity, the AFC members expressed their support and desire to stand behind Saudi Arabia as confirmed by the AFC

President to obtain the rights to host the Fifa World Cup in 2034.

Iran's Jahangir Baglari was elected as the president of the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee, and Chinese Shen Rui became vice-president. Japan's Kengo Harima, Malaysia's Saaran Nadarajah, Ismail Zumayl Rasheed from the Maldives, Guillermo Biroy Jr of the Philippines, Saudi Arabia's Bandar al Hamidani and the United Arab Emirates' Saeed bin Mohammed al Houti were elected as the members.

The AFC Appeals Committee will be headed by Qatar's Salman al Ansari, Vietnam's Nguyen Thi My Dung as deputy, and India's Vaibhav Jajjar, South Korea's Dong-Ho Lim, Lebanon's Ali Mohammed Mhaydle and Abdulsalim Ahmed Ibrahim as members.

China's Liu Chi was elected as chairperson for the AFC Entry Control Body with Danilo M Rapadas as the first deputy, Syria's Feras al Mustafa as the second deputy, the Australia's Alexander J Davani as the third deputy and Uzbekistan's Olimjonov Umidjon Bakhodirjonovich as the fourth deputy.

AFC representatives voted on the auditors' report for 2022, 2023 and 2024 budgets, which witnessed a significant increase in investments across the AFC competitions.

Al Nahda meet Sur, Fanja take on Al Khabourah in HM Cup last 16

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 18

Defending champions Al Nahda will chase for a win when they meet Sur club on Thursday in the last 16 round of the HM Cup Football Championship. The knockout match will be held at Al Buraimi Sports Complex and will start at 18:15. In another match on Thursday, nine- time winners Fanja will take on Al Khabourah at the Nizwa Sports Complex with kick off at 18:10.

Al Nahda, coached by national experienced coach Hamed al Azani, will look to advance in the tournament to defend their title. They had won the first HM Cup title by defeating Seeb 2-0 in the last edition's final.

On the other hand, Sur will play the match away from their home as the opponent side will get the desired support from their fans. Sur managed to earn ticket in the last 16 as they defeated Muscat 4-1 in the round of 32 while it is the first match for Al Buraimi based team as the draw progressed them to this round. Sur's last title in the prestigious cup was in 2018-19 season. The four-time champions are capable of springing a surprise in Thursday's encounter with their vast experience in the HM Cup games.

In the other clash between first division league teams Fanja and Al Khabourah, both teams will look to register a win. Fanja have the home advantage with Al Khabourah putting up a strong challenge. Nine-time champions Fanja last won the title in 2013-14 season.

The remaining matches of the last 16 round will be held on Friday as Bahla will host Salalah at Nizwa Sports Complex while Oman club will face Al Mudhaibi club



Al Nahda, coached by Hamed al Azani, will look to advance in the tournament to defend their title.

at ROP stadium in Al Wattayah. Four-time winners Seeb meet Sohar in a tight clash while five-

time champions Al Nasr take on Al Talea. Record 10-time winners Dhofar meet Saham at Al Saada

Stadium while Al Rustaq will host Ibri at their home in Al Rustaq Sports Complex.

Oman Open Billiards and Snooker gets Asian recognition

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 18

The Asian Confederation of Billiard Sports (ACBS) has officially acknowledged the Oman Open Billiards and Snooker Championship, incorporating it into the federation's activities. This recognition was conveyed through a formal communication received by the Oman Billiards and Snooker Committee (OBSC) from the Asian body, solidifying the championship's status within the ACBS for open championships.

Khalid bin Khalfan al Sabahi, OBSC Chairman, expressed immense satisfaction and appreciation for this significant milestone. He emphasised the paramount importance of the ACBS recognition, particularly following the resounding success of four editions of the Oman Billiards and Snooker Championship.

The event witnessed the participation of professional players from Oman and neighbouring countries, thus meriting its inclusion among the prestigious open Asian



Hassan al Mousawi clinched the first-place trophy.

championships.

Al Sabahi highlighted the pivotal role of this recognition, symbolising unwavering support from the Asian body towards the committee. The ongoing inclusion of the championship within the ACBS' activities is seen as a crucial factor in empowering and honing the skills of players in the Sultanate of Oman.

In a related development, the OBSC successfully concluded

the qualifying championship to determine the representatives of the Oman billiards team for 2023.

The chosen representatives are set to compete in the highly anticipated Arab Billiards and Snooker Championship scheduled to take place in Jordan from December 10 to 22. The championship victory was secured by Hassan al Mousawi, who showcased exceptional

talent and determination by defeating Mohammed al Balushi with a score of 11-8.

The tournament, which unfolded at the renowned 888 Hall in the Al Maabilah area, witnessed participation from 35 talented players. Organised into eight groups of five players each, the tournament adopted a rigorous format where the top two players from each group advanced to the exhilarating round of 16. This knockout round determined the finalists and eventually the champions.

At the conclusion of the championship, Khaled bin Badr al Shabibi, OBSC member, presided over the awards ceremony.

The young talent, Hassan al Mousawi, clinched the first-place trophy, followed by Mohammed al Balushi in second place and Fahd al Muqbali securing the third place. Given the academic commitments of Al Mousawi, who claimed the top place, Mohammed al Balushi and Fahd al Muqbali were rightfully chosen to represent the national team in forthcoming prestigious tournaments.

BSC U16 A, MCCC Blue U16 register big wins

MUSCAT: BSC U16 A dominated their counterparts BSC U16 B claiming victory by 253 runs in the U16 Academies Junior League 2023-24 powered by Mazoon Dairy SAOG in the Municipality Grounds in Al Amerat on Saturday.

BSC U16 A's skipper and opener Nimish Dhuri thundered a double century (202) in 105 balls with 33 boundaries to his individual tally being the first double centurion of Season 2023-24. BSC U16 A piled up 332 in 30 overs courtesy of Tharun Mahesh contributing with a 37-ball 54 in the slog overs. In response, BSC U16 B were bundled out for 79 with two wickets each from Naushad Manaz and Vivikta Dande.

In another match, MCCC Blue U16 thumped MCCC Red U16 by 162 runs.

MCCC Blue got off to a superb start provided by Abdul Muqsih scoring a half century. Although, MCCC Blue's mainstay batter at No 3, Vihaan Sanjay Chauhan smashed a massive century (165 of 95)

along with able support from Kartikeya Gupta (42 of 23) taking the MCCC Blue U16 runs to 320 in 30 overs. In reply, Ishva P , Shrivatsa V and Ayaan Adil scored thirties and could only manage MCCC Red to drag to 158 in 30 overs. Kartikeya Gupta picked up 2 wickets.

Brief scores
BSC U16 A 332-2 in 30 overs (Nimish Dhuri 202 (105b) - 33x4) beat BSC U16 B 79 all out in 20.4 overs (Naushad Manaz 2-8) by 253 runs.
MCCC Blue U16 320-3 in 30 overs (Vihaan S Chauhan 165 (95b, 22x4) beat MCCC Red U16 158-6 in 30 overs (Ishva Pradeep 34 (44b, 4x4); Kartikeya Gupta 2-10) by 162 runs.



Nimish Dhuri of BSC U16 A hit a double century (202) in 105 balls.

Clinical New Zealand rout Afghanistan



MITCHELL
SANTNER

WICKETS IN 98TH ODI

100

MATCH FIGURES

3-39

CHENNAI: New Zealand handed giant-killing Afghanistan a brutal reality check on Wednesday when they exploited a disastrous fielding performance to romp to a 149-run victory at the Cricket World Cup.

Glenn Phillips, Tom Latham and Will Young all scored half centuries and benefitted from dropped catches to score a fighting 288-6.

The Black Caps then ran through Afghanistan, who had shocked defending champions England last time out, for just 139 in 34.4 overs.

“I thought 250 was par. We are in an environment where we keep working for each other and play as a team,” said man of the match Phillips who made 71.

The victory gives New Zealand, runners-up at the last two World Cups, a fourth victory in as many games and comfortably on course for the semifinals.

Fast bowler Lockie Ferguson took 3-19, spinner Mitchell Santner claimed 3-39 while veteran seamer Trent Boult chipped in with 2-18 as New Zealand turned the screw.

Afghanistan have one win and three defeats from their four games.

“We are very disappointed because at this level you have to take those kind of catches. End of the day those catches hurt us,” admitted captain Hashmatullah Shahidi, one of the worst culprits.

They had hoped Rahmanullah Gurbaz could repeat his fireworks against England when he made 80.

However, on Wednesday, the opener was cleaned up by Matt Henry in the sixth over for just 11. Boult dismissed Ibrahim Zadran (14) and Azmatullah Omarzai (27) while Rachin Ravindra dismissed Rahmat Shah who was the top-scorer for Afghanistan with 36.

PHILLIPS HITS 71

Santner completed 100 wickets in his 98th ODI when he dismissed Mohammad Nabi for seven before wrecking the rest of the batting in the company of Ferguson.

Earlier, Phillips hit 71 off 80 balls, Latham made 68 off 74 and opener Young 54 off 64 balls to lift New Zealand from a precarious 110-4 after they were sent in to bat on a slow pitch.

Mark Chapman fired a rapid 25 off 12 balls with two fours and a six as New Zealand scored 62 runs in the last five overs.

Afghanistan dropped as many as five catches.

These included Young being dropped by Rahmat Shah off Fazalhaq Farooqi before he had scored in the first over while skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi let off Ravindra on nought and Latham on 38.

New Zealand were off to a slow start of 30 in the seventh over when Mujeeb Ur Rahman removed Devon Conway for 20.

Young, replacing skipper Kane Williamson who fractured his thumb in the last game, added 79 for the second wicket with Ravindra who scored a 41-ball 32.

But Afghanistan hit back with three wickets off just nine balls for one run as pacer Omarzai dismissed Ravindra and Young in the same over.

Young had three sixes and four boundaries in his knock.

In the next over spinner Rashid Khan had Daryl Mitchell for one as New Zealand lost their way.

It was left to Phillips, who cracked four sixes and as many boundaries, to join stand-in skipper Latham in a solid fifth wicket stand of 144 to revive the innings.

Latham hit three boundaries and two sixes but he and Phillips fell for the addition of just one run, leaving Chapman to provide late impetus.

Fast bowlers Naveen-ul-Haq and Omarzai took two wickets apiece. — AFP

WORLD CUP STANDINGS

CRICKET WORLD CUP STANDINGS AFTER WEDNESDAY’S MATCH

Team	Played	Won	Lost	Tied	No Result	Points	NRR
New Zealand	4	4	0	0	0	8	1.923
India	3	3	0	0	0	6	1.821
South Africa	3	2	1	0	0	4	1.385
Pakistan	3	2	1	0	0	4	-0.137
England	3	1	2	0	0	2	-0.084
Bangladesh	3	1	2	0	0	2	-0.699
Australia	3	1	2	0	0	2	-0.734
Netherlands	3	1	2	0	0	2	-0.993
Afghanistan	4	1	3	0	0	2	-1.250
Sri Lanka	3	0	3	0	0	0	-1.532

NOTE: Top four teams qualify for the semifinals

Can Bangladesh upset India?

India have started their World cup campaign in the best possible way winning all their three games convincingly and are looking way ahead of the rest of the teams so far in all departments be in batting, bowling and fielding. They have clicked all the boxes so far and are on a roll and are the team to beat for all opposition.

The fourth match for India is against Bangladesh who have lost their last two matches to New Zealand and England and looked



ANIS SAJAN



well below par in spite of winning their first game against Afghanistan comfortably. Bangladesh will be also concerned about the injury to their skipper Shakib ul Hassan and will hope he is fit as he is a captain who leads from the front.

India on the other hand have ticked all boxes and with Rohit Sharma in prime form playing fearless cricket, setting a good platform for the rest to follow.

Players like Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer and KL Rahul have all got the time to build their innings because



of the high intensity template set by their skipper. With Shubman Gill returning to the India squad after missing the first two games due to sickness, fans will be hoping he too gets among the runs.

India definitely go in as favourites in the tournament but would be wary of the fact that Bangladesh had beaten India three times in the last four games between them and would like to set the record intact that Bangladesh have never beaten India in India in an ODI.





Closer than you think

Over 100 branches, and more than 300 ATMs/CDMs/FFMs/MFKs to serve you

bankdhofar www.bankdhofar.com

بنك ظفار BankDhofar

Oman Shell’s Blue Hydrogen project to support energy transition

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 18

A landmark Blue Hydrogen & Ammonia project being firmed up by Oman Shell for planned implementation at Duqm has the potential to underpin the country’s transition to large-scale adoption of sustainable zero-carbon fuels, such as green hydrogen.

Shell recently announced that it had received the support and endorsement of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals to press ahead with studies to ascertain the technical and commercial viability of the project.

The Shell venture is expected to be the first large-scale project of its kind in Oman.

Production of Blue Hydrogen centres on the processing of natural gas into hydrogen and carbon dioxide (CO2).

While the CO2 is captured and stored, what’s left from the process is Blue Hydrogen.

When further combined with nitrogen, it is converted into Blue Ammonia. As either process is carbon-neutral, hydrogen and ammonia derived from these processes are referred to as ‘low-carbon’.

Significantly, the implementation of a Blue Hydrogen project could serve as a crucial stepping stone towards the widespread adoption of zero-carbon Green Hydrogen in Oman, according to Oman Shell.

As highlighted recently by Walid Hadi, Oman Shell’s Senior Vice President and Country Chair, the proposed project’s location in



Production of Blue Hydrogen centres on the processing of natural gas into hydrogen and carbon dioxide (CO2)

Duqm will open up opportunities for the supply of blue hydrogen to industrial customers at the Port of Duqm and in SEZAD.

Potential candidates that will have a requirement of hydrogen are major green steel projects that have pledged to use sustainable fuels for their energy needs, and an array of hard-to-abate industries expected to materialise in the SEZ.

The use of hydrogen for mobility and transportation has promising potential as well. Blue ammonia, on the other hand, is expected to be exported to international markets.

As for the CO2 that will be captured from these production

processes, it will be stored under a collaborative arrangement reached with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), the largest producer of oil and gas in Oman.

Significantly, the Oman Blue Hydrogen & Ammonia project adds to a growing list of initiatives being pursued by the energy giant around the world in the field of hydrogen development.

Many of these ventures will also leverage Shell’s decades-long expertise in Carbon Capture, Utilisation & Storage (CCUS).

“Shell is working to advance hydrogen opportunities in key regions where we have competitive advantage and strong adjacencies

with our existing business.

We aim to deliver these opportunities to demonstrate the commercial viability of hydrogen and meanwhile, maintain a healthy funnel of emerging opportunities that give us the foundations and flexibility to pursue options in time,” said Oman Shell.

Beyond production, the company also sees opportunities across the hydrogen supply chain, including the storage, transport via pipelines, shipping of hydrogen and end-customer solutions.

To enable development of the entire value chain, Shell is able to connect multiple parts of its businesses, it added.

Forum delves into SME funding challenges

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, OCT 18

MUSCAT: The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) conducted a workshop to address the funding challenges faced by small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Oman.

The one-day seminar, organised in collaboration with the Arab Women for Media Services and Event Management Foundation, featured a series of speakers from various financing entities and Omani entrepreneurs.

Aziza al Habsi, CEO of the Arab Women for Media Services and Event Management Foundation, highlighted importance of SMEs in Oman’s local economy, “In 2022, SMEs contributed around RO 2 billion to Oman’s non-oil economy.

Furthermore, their contribution to the national GDP is projected to reach 17 per cent in 2023.

Studies suggest that small businesses in Oman face challenges in terms of expansion, growth, and subsequently, job creation, which the country desperately needs.

Small and medium-sized companies can help resolve the issue of unemployment, aligning with Oman’s Vision 2040.”

She further added: “Studies confirm that small projects in Oman face challenges in their ability to expand and grow,



Aziza al Habsi, CEO of the Arab Women for Media Services and Event Management Foundation

thereby limiting their capacity to create the job opportunities needed by the country.

It is believed that small and medium-sized companies can help address the issue of unemployment by 74 per cent according to the Oman Vision 2040.

The problem of financing small projects represents a significant challenge for emerging companies led by entrepreneurs of both genders in Oman.”

The forum featured presentations highlighting financing options for SME owners from the public and private sector, including the Oman Development Bank and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Beehive crowdfunding platform.

The event also included two workshops focusing on entrepreneurial skills and commercial marketing.

MoCIIP workshop stresses importance of fair market competition

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, OCT 18

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), in collaboration with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), organised a workshop to discuss regulations for shopping complexes and commercial centres on Wednesday, October 18, 2023.

Deliberations focused on the regulations governing the activities of shopping complexes, commercial centres, and hypermarkets.

This event serves as a continuation of the ministry’s ongoing efforts to formulate regulations for consumer complexes and commercial centres, in addition to streamlining the entry and presentation of Omani products within these establishments.

These regulations align with the ministry’s mission to create a competitive business environment that effectively contributes to the national economy.

Ali al Maamari, Head of Licensing at the Ministry, underlined the importance of collaboration between the Ministry and the Chamber to support the government’s goal of promoting a competitive business environment based on structured regulations.

At the core of these proposed regulations is the structured framework for consumer complexes and commercial centres, which seeks to elevate the quality of operations and meet defined objectives.

Recent times have revealed a gap in regulatory oversight, particularly concerning space allocation, adherence to standards, and specification requirements within



Workshop in OCCI to discuss regulations for shopping complexes and commercial centres

these establishments.

As a result, the quality of commercial activities hasn’t always matched their potential.

Additionally, concerns, such as higher fees imposed on specific national products and the practice of segregating them onto separate shelves, have adversely impacted the marketing quality of these goods.

The draft regulations, as elucidated by Ali al Maamari, aim to confront and address these challenges, ultimately creating a more organised and equitable business environment for these enterprises.

The workshop reflects a shared commitment to enhancing the business environment and promoting the national economy through structured regulations and fair treatment of Omani products.

Hongqi and Al Qurum Sports partner to elevate padel in Oman

MUSCAT: Hongqi Oman, the luxury automobile brand, and Al Qurum Sports, the hub for padel enthusiasts, are excited to announce an exclusive partnership aimed at elevating the sport of padel in Oman.

The landmark agreement, signed at the Hongqi showroom by Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, underscores both organisations' commitment to excellence and community involvement.

"Sports have the power to bring communities together, and this partnership will provide a platform to engage the youth in meaningful experiences," said Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE.

"At MHD ACERE, we are thrilled to join forces with Padel Addicts and Padel Avenues, Oman.

It is an exciting opportunity for us to direct the spotlight



Hongqi Partnership with Al Qurum Sports as the Official Automobile Sponsor for Padel Addicts and Padel Avenue

towards our brand identity and services.

Together, we are excited to embark on a journey that fosters our vision of creating connections, strengthening our community, and engaging with

our customers in a truly unique way."

This alliance holds a shared vision of supporting youth engagement and community involvement in Oman.

By sponsoring tournaments

at both Padel Addicts and Padel Avenues, Hongqi aims to contribute significantly to the growth and development of the padel community in Oman, offering exciting opportunities for both players and fans.

ALIZZ ISLAMIC BANK SHARI'A SUPERVISORY BOARD HOLDS ITS MEETING

MUSCAT: The Shari'a Supervisory Board (SSB) of Alizz Islamic Bank held its fourth meeting for the year 2023 at the bank's headquarters in the Central Business District of Ruwi, in the presence of the Chairman of the Shari'a Supervisory Board, Shaikh Dr. Essam al Enezi and the other members of the SBB as well as Ali bin Saif al Mani, the bank's CEO, members of the executive management team and the Internal Shari'a Auditors.

The meeting was also attended by scholars from the "Empowering the Second line of Sharia Supervisory Board Members" programme, where they participated alongside members



Shari'a Supervisory Board (SSB) Meeting

of the Sharia Supervisory Board for practical experience and direct vocational training.

During the meeting, the CEO of Alizz Islamic Bank presented

a presentation about the local economic performance and the bank's performance during the third quarter of this year and the desired expectations during the

coming period.

Moreover, the meeting discussed the Sharia Audit Report for the third quarter of the year and the Shari'a Compliance and Risks Report, as well as a number of issues of interest.

The meeting also discussed some of the requests to reschedule corporate finance and issued the appropriate decisions in this respect.

It is worth noting that the Sharia Supervisory Board, through the reports submitted to it, monitors the Shari'a performance of the bank, which enables the board to evaluate the extent of compliance with Shari'a directives and decisions.

Tuna Commission chief visits Oman for the first time

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 18

Dr Saud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, has met with Dr Paul de Bruyn, the newly appointed Executive General of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), the ministry announced on Wednesday.

It was Dr de Bruyn's first visit to a Contracting Party, which was an opportunity to discuss the challenges of the Sultanate of Oman as Contracting Party of the IOTC.

Also present at the meeting were Eng Yaqoub al Busaïdy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Fisheries, and top officials of the Oman Fisheries Department, handling IOTC matters, fleet development and statistics.

With this visit, the Sultanate of Oman has reconfirmed that is fully committed to continue playing an active role in the IOTC, the Regional Fisheries Management Organization of the tuna in the Indian Ocean.

At the meeting, Oman also presented to Dr De Bruyn a report on the importance of the Oman's Blue Economy, in particular, the fisheries sector, included in the framework of Sultanate of Oman's Plan 2020-2040; a detailed presentation on Oman's system on data collection and statistics of fishing catches; and Oman's sustainable plan on industrial tuna



Dr Paul de Bruyn with Dr Saud al Habsi

fleet for tropical tunas and restructuring artisanal fleet.

During his two-day visit, Dr de Bruyn also visited some port facilities and the fishing markets and the headquarters of Fisheries Development Oman.

IOTC's Executive General provides interesting guidance to improve the compliance for the implementation of IOTC Resolutions on Management and Conservations Measures.

They also discussed the steps undertaken by Oman on data collection and statistics system.

Oman plans to submit a solid report on the increase in recent years of declared catches of yellow fin tuna, during the 19th Working Group on Data Collection and Statistics Meeting (WPDCS19), to take place in Mumbai in early December 2023.

JW Marriott Hotel Muscat reopens after renovation



JW Marriott Hotel Muscat

MUSCAT: JW Marriott Hotel Muscat has reopened after a comprehensive renovation and refurbishment.

The hotel is now anchored in well-being and mindfulness, and features thoughtfully designed spaces, brand hallmarks such as Family by JW activities and the JW Garden experience, and a renewed commitment to timeless luxury and exceptional service in Oman.

JW Marriott Hotel Muscat introduces FamilybyJW, designed to invite children of all ages to feel inspired and connected while creating cherished memories with their family.

The dedicated children's club area offers a welcoming atmosphere along with workshops to ignite the imagination and curiosity of children.

The hotel also features the debut of the JW Garden, a serene sanctuary that will provide organic, fresh vegetables and herbs to the hotel's dining venues.

Throughout the hotel, guests will discover thoughtfully designed spaces to relax and rejuvenate, from cosy nooks to lush outdoor areas, reflecting the brand's ethos of mindful luxury. Culinary experiences at JW Marriott Hotel Muscat embrace the brand's commitment to providing authentic and refined dining experiences.

The hotel introduces the newly Mediterranean-inspired poolside restaurant, Catch, where guests can relax and indulge in a variety of dishes that are expertly prepared

using fresh, local ingredients.

The hotel also brings back celebrated dining experiences such as Pink Salt, a steak house where a variety of culinary methods are used including fire-cooking and dry-aging, and Kitchen 7 offers flavours and aromas of the world.

Specialising in crafted burgers, with its chic atmosphere and friendly service, Butter Buns is the perfect place for guests to unwind and socialise with friends and colleagues.

JW Marriott Hotel Muscat features 304 luxurious, spacious guest rooms and suites overlooking inspiring surroundings including Oman's wadis, spectacular natural valleys flowing with water.

The hotel is a short drive from Muscat International Airport in the heart of Madinat Al-Irfan and has direct connectivity to the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre.

A serene sanctuary to escape from the hustle and bustle of urban living, every facet of JW Marriott Hotel Muscat is meticulously designed to enhance guests' well-being.

With the most spacious executive lounges in Muscat overlooking the city, three outdoor swimming pools, lush outdoor gardens, tennis and multi-purpose courts, a modern fitness centre featuring state-of-the-art equipment, and a holistic spa experience, guests are encouraged to take time for themselves, finding balance through experiences that inspire.

India allows some rice shipments

NEW DELHI: India will allow exports of non-basmati white rice to a clutch of countries such as the Philippines — one of the world's biggest importers of the grain — a government order said on Wednesday.

India, the world's biggest rice exporter, in July banned overseas shipments of non-basmati white rice and later imposed a 20 per cent tax on parboiled rice cargoes to keep a lid on local prices and ensure sufficient supplies in the domestic market.

But New Delhi said it would still consider requests for supplies of rice from needy, vulnerable countries on a case-by-case basis.

India would supply 295,000 tonnes of non-basmati white rice to the Philippines.

The Philippines, which usually depends on Vietnam for most of its import requirements, is struggling to tame inflation, and its President Ferdinand Marcos Jr has set rice price ceilings to keep rates in check.

Other than the Philippines, New Delhi will also supply non-basmati white rice to Nepal, Cameroon, Malaysia, Seychelles, Ivory Coast and the Republic of Guinea.



Farmers thrash rice paddies in a field in Tral town in south Kashmir's Pulwama district. — Reuters

Cumulatively, India will sell a little over 1 million metric tons to the seven countries.

In August, India allowed some rice exports to Bhutan, Mauritius and Singapore.

India is unlikely to consider any more request for rice supplies until farmers gather their new-season crop, a government source said.

Indian farmers have just started

harvesting the rice crop. Although growers have planted a bigger area with rice this year, patchy rains in some parts of the country could hit crop yields.

The government is keen to shore up its inventories by buying large volumes of the new season harvest from farmers. A bigger crop and higher purchases by the government will alleviate concerns about lower local

supplies.

Separately, a government statement said Indian farmers produced 135.7 million metric tons of rice in the crop year to June 2023, up from 129.4 million metric tons produced in the previous year.

Wheat output totalled 110.5 million metric tons against 107.7 million metric tons in the previous year. — Reuters



Chery to bring technological expertise to Oman's auto industry

JOMAR MENDOZA
WUHU, CHINA, OCT 18

Chinese automaker, Chery, has announced its plans to expand its operations to Oman, bringing its advanced technology and automotive expertise to Oman.

This move aims to contribute to the growth and development of Oman's automotive industry and enhance the skill sets of local workers while providing consumers with innovative and high-quality vehicles.

Guibing Zhang, Chery International President, said, "Chery has gained a solid reputation as a leading automotive manufacturer in China and globally, known for its cutting-edge technology, reliability and customer-centric approach."

"With a strong focus on research and development, we consistently introduced groundbreaking advancements

in new energy vehicles (NEVs) and autonomous driving technologies."

As a testament to its massive popularity globally, Chery has sold more than 1.25 million cars until September 2023, already surpassing the total sales for the entire 2022, with a year-on-year increase of 40.2 per cent.

"One in every 5 cars being exported from China is a Chery brand," Zhang added.

Meanwhile, Oman's automotive sector has been experiencing steady growth, driven by increased consumer spending power and a growing demand for modern and technologically advanced vehicles. Chery's entry into the Omani market is expected to not only meet this demand, but also contribute to the overall development of the industry. As part of its expansion plans, Chery signed a distribution agreement with Saud Bahwan Group, which will create employment opportunities and



Employees work at the final assembly line during a media tour at Chery's car factory in Wuhu, China.

foster knowledge and technology transfer. With the distribution agreement, Chery aims to tap into the growing demand for reliable and cost-effective automobiles in Oman.

The partnership will bring a wide range of Chery

vehicles including the Tiggo series and Arrazo series. Chery's investment in Oman will not be limited to distribution.

It also plans collaborate with Saud Bahwan in terms of research, training and exchange of expertise.

This partnership will enable

the transfer of knowledge and expertise, fostering innovation and driving the development of customised solutions tailored to the specific needs of Oman as a market.

The exchange of expertise between Chery and Saud Bahwan is expected to result in various benefits for both companies.

Ahmad Salaheldin, General Manager of Chery Oman, said, "Chery can gain insights into the Middle Eastern market and leverage Saud Bahwan's distribution network and industry know-how to expand its presence in the region."

"At the same time, Saud Bahwan can benefit from Chery's technological advancements, manufacturing practices and product portfolio, enabling it to offer a wider range of innovative automotive solutions to its customers."

Chery's production facility in Wuhu, China, is a state-of-

the-art manufacturing plant characterised by automated, connected, and environmentally friendly processes.

It boasts exceptional efficiency, cost-effectiveness, advanced technology and impressive production capabilities.

Spanning across a vast area of 830,000 square metres and backed by an investment of RO 210 million, this facility houses two production platforms: the D1X, responsible for manufacturing core products such as the Tiggo 8 and Tiggo 9 series, and the D2X, dedicated to high-performance vehicles.

Additionally, Chery's final assembly line base occupies an area of 83,000 square metres and has the capacity to handle 60 jobs per hour.

With an annual production capacity of 300,000 vehicles, it demonstrates Chery's commitment to delivering quality cars efficiently.

Heads of GCC state audit bodies meet in Muscat

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 18

Shaikh Ghosn bin Hilal al Alawi, Chairman of State Audit Institution, chaired the 20th meeting of the heads of the GCC Audit and Accounting Institutions and Bureaus, which began on October 18, at the headquarters of Consultative Authority of the GCC Supreme Council in Muscat.

In opening remarks, Al Alawi pointed out that the roles assigned to the Audit and Accounting Institutions and Bureaus are significant.

Inspired by the vision and directions of the GCC leaders, this role demonstrates a commitment to protecting public funds and enhancing efficiency in the use of state resources in support of sustainable economic growth and societal well-being.

He lauded the significance of joint Gulf action in enhancing the institutional performance of the member institutions and bureaus by sharing institutional expertise and preparing unified work manuals, which come through mutual visits, seminars and collaborative training activities,



Shaikh Ghosn bin Hilal al Alawi, Chairman of SAI, chaired the 20th meeting of the heads of the GCC Audit

as well as research competitions and other activities.

Sultan bin Nasser al Suwaidi, Assistant Secretary-General for Legislative and Legal Affairs, said the GCC Audit Bureaus and Institutions are keen to reflect joint work through exchanging experiences and building functional capabilities and competencies of their members through a variety of specialised professional activities, which has contributed to the effectiveness of their role in the national work system.

He also stressed the keenness of the GCC Secretariat-General on the effective management of organisational and technical activities.

The meeting focused on the importance of research as exemplified by the 6th Competition of the Cooperation Council for Research and Studies in the field of audit and accounting.

Attendees discussed a proposal to update the regulation organising the competition that aims to highlight the

best professional practices in auditing, as well as enhancing the audit culture and spreading it among employees.

Participants also discussed a proposal for the signing of MoUs with King Fahd National Library to enhance the sources of knowledge for the employees of member States' Institutions and Bureaus, and the INTOSAI Development Initiative (IDI) of the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) with the aim of developing the capabilities of the employees in the member states' institutions.

In addition, the meeting discussed the training plan for the years 2024-2025, and reviewed the operational plan of the training strategic plan, which aims to develop the capabilities and skills of employees in the Audit Bureaus, exchange experiences and enhance cooperation in the field of skills and knowledge development, scientific research and professional qualification.

The training strategic plan also aims to develop institutional capacities in the field of training, development and knowledge.

BANK MUSCAT HOSTS A SEMINAR ABOUT GLOBAL ECONOMIC PROSPECTS

MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to strengthening its partnerships, Bank Muscat, hosted a special seminar about Global Economics Prospects presented by Dr Gaurav Ganguly, the Chief Economist for Europe and the Middle East, and the Head of the Climate Scenario Group at Moody's Analytics.

The event was attended by a number of officials representing different institutions and corporates and senior officials from Bank Muscat. Addressing the gathering, Ilham Murtadha al Hamaid, General Manager - Corporate Banking, Bank Muscat, said: "It is one of Bank Muscat's priorities to organise events like this and connect with our corporate partners with the aim of keeping them informed about the latest developments in the banking and economic sectors."

"The bank is also keen to attract expertise and exchange knowledge in the related fields."

"Our aim is to ensure that our partners are well-aware about all the latest trends on the local, regional and international arena. We will continue to go above and beyond to serve our customers and contribute to the prosperity of Oman."

During the seminar, Dr Gaurav Ganguly focused on a number of points around global prospects including non-oil economy in the GCC, inflation and risks, long term growth prospects, shifting Fiscal Breakevens, improvement of

government balances, top CO2 emitters, global greenhouse gas emissions, and energy consumption and supply amongst other related points.

Through continuously upgrading the services and products, Bank Muscat seeks to meet the aspirations of its customers by keeping pace with the latest trends in banking sector and it exerts efforts to provide only the best to them.

The bank has succeeded over 40 years to gain people's trust which can be seen in the ever-growing bank's family.

As part of its efforts to enhance convenience and add value to services offered to the governmental institutions, corporates and SMEs, the bank's five exclusive corporate branches are located at major business hubs in the Sultanate, Al Nahdha Towers branch, CBD corporate branch, Sohar corporate branch, Salalah corporate branch and the newly-opened branch in Duqm.

The corporate banking branches represent a one-stop shop for all business banking requirements ranging from a simple account opening to availing of credit facilities and more complex transactions such as global trade services.

They maintain and build relationships with government bodies, large corporates and SMEs and provide products and services that meet their various business requirements.

Oman-Indonesia bilateral trade reaches RO 187m in 2022

BUSINESS REPORTER
JAKARTA, OCT 18

A delegation of businessmen representing the boards of directors of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the governorates of Al Dakhiliyah and Dhofar, and a number of businessmen from the two governorates, participated in the activities of the 38th Indonesian International Trade Fair (Trade Expo 38), which is organised by the General Directorate of National Export Development of the Ministry of Commerce in Indonesia.

The fair began on Wednesday, October 18, 2023, in Jakarta, with an opening ceremony under the auspices of the representative of the Indonesian President and a wide presence from various countries of the world.

The Indonesian trade fair is considered one of the largest international exhibitions, as the fair in its current version is considered the largest reliable interactive platform for businesses that are characterised by diversity.

It is held through two tracks: the first is the direct track, which continues until next Sunday, and the second is the display of products via the Internet and continues for two months, until the eighteenth of next December.

Trade exchange between Oman and Indonesia has witnessed steady growth in recent years, as the volume of trade exchange between the two countries reached RO 187.704 million in 2022.

Oman's exports to Indonesia reached a value of RO 32.115 million, while imports from Indonesia totalled RO 155.588



Businessmen representing the boards of directors of the OCCI

million. Oman imports palm oils, four-wheel drive cars of between 1,500-3,000 cc, private tourist cars, fats, hydrogenated vegetable oils, and smart screens, while the Sultanate of Oman exports to Indonesia a number of commodities, most notably methanol, raw aluminium, gypsum, polypropylene, iron, leather, flour, fish products, crustaceans, molluscs, and fish and bird food.

Trade Expo 38 is a comprehensive business destination offering areas of classified products with live interactions.

Buyers and visitors have the opportunity to join and benefit from comprehensive support programmes parallel to the exhibition such as trade forums, international seminars, business matching, and international and local trade missions.

Strengthening financial oversight and probity is an imperative



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

The author is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for the CBO and OCCI

The affairs of a state cannot be effectively managed without the presence of two robust official bodies. The first body's primary responsibility is to tackle corruption, financial irregularities, and administrative manipulations within both governmental and private institutions, as well as civil society. The second body oversees the courts and the judiciary, with a mandate to ensure justice is upheld and people's rights are protected. Both institutions must operate with complete transparency, integrity, and impartiality. Simultaneously, all institutions are obligated to collaborate and coordinate in supporting these crucial bodies, providing necessary information and facts

to promote security, tranquillity, and peace among all individuals and groups. The recent annual report of the State Audit Institution, titled "Society Summary" for the year 2022, addressed numerous issues of interest to public government institutions and companies regarding financial, administrative, and technical violations committed by certain employees during the past period. Many of these cases involve negligence, manipulation, and violations of laws, regulations, and decisions issued by relevant authorities. Some violations rise to the level of criminal acts, necessitating the involvement of the Public Prosecution and other concerned parties to gather evidence and facts. According to the data, there

OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE STATE AUDIT INSTITUTION HAS SUCCESSFULLY RECOVERED APPROXIMATELY RO 97.8 MILLION FOR THE STATE TREASURY, INCLUDING RO 80 MILLION IN 2021 AND RO 17.8 MILLION IN 2022

were a total of 587 complaints and reports of administrative and financial violations within government institutions, along with numerous cases of employee grievances and other complaints. The agency also addressed various matters related to state enterprises and investments that required ongoing supervision. Over the past two years, the State Audit Institution has successfully recovered approximately RO 97.8 million for the state treasury, including RO 80 million in 2021 and RO 17.8 million in 2022, with RO 14 million originating from bodies, investments, and companies operating within the country. Some institutions and companies have failed to report their actual revenues, necessitating appropriate measures. In general, the absence

of oversight in any society worldwide results in an increase in financial and administrative violations. Bribery, forgery, embezzlement, misappropriation of public funds, abuse of office, and other misconduct continue to plague these companies and institutions. Many of these entities collaborate to exploit legal loopholes, particularly those dealing with critical aspects of the national economy, such as food, medicines, import and export, healthcare, insurance, minerals, information technology, electronic systems, and other key industries. In such cases, it is crucial for the public prosecution, security agencies, police, judiciary, and courts to swiftly adjudicate these cases and take action against violators.

UK seeks global leadership with AI safety summit

MARTIN COULTER

Britain will host the world's first global artificial intelligence (AI) safety summit next month, aiming to carve out a role following Brexit as an arbiter between the United States, China, and the European Union in a key tech sector.

The November 1-2 summit will focus heavily on the existential threat some lawmakers, including Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, fear AI poses. Sunak, who wants the UK to become a hub for AI safety, has warned the technology could be used by criminals and terrorists to create weapons of mass destruction.

The EU, in contrast, has so far prioritised the technology's implications for human rights and corporate transparency.

Sunak will host around 100 guests at Bletchley Park, the site in southern England where mathematician Alan Turing cracked Nazi Germany's Enigma code.

US Vice President Kamala Harris and Google DeepMind CEO Demis Hassabis head a guest list that includes lawmakers, AI pioneers and academics.

The aim of the summit is to kick-start international dialogue on AI regulation, said Matt Clifford, a tech investor and one of its two chief organisers.

"It's not a parliament," Clifford said. "We're not making laws, we're not making treaties. We're trying to bring different people into the conversation with very different opinions."

The UK government's agenda for the event, published this week, includes discussions on the unpredictable advances of the technology and the potential for humans to lose control of it.

But some experts argue the conference shouldn't focus so specifically on existential threats. They say there are more pressing matters at hand.

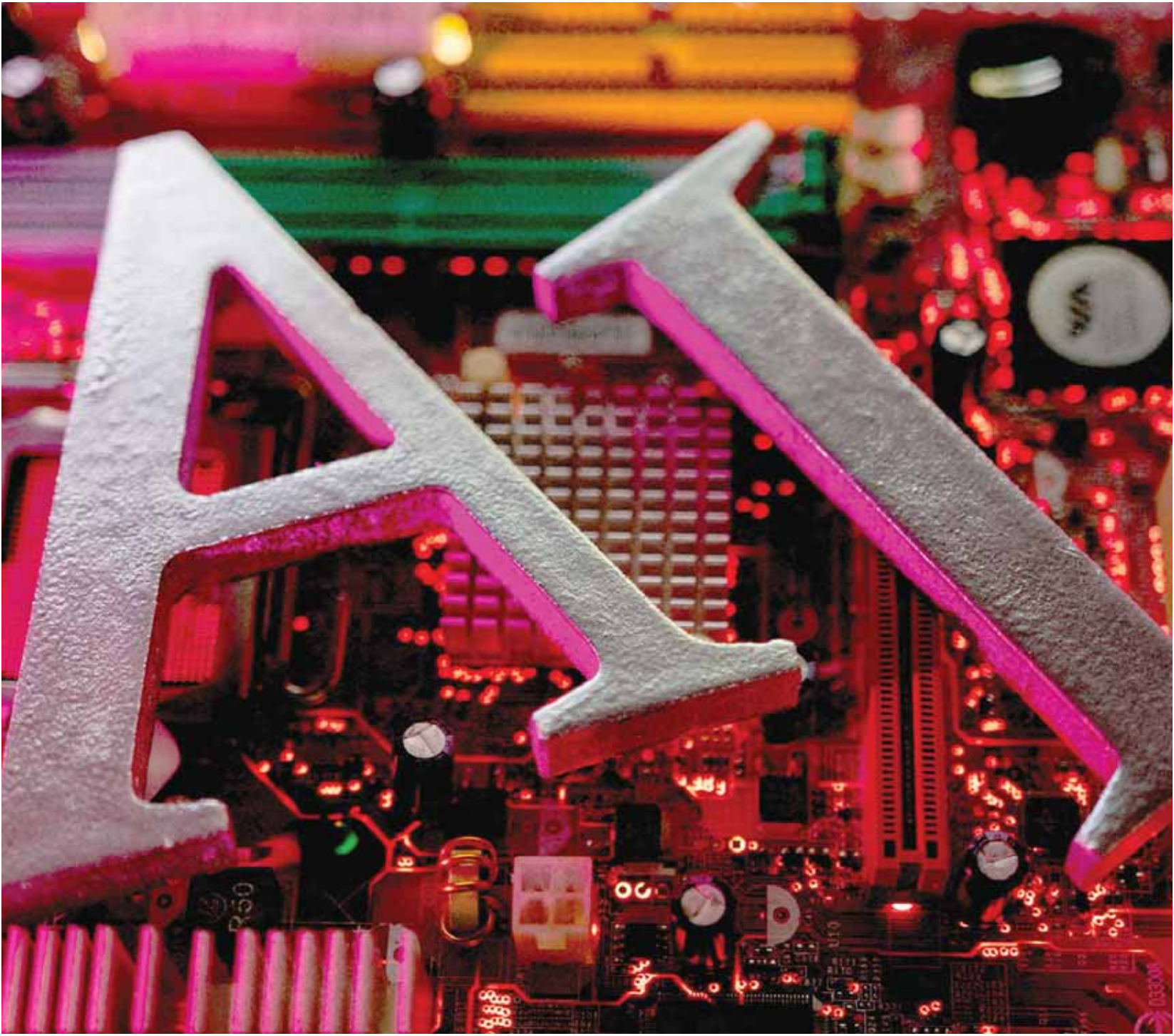
"Most people I speak to are



MARTIN COULTER

The writer is European technology correspondent for Reuters

THE NOVEMBER 1-2 SUMMIT WILL FOCUS HEAVILY ON THE EXISTENTIAL THREAT SOME LAWMAKERS, INCLUDING BRITAIN'S PRIME MINISTER RISHI SUNAK, FEAR AI POSES



AI (Artificial Intelligence) letters are placed on computer motherboard in this illustration. – Reuters file photo

baffled that the UK has taken this approach," said Stephanie Hare, author and leading researcher in technology ethics. "The question is: What are you going to do about it?" NOISE

When Sunak first announced the summit in June, high profile figures had already been sounding the alarm about AI's existential risks. Tesla mogul Elon Musk called for a pause in the development of such systems. Former Google researcher and "godfather of AI" Geoffrey Hinton warned the technology posed a more urgent threat to humanity than climate change.

Critics question why Britain has appointed itself the centre of AI safety. But supporters say the summit

will underline London's position as a world-leading technology hub. According to recent Dealroom data, British tech companies raised more capital in 2022 than those in France and Germany combined.

In the weeks after Sunak announced the summit, OpenAI announced it would open its first office outside of the US in London, while Google published an analysis suggesting further investment in AI would provide a £400 billion (\$488 billion) boost to Britain's economy by 2030.

Marc Warner, CEO of London-based AI firm Faculty, who is attending the summit, said: "There's three big poles in the world: the US, the EU, and China. If you're going to try and do some kind

of international collaboration, it's not obvious that any one of those would let it be situated in the others."

He added: "If you agree that London is the third most important AI city, behind San Francisco and Beijing, and that Britain is relatively neutral compared to the three big blocs, it's a sensible proposition."

The EU recently confirmed Vice President Vera Jourova had received an invitation to the event, but wouldn't confirm her attendance. "We are now reflecting on potential EU participation," a spokesperson said.

At the time of writing, the two members of the European Parliament who led the drafting of the bloc's AI Act, Brando Benifei and Dragos

Tudorache, had not received invitations.

"It seems that this event's focus on safety might be a different concept of safety from the AI Act, which has been centred around protecting fundamental rights," Benifei said.

While the architects of AI regulation in Europe may not be present, the British government faced criticism over one potential attendee: China.

Finance minister Jeremy Hunt defended the decision in an interview with Politico, saying: "If you're trying to create structures that make AI something that overall is a net benefit to humanity, then you can't just ignore the second-biggest economy in the world."

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

أوربت
ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds

THURSDAY

OCTOBER 19, 2023 | RABEE AL THANI 4, 1445 AH

OMAN DAILY
Observer Classified Section

Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

Ali al Maashari: 99639264
ali.almashari@omandaily.om

Saada al Rashdi
95919344

94501166
24649593
24649595

النماني للشحن
AL NAMANI CARGO
DOOR TO DOOR AIR AND SEA CARGO WORLD WIDE

DOOR TO DOOR
CARGO

INDIA BANGLADESH NEPAL PHILIPPINES UAE INDONESIA EUROPE UK CANADA USA

WHATSAPP
96353654

TOLL FREE NUMBER
80066766

Follow us : www.alnamanicargo.com

Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)

Contact No: 99074072

Job Vacancy

FERROTECH GROUP OF COMPANIES for its Oman branch looking for Sales Engineer with 3-5 years experience in Cable Management Systems and related products.

Candidates with relevant experience & valid Oman Driving License can apply to recruitment23oman@gmail.com

Salary OMR 500/- Month
(Car, Fuel & mobile allowance will be provided)

FLAT FOR RENT

FLATS for rent in north Al Hail: Ground floor: 2 rooms, 1 Majlis, 2 toilets, kitchen. First floor: 3 rooms, 1 Majlis, 3 toilets, kitchen. Contact number 95588775.

FOR RENT

FLATS and offices for rent in Muscat. 96379095, 98403020.

LOST

IN Ruwi, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, hall, kitchen, with car parking. RO 150 monthly only. Tel: 94402003

HAIBA Yussuf Bahari has lost Tanzanian Passport No TAE098646. Finder please handover to ROP.

AUDIT, ACCOUNTING, VAT, TAXATION

Contact: 97239696 95355638

Gulf Center Consultancy & Audit
Muscat, Sohar, Salalah, Sur

HAVE A PROPERTY FOR RENT?

Advertise with us.

Contact us on: **99639264**

FOR SALE

A commercial residential building in the southern Maabela next to Nesto, consisting of 12 floors and fully rented shops. Contact: 99888390.

A commercial residential building in the Al Amerat, next to Sultan Al Jamalah and Lulu Al Amerat, consisting of 9 floors and fully rented shops. Contact: 99888390.

AN INDUSTRIAL building in al Jifnain, fully rented, consisting of a warehouse, four shops, and 4 apartments. Contact: 99888390.

SIT. WANTED

OUTDOOR sales staff required for building materials and hardware items, driving licence necessary, e-mail: sangita@dhiyahilal.com, Contact: 93832626.

Sale of left over Project Material available at Nizwa

- A reputed company from Oman invites Bids for immediate sale of
- 1) Unused high quality project material procured from O&G end user's approved sources.
 - 2) Material ranges from Nuts / Bolts to DSS Pipes / DSS Flanges / Nipolets & Sweepolets.
 - 3) Used European made Flushing Machine and accessories in good working condition.

Interested Purchasers may write with in next 7 days to material20240@gmail.com or contact at phone no 94727312 for list of items and other details.

EAGLE FREIGHT EXPRESS
DOOR TO DOOR COURIER SERVICES
INDIA | NEPAL | BANGLADESH

25 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE FAST DELIVERY EXCELLENT SERVICES

WORLD WIDE CARGO SERVICE Tel.: 99432926, 78211708, 92319472, 93350126
Head Office (H.O.) Room No.: 218, 1st Floor, Aircargo Complex, Branch Al-Hail, Email: eaglefreightexpress@gmail.com

ROYAL CARGO
DOOR TO DOOR CARGO

ALL OVER INDIA INDONESIA NEPAL AIR EXPORT (Port to Port) SEA EXPORT (Container Booking) PICK UP FREE ANYWHERE IN MUSCAT 93213206

SERVICES BY AIR & SEA

FOR MORE INFORMATION JUST DIAL CUSTOMER CARE 93213207

SIT. WANTED

ACCOUNTS professional with 17 years' experience in Oman seeks senior level opportunity. Please contact: +968 78581435.

EXPERT in selling and marketing goods produced in Oman to the UAE markets and vice versa is looking for a good break. 78501743.

M Com graduate, with Oman Driving Licence, residing in Muscat with 1 year and 4 months work experience as Media Executive in India, seeking Accounts Assistant or other eligible jobs. Ph No: 71755901. E-mail: krishnanmahesh02@gmail.com

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN male 25 years, B Com, 2 years experience in Digital Marketing, currently in Oman on a visit, looking for a suitable opportunity. Contact: 97908857.

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN male experienced in sales, having DL & release is looking for a job in sales and marketing. Please call: 78501743.

AUTOMOBILE service supervisor/advisor/ diagnostic master 12 years GCC experience in multi-brand vehicle. Available in Muscat. Looking for new challenge job. Contact# 78827334.

ACCOUNTANT & sales Executive, Indian male, 31 years, BA English, specialised in Accounting. 2 years experience in India & 6 years experience in Oman. Seeking position in Accounts/Sales fields (has Oman license). Mob: 78805951. Gmail: akhilgopinath2017@gmail.com

ARCHITECT with three years of experience, 28-year-old Indian woman with a B.Arch., looking for work. Mobile: 96021743, sairanowshad3@gmail.com

SUDANESE lawyer and legal adviser, with more than 30 years of experience in Sudanese courts of all levels and types. Available in Muscat, Tel: 79121176, Yasir. Elmahi@hotmail.com

ACCOUNTANT (male), MBA Finance and a Certified SAP FICO Consultant with 7 years work experience from Oman in Finance Department. Looking for a suitable position. Contact: 99685330. Email: hussain_ca87@yahoo.com

OMAN عمان DAILY
Observer

For Advertisements

Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office

Mohd Al Rashdi
99841230
m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

Salalah Office

Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suhar Office

Musalam Al Saidi
99429192
sohardaily@outlook.com

@omanobserver
www.omanobserver.om



FARMING

A worker holds a grapes cluster, in Kavadarci, North Macedonia. — REUTERS



TRAVEL

A man walks through the Zaryadye Park in downtown Moscow, with the Kremlin's Spasskaya Tower in the background. — AFP



DISNEY

Disney cast member Minnie Mouse (C) takes part in a parade during a ceremony marking the 100th anniversary of the Walt Disney Company, held at Disneyland Paris, in Marne-la-Vallée, east of Paris. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

A woman walks among sunflowers at a park in Shenyang, in China's northeastern Liaoning province. — AFP



MUSIC

A worker inspects the frame of a "Steinway X Disney: Mickey Mouse Limited Edition" piano at Steinway & Sons Factory in New York. — AFP

art & life

THURSDAY | OCTOBER 19, 2023 | RABEE AL THANI 4, 1445 AH

OMAN OBSERVER f x @ y t v www.omanobserver.om features@omanobserver.om



Oman is a treasure trove of historical defensive structures

BY KHALED ABDUL MALAK

The Sultanate of Oman has more than 500 forts, watchtowers, and citadels dotting its coast and inner regions. Many of these historical landmarks remain undiscovered, concealed by the passage of time and the remoteness of their locations. These enduring bastions bear witness to Oman's tumultuous history, marked by the presence of various invaders and occupants, including Persians, Parthians, Portuguese and Ottomans, the legacy of which can be seen in the stone monuments and mud-brick defensive architecture that still stands. While the history of some Omani forts, such as the UNESCO World Heritage site Bahla, dating back to

the pre-Islamic era, is well-documented, others remain shrouded in mystery, waiting to be unveiled. Among these enigmatic fortresses, at least five stand as "phantom citadels" in the remote areas along Al Hajar Mountains chain. These relics are slowly crumbling into obscurity, neglected by official efforts. One such elusive citadel is Ras al Hosn, perched on a mound in a rugged canyon, accessible only by a two-hour hike along an exposed mule trail. Its vantage point on the edge of a sheer cliff overlooking the wadi below and the surrounding terrain suggests its impregnability, hinting at a history intertwined with ancient conflicts. However, the details of its construction, the wars it witnessed, and its builders remain elusive. Similarly, Hosn al Furs,

known as the "Fort of the Persians," stands atop a hill at the convergence of two canyons in Al Hajar Mountains. Surrounded by a high fence and accessible only via an arduous one-hour trek, the fort's age and origin remain veiled in uncertainty, though its name suggests Persian origins. "The Persians probably built it, as the name indicates," said Mubarak, a Al Hijir resident. Al Hadash fort, overlooking Wadi Mistal, is another anonymous vestige, positioned near the village of Hadash. It reportedly drew the attention of British soldiers stationed in Oman during the 1950s, who discovered ancient pottery with pre-Islamic inscriptions. Despite this intriguing find, the fort remains largely unexplored, with authorities yet to research its history

comprehensively. "Several years ago, during the Jabal war in the mid-50s, some British soldiers found potteries with inscriptions dating before Islam," said Mubarak. Hosn Hbeish, situated at the foot of Jabal Shams, Oman's highest mountain, has a local legend associated with it. "According to the legend, Hbeish resided there with his wife, and a tragic incident involving his brother and the construction of the fort's fence forms the centrepiece of the story," Suleiman al Abri, a resident of the nearby village of Al Wijmah, recounted. The sheer abundance of these defensive monuments, built over centuries by different civilisations, presents a formidable challenge for conservation efforts in Oman. Preserving and research-



ing these historical structures is a costly and monumental task that requires both financial resources and a commitment to uncovering the secrets hidden within these enigmatic fortresses.



find us on



Scan the QR Code or follow us on
www.twitter.com/omanobserver

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



dpkliks

Musician : Rakesh Chaurasia · Enchanting Flute

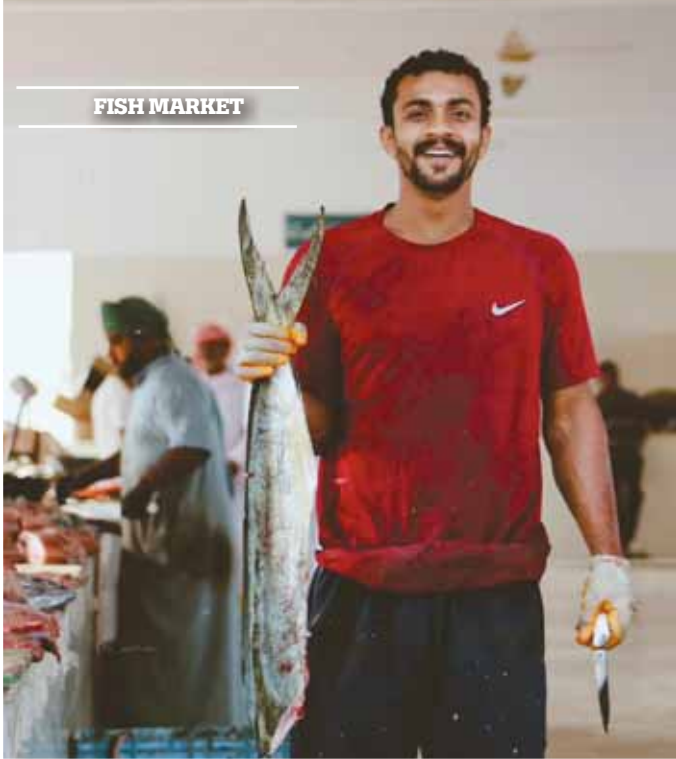


BEHIND THE PALM TREES



mr_pathfinder and vibes_of_oman

Oman, Ibra



FISH MARKET



queen_pixel18

Grand Mosque, Muscat, Oman



SULTAN QABOOS GRAND MOSQUE

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.



To find out how wildlife is doing, scientists try listening

A REEDY PIPE AND a high-pitched trill duet against the backdrop of a low-pitched insect drone. Their symphony is the sound of a forest, and is monitored by scientists to gauge biodiversity.

The recording from the forest in Ecuador is part of new research looking at how artificial intelligence could track animal life in recovering habitats.

When scientists want to measure reforestation, they can survey large tracts of land with tools like satellite and lidar.

But determining how fast and abundantly wildlife is returning to an area presents a more difficult challenge — sometimes requiring an expert to sift through sound recordings and pick out animal calls.

Jorg Muller, a professor and field ornithologist at University of Wurzburg Biocenter, wondered if there was a different way.

"I saw the gap that we need, particularly in the tropics, better methods to quantify the huge diversity... to improve conservation actions," he said.

He turned to bioacoustics, which uses sound to learn more about animal

life and habitats.

It is a long-standing research tool, but more recently is being paired with computer learning to process large amounts of data more quickly.

Muller and his team recorded audio at sites in Ecuador's Choco region ranging from recently abandoned cacao plantations and pastures, to agricultural land recovering from use, to old-growth forests.

They first had experts listen to the recordings and pick out birds, mammals and amphibians.

Then, they carried out an acoustic index analysis, which gives a measure of biodiversity based on broad metrics from a soundscape, like volume and frequency of noises.

Finally, they ran two weeks of recordings through an AI-assisted computer programme trained to distinguish 75 bird calls.

MORE RECORDINGS NEEDED

The programme was able to pick out the calls on which it was trained in a consistent way, but could it correctly identify the relative biodiversity



of each location?

To check this, the team used two baselines: one from the experts who listened to the audio recordings, and a second based on insect samples from each location, which offer a proxy for biodiversity.

While the library of available sounds to train the AI model meant it could only identify a quarter of the bird calls the experts could, it was still able to correctly gauge biodiversity levels in each location, the study said.

"Our results show that soundscape analysis is a powerful tool to monitor the recovery of faunal communities in hyperdiverse tropical forest," said the research published on Tuesday in the journal Nature Communications.

"Soundscape diversity can be quantified in a cost-effective and robust way across the full gradient from active agriculture, to recovering and

old-growth forests," it added.

There are still shortcomings, including a paucity of animal sounds on which to train AI models.

And the approach can only capture species that announce their presence.

"Of course (there is) no information on plants or silent animals. However, birds and amphibians are very sensitive to ecological integrity, they are a very good surrogate," Muller said.

He believes the tool could become increasingly useful given the current push for "biodiversity credits" — a way of monetising the protection of animals in their natural habitat.

"Being able to directly quantify biodiversity, rather than relying on proxies such as growing trees, encourages and allows external assessment of conservation actions, and promotes transparency," the study said. — **AFP**

ENVIRONMENT

Four-day work week boosts Spanish workers' health, pilot programme shows

FOUR-DAY WORK weeks improved Spanish workers' health such as by lowering stress while reducing fuel emissions and benefiting children, a pilot programme showed on Tuesday.

The coastal city of Valencia - Spain's third-largest with more than 800,000 inhabitants - scheduled local holidays to fall on four consecutive Mondays between April 10 and May 7 this year. The project affected 360,000 workers.

Many participants used the long weekends to develop healthier habits such as practicing sport, resting and eating homemade food, according to an independent commission of health and social science experts that evaluated the programme.



The data showed an improvement in self-perceived health status, lower stress levels and better feelings regarding tiredness, happiness, mood and personal satisfaction, it added.

A drop in the use of motor vehicles led to better air quality on the four Mondays during the programme's period, as less nitrogen dioxide was emitted, according to the city's daily emissions measurements.

However, smokers and drinkers increased their overall use of tobacco and alcohol, it added.

A high percentage of those surveyed said they were more likely to read, study, watch films and pursue hobbies like photography, music or painting, the commission said. It did not specify the percentage.

Children benefited the most, thanks to improved work-life balance enjoyed by their parents, the commission found.

While the hospitality and tourism sectors served more customers during extended weekends, retailers reported a decrease in sales and emergency medical services may have been overextended as more healthcare workers took time off, the report said.

The project was designed by the left-wing Compromis coalition of progressive, green and regionalist parties, which ruled the city at the time.

Last year, the Spanish government launched a similar two-year project focused on small and medium-sized industrial companies nationwide. — **Reuters**

MUSIC

For classical star Lang Lang, musicians must 'bridge' cultures

LANG LANG, one of the world's most influential classical artists, says that musicians must always act as a "bridge" between cultures, but even more so during times of crisis.

Speaking to AFP after an intimate performance at the Steinway piano showroom in Manhattan, the 41-year-old renowned pianist said "every musician is an ambassador for their own culture."

"When you're a performing artist you play a lot of different works from different parts of the world, and it's almost like a bridge, bridging the cultures," he said.

"I think every musician has the responsibilities to share the different heritage through their music."

Born in northeastern Shenyang in 1982, the globe-trotting performer became famous playing the great romantic composers.

He's brought that sensibility to Disney, as the entertainment conglomerate that revolutionised the

animation industry celebrates its 100th anniversary.

Lang Lang last year released an album of songs based on Disney classics — "The Disney Book" — as well as a companion special that's streaming on Disney+.

And recently he introduced a "Steinway X Disney" limited edition piano handpainted with the likeness of Mickey Mouse.

Lang Lang said a benefit of partnering with Disney is bringing more classical music to the ears of young people.

"A lot of the time people ask me to play 'Frozen', to play 'Can You Feel The Love Tonight'," he said, citing themes from the animated classic "The Lion King" and the more recent phenomenon about a kingdom trapped in perpetual winter.

He said part of his goal is to make versions of those popular songs "exceptional" and in the mold of "Chopin or Liszt -- this level of piano that romantic composers will do."

Lang Lang said the "deep emotion" that music can evoke allows it to "unite people's hearts."

"Music is quite powerful," he said. "When you listen to music, you get a lot of different types of feel-



ings. Whether it's happy, whether it's sad, or sentimental, in a way that you get a whole world, a range of emotions."

He also lauded the power of live performance, which for years was set back by the coronavirus pandemic, saying that artists performing onstage is "kind of like visual art and performing arts combined."

"Whether it's moving hands or moving the body and facial expression, it's very moving in a way," he continued. "A great performance always moves your heart."

Asked if he had any concern over AI — whose use in music has been the subject of controversy and debate throughout the industry, with some pointing to copyright abuses — Lang Lang brushed off the concern.

"It's not easy to create another Beethoven," he said. — **AFP**



LIFESTYLE

In Argentina, trash is a lifeline for army of recyclers

AYELEN TORRES weaves her trolley expertly through the streets on the outskirts of Argentina's capital, stopping every few steps to sift through trash in search of recyclable cardboard or plastic.

She is part of an army of "cartoneros" — tens of thousands of poor Argentines who scour the streets for material to sell and put food on the table.

Since the pandemic, and an economic crisis that has seen annual inflation hit 138 per cent and pushed poverty levels to 40 per cent, the numbers of those turning to the informal recycling industry have exploded.

"I think it's a very denigrated job but, at the same time, it's a beautiful job... what picking things up means, how it helps the environment. The strength you have to have, the courage, because in the street you encounter many things," said Torres, 25.

She has little hope that Sunday's presidential election will change anything for her.

"Whoever wins, I will still have to wake up at six in the morning" to go hunt for things to recycle, said Torres.

The mother-of-two works in a team alongside Sabrina Sosa, who continues to lug around heavy bags even though she is three months pregnant.

In a few hours, the women gather 76 kilogrammes (167 pounds) of material. On a good day, they can double that amount, and their pay.

'OUR DAILY BREAD'

The "cartonero" movement began in Argentina after the economic implosion of 2001 when a financial crisis led authorities to freeze bank deposits, and deadly social unrest erupted.

They faced fierce resistance from authorities and

residents of the capital who didn't want them picking through their trash.

Twenty years later, there is a federation, Faccyr, with 20,000 individual collectors who work for 145 cooperatives that buy the material and sell it on to the recycling industry.

With different rates for glass, cardboard, paper, or plastic, the cooperative pays between 10 and 90 pesos per kilo.

In a good month, and counting a small government subsidy, Torres and Sosa earn about 132,000 pesos (\$360) each — almost the minimum wage.



Sosa began doing the job to make ends meet between other casual gigs — babysitting here, waitressing there, always working off the books. In Argentina, almost 47 per cent of jobs are informal or partially regulated.

Since joining the cooperative Construyendo desde Abajo (Building from Below), the two women are in the first registered jobs of their lives.

"Cardboard is our daily bread," said Sosa.

According to Faccyr, more than 150,000 people work as "cartoneros."

"The number keeps growing," said Santiago Britez, 42, who used to collect recyclables and now manages a few dozen workers at the cooperative.

During the pandemic "there was a whole sector of society that had no resources. Many who had informal jobs lost everything."

As Argentina's perennial economic malaise has deepened in recent years, "entire families have appeared, with children," into open dumps, looking for goods to sell and even food, said Jackie Flores, an environmental official in

Buenos Aires province who once worked as a "cartonera" herself.

"It's an enormous challenge," she added.

Torres and Sosa take pride in their work, which has been praised by Pope Francis, an Argentine himself, as a "necessary ecological job."

"For the first time I have a dignified job," said Torres.

"On Labor Day, my daughter drew a picture of me for school with my cardboard-filled trolley and wrote on it: 'My mom works for the environment'." — **AFP**

THE CHANGING WORLD



Shaddad al Musalmy

Omani women making positive changes

FOR A NATION TO progress, both men and women must prosper in a society that provides equal opportunities. Ever since His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik took the oath of office, he has been aware of the immense potential and possibilities that women can provide for development.

On Omani Women's Day this week, I must say that Omani women have been responding to the call of the Renaissance and are working hard to build the country alongside men.

The day marks the prominent status accorded to women during the Blessed Renaissance and celebrates the welfare programmes for them, which ensured the advancement of their status and enthusiastic participation alongside men in nation-building.

The current era has shown how women all across the country have not only empowered themselves in every field, but also reached a commendable level through sheer willpower and unwavering support from the government.

Over the past 50 years of the Blessed Renaissance, women have received ample attention and are fully armed with education and training for better employment opportunities to actively participate in the development process of Oman.

Women in Oman enjoy an equal status with men and that is why many hold

MAKING SURE WOMEN AND GIRLS HAVE EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE, AND WORK OPPORTUNITIES, AS WELL AS POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION IN ECONOMIC DECISION-MAKING, IS CRUCIAL TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC PROGRESS

key positions across sectors, thanks to the constant attention by the government.

Gender equality is important not only because it is a human right, but because it is essential for building peaceful nations. Making sure women and girls have equal access to quality education, healthcare, and work opportunities, as well as political representation and participation in economic decision-making, is crucial to sustainable development and economic progress.

Women in Oman are keen to have legal and social awareness to protect their rights and ensure a balanced life. Some women in Oman believe that nations move forward through the contribution of individuals. This is so because development without discrimination of women constitutes a basic pillar of progress.

Women's role is undeniably contributing to various social, economic and cultural aspects. Their potential has been enhanced with a set of laws that grant them their deserved rights to enable them to shoulder their responsibility in sustainable development.

They have shown collective power to make positive changes and have collaborated to achieve big strides in their personal and professional capacities. They have used their voice to advocate for other women too. All these make Omani women special.

Till next, happy Omani Women's Day.

Shaddad al Musalmy is a seasoned Omani journalist who worked for top newspapers in the country. He's currently one of Oman Observer's senior editors and contributes across different beats. His commentaries about life in general paints a vivid picture of the changing landscape in Oman.

FOR FEEDBACK, EMAIL THE AUTHOR AT shadadm75@gmail.com

