

HM greets Albania and Mauritania

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Bajram Begaj of the Republic of Albania on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Begaj. His Majesty also wished the people of Albania further progress and prosperity. His Majesty the Sultan has also sent a cable of greetings to President Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania on his country's Independence Day.



P10

HAMDAN AL KHATRI WON 110 KM RACE



P13

CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON OMAN'S FIRST GREEN STEEL PLANT



P20

IT'S THE SEASON OF PINK LAKES IN OMAN



German President arrives on three-day official visit

VISIT TO EXPLORE AREAS OF JOINT COOPERATION



President Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier of the Federal Republic of Germany and his spouse arrived in Muscat on Monday.

MUSCAT: President Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier of the Federal Republic of Germany and his spouse arrived in Muscat on Monday on an official three-day visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, led the welcoming party for the German President and his accompanying delegation upon their arrival at the Royal Airport.

The German President was also received by Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and

Information Technology (Head of the Mission of Honour), Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (Minister accompanying the guest's spouse), Maitha bint Saif al Mahrouqiyah, Ambassador of Oman to Germany, Dirk Lölke, Ambassador of Germany to Oman, and members of the German Embassy in Muscat.

The President of Germany is accompanied by an official delegation comprising Dr Tobias

Lindner, Minister of State at the Foreign Ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany, Dirk Lölke, Ambassador of Germany to Oman, Wolfgang Silbermann, Head of the Foreign Policy Department of the Office of the Federal President, and a number of German officials.

The visit will explore the joint areas of cooperation that serve the two countries' interests and aspirations. It will also discuss the current regional issues.

— ONA
SEE ALSO P2

Sayyid Fahd receives ICAO President

HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, on Monday received Salvatore Sciacchitano, President of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Council, and his delegation. HH Sayyid Fahd affirmed that the Sultanate of Oman accords attention to the matter of following up on the steps undertaken by the ICAO and its President in matters related to improving the level of services that facilitate airspace safety at the global level.

DETAILS ON P2

PHOTO BY
MOHAMED
AL RASHDI



Gaza truce extended for 2 more days

GAZA: Israel and Hamas will agree to prolong a truce in Gaza that had been due to expire on Tuesday, mediator Qatar said, as hostage and prisoner exchanges were set to continue.

With just hours to go before the so-called "humanitarian pause" was to end, both had been under international pressure to avoid a return to battle.

Qatari foreign ministry spokesman Majed al Ansari said "an agreement has been reached to extend the humanitarian truce for an additional two days in the Gaza Strip."

Hamas confirmed in a statement "that an agreement has been reached with the brothers in Qatar and Egypt for an extension of the temporary humanitarian pause for an additional two days, with the same conditions as the previous truce."

But both sides are under pressure to build on the break in hostilities to allow humanitarian aid to reach civilians in Gaza,



A Palestinian woman fleeing north Gaza with her daughter during rainfall moves southward amid a temporary truce near Gaza City, on Monday. — Reuters

where Israel's campaign has left almost 15,000 dead, mostly Palestinian civilians.

The Qatari announcement came after US President Joe Biden, top EU envoy Josep Borrell and Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg all joined a global chorus urging the parties to extend their temporary break in fighting.

As part of the truce deal, so far released 39 Israeli captives, including a four-year-old girl orphaned by the October 7 attack, were freed. Israel has freed 117 Palestinian prisoners under the terms of the agreement. In parallel, 19 foreign nationals have also been released by Palestinians.

SEE ALSO P6 & 7



PATEK PHILIPPE
GENEVE



TWENTY~4

BEGIN YOUR OWN TRADITION

Patek Philippe Boutique
at
القرم
Al-Qurum
MUSCAT • 22009991



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



German President arrives on 3-day visit



President Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier of the Federal Republic of Germany and his spouse arrived in Muscat on Monday on an official three-day visit to the Sultanate of Oman. Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, led the welcoming party for the German President and his accompanying delegation upon their arrival at the Royal Airport. — ONA

Sayyid Fahd receives ICAO President

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers received on Monday Salvatore Sciacchitano, President of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Council and his accompanying delegation.

HH Sayyid Fahd affirmed that the Sultanate of Oman accords attention to the matter of following up on the steps undertaken by the ICAO and its President in matters related to improving the level of services that facilitate airspace safety on the global level.

He also underscored Oman's constant commitment to cooperation in a bid to enhance air traffic and maintain safety requirements.

On his turn, the ICAO President lauded Oman's renaissance in various fields. He also shed light on Oman's modern airports which are built based on international standards.

The meeting was attended by Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and Eng Nayef bin Ali bin Hamad al Abri , Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). — ONA



HH Sayyid Fahd affirmed that the Sultanate of Oman accords attention to the matter of following up on the steps undertaken by the ICAO

MoH celebrates Khoula Hospital expansion



The new expansion of the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Emergency Department of Khoula Hospital was opened officially on Monday. — ONA

MUSCAT: The new expansion of the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Emergency Department of Khoula Hospital was opened officially on Monday aside with restarting the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department after being modernised.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Said bin Harib al Lamki, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs.

Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Salti, Assistant Director General for Medical Affairs at Khoula Hospital pointed out that the expansion of the OBG was due to the increasing demand for the services as figures indicated that the Khoula Hospital clinic received more than (22,645) patients in 2022, while the patients this year have reached (22,939) so far.

He stressed that the Directorate General of Khoula Hospital

represented by Khoula Hospital, Al Nahdha Hospital, and Wattaya OBG Complex, is striving to achieve a qualitative leap in Gynaecology and Obstetrics services align with Oman Vision 2040 through introducing rare specialties, maintaining service competency as per the approved international standards, along with utilising available resources, and boosting training and scientific research.

The Obstetrics and Gynaecology

Emergency department includes (4) beds and an examination room, while the labour ward includes (4) beds and an induction room with (2) beds.

the department also includes (10) rooms for the final post-natal stage, a pregnant ward with (16) beds, (36) beds in the postnatal ward, (30) beds in the obstetrics and gynaecology ward, (3) operating rooms, and (2) beds in the recovery room. — ONA

Oman, Qatar keen to boost cooperation

DOHA: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister held a meeting in Doha on Monday with Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Thani, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the State of Qatar.

The two ministers expressed their satisfaction with the level of the relations and coordination between Oman and Qatar in various areas. This includes the exchange of views on different issues and challenges.

The two sides underscored the joint keenness to continue promoting various areas of economic cooperation and partnership in a manner that serves the mutual interests and opens wider horizons for investment.

During the meeting, Sayyid Badr expressed Oman's confidence in the success of the upcoming GCC Summit, due to be hosted by Qatar next month.

As for the repercussions of with the brutal Israeli aggression on Gaza Strip, Sayyid Badr and Shaikh Mohammed discussed the efforts made regionally and internationally to contain the crisis and address its humanitarian, security and political impacts.

Sayyid Badr lauded Qatar's pivotal role in achieving the current humanitarian truce in Gaza in order to allow the exchange of prisoners and detainees and the entry of humanitarian and relief needs into the Strip.

Sayyid Badr also appreciated the efforts of the Arab Republic

of Egypt, as well as the effective facilities and the existing coordination to make the humanitarian truce a success. He expressed the hope that this success will lead to an extension of the truce and a permanent ceasefire. He also wished that this will come up with real convictions to resume efforts in a bid to achieve a just and comprehensive peace and address all the causes of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The two sides reiterated their countries' support for the two-state solution and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in implementation of the rules of international law and in accordance with the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy.

The meeting was attended by Sayyid Ammar bin Abdullah al Busaidy, ambassador-designate of Oman to Qatar.

— ONA

Sayyid Badr receives written message from Syrian counterpart

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received a written message from Dr Faisal Mekdad, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic. The message deals with the bilateral relations between the two countries.

Moreover, the message was handed over to Sayyid Badr, when he received here today Idris Maya, Ambassador of Syria to Oman.



The two sides underscored the joint keenness to continue promoting various areas of economic cooperation and partnership. — ONA



Frankincense season to begin on Dec 2 in Dhofar

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, NOV 27

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) announced on Sunday the official launch of the Frankincense Season in Dhofar Governorate. The season is set to commence on December 2 and run until December 9, 2023.

This year's Frankincense Season promises to be an immersive and enriching experience, offering a diverse array of activities and events that will shed light on the profound significance of frankincense in Omani history and civilisation. The season also aims to promote tourism in Dhofar Governorate, showcasing its natural beauty, cultural heritage, and warm hospitality.

Frankincense, also known as 'Luban' in Arabic, has been pivotal in Omani culture for centuries. Revered for its fragrant aroma and therapeutic properties, frankincense has been used in traditional medicine, religious ceremonies, and perfume production.

The Frankincense season will feature a captivating lineup of



The Frankincense season will feature a captivating lineup of activities

and events. There will be frankincense tree planting in which participants will have the opportunity to plant frankincense trees at the Wadi Dawkah Reserve site, commemorating the inscription of the Land of Frankincense sites on the Unesco World Heritage List.

The season will be an opportunity to embark on a journey of discovery through authentic Bedouin hospitality, experience the thrill of camel riding, and delve into the fascinating world of Bedouin arts and crafts.

There will be a Frankincense Caravans Art Exhibition to showcase the artistry of talented

individuals as they showcase their creations in the frankincense caravans, history, and civilisation drawing competition.

The Interactive Children's Corner will engage in a fun and educational adventure at the interactive children's corner, fostering museum education and igniting a passion for archaeology.

There will be enchanting entertainment, lighting shows, performances, and models. one can capture memorable moments at the whimsical photo booth with cartoon characters.

A sand drawing artistry will be on display as talented artists transform grains of sand into mesmerising shapes and designs that embody the rich heritage of Dhofar Governorate.

The Therapeutic Health and Beauty Exhibition will discover the myriad benefits of frankincense derivatives in the therapeutic health and beauty exhibition.

Other activities include Al Baleed Exhibition, exciting tourist experiences, the Treasure Hunt Competition, Discover Samharam, Art Exhibition, and Kayak and Pleasure Boat Excursions.

FOOD AID FROM OMAN REACHES RAFAH CROSSING

MUSCAT: Oman Charitable Organisation (OCO) shipped the first batch of food aid through the Rafah crossing to the Gaza Strip. Recently, OCO, in coordination with the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in Cairo and the Egyptian Red Crescent, conducted an air bridge consisting of five aircraft to the El Arish International Airport in Egypt. The flights shipped 100 tonnes of various foodstuffs for the Palestinian people in the occupied Gaza Strip, to be delivered through the Rafah crossing to the Palestinian Red Crescent.



Royal Hospital conducts operation to relieve baby of chest tumour

MUSCAT: A specialised medical team from the Royal Hospital succeeded in performing a complex operation to remove a tumour that developed in the chest of a 7-day-old baby.

The surgery, the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman, was conducted using advanced laparoscopic technology.

Dr Ghalia bint Khalid al Maawaliyah, Head of the medical team and paediatric surgeon/consultant at the Royal Hospital, said that a

major challenge that faced the medical team was the nature of the tumour, which developed in a sensitive area of the rib cage, in the vicinity of the body's main artery and vein, making anaesthesia a further risk factor.

Dr Ghalia affirmed that the ventilator was immediately removed from the patient after the surgical operation. The baby was then put under observation and he started recovering, she added.

— ONA



The surgery, the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman, was conducted using advanced laparoscopic technology. — ONA

Charity Bazaar offers international flavours



The objective of the Diplomatic Charity Bazaar is to support the initiatives of Al Rahma Association of Oman. — ONA

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

The Diplomatic Club of the Foreign Ministry bustled with activities and stalls represented by SMEs, country outlets of different embassies and private sector companies. The participants were enthusiastic to participate in the Diplomatic Charity Bazaar 2023 from 10 am to 10 pm on Monday. An open public event was a blend of Omani and international flavours.

The objective of the Diplomatic Charity Bazaar is to support the initiatives of Al Rahma Association of Oman.

The Charity Bazaar included an introductory corner, which provided information on the different services of Al Rahma Association and the locations of the centres in the country so that one could contribute toward the charity of mercy for the bereaved

and the orphans.

Hotels and eatery outlets were participating in addition to homemade products, for example, the specialised Mahu (sweet made of milk) with different ingredients such as pistachios, frankincense, coconut etc.

Omani Women's Association from Nakhal participated in handmade silver jewellery with designs for modern-day usage.

"Our label is called sawr_sa, and we are on social media, so no matter where you are in the world, you can look at our collections and purchase them too. We have training sessions too for the association members," said Shaikha al Namani, who supervises the jewellery designing section.

Yaqoub al Amri had a halwa stall. He was busy with sales and explaining how he makes the halwa to the visitors. His outlet is based in Seeb, but he was excited to participate in the Charity Bazaar.

Celebrating maritime heritage is Ahmed al Alawi, a boat builder from Sur, whose expertise in carpentry could be seen in his miniature dhows and doors. He has the map in front of him and is happy to show the visitors the sea routes Omani sailors had ventured through.

Preserving heritage in a bottle was Farha al Kindi. She is an entrepreneur and an expert in agriculture and fisheries.

For five years, she has been developing small-scale fisheries industries. Her small factory is based in Al Musannah.

"We wanted to develop and preserve a tradition of Oman, salted fish. The young people are busy, but we have been able to provide the salted fish and pickle on the table, so this tradition is preserved. In olden days, salted fish was the way we preserved fish. We deal with tuna and kingfish, which are seasonal," said Farah al Kindi.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C invites interested companies to participate in the following tenders

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying/ Participate	Date & Time of Site visit	Date of Submission	Grade	Tender Price (OMR)
RFP No. 20/ Nama Supply/2023	Supply and Installation Air freshener for Head Quarter Building for one year	05/12/2023	29/11/2023 (9:00 am)	10/12/2023	Specialist	Free Cost
RFP No. 27/ Nama Supply/2023	Gardening work for Nama Supply HQ Building for 2 Years	05/12/2023	29/11/2023 (11:00 am)	10/12/2023	Specialist	Free Cost
RFP No. 28/ Nama Supply/2023	Supply of stationary for Nama Electricity Supply for One Year	05/12/2023	N/A	10/12/2023	Specialist	Free Cost
Re-RFP No. 18/ Nama Supply/2023	Renewal of Anti-Virus and Endpoint Protection Software McAfee License for Nama Electricity Supply Company for 3 Years.	05/12/2023	N/A	10/12/2023	Specialist	26.250

The table below shows the instructions for participation:-						
Participation	- Companies registered with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and in I Supplier with Nama Groupe may obtain Tender documents. - The amount specified above is including 5% VAT. - The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply) - To obtain the tender document and payment procedure, please contact us by email procurement@supply.nama.om					
Enquiries	- Any inquiry can be sent to procurement@supply.nama.om, (3) Three days before bid submission date. - Any request for clarification received after the above-mentioned period will not be considered.					
Tender Submission	Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER mentioned in the Prime Document.					
Guarantee	This applies only for Tender No. Re-RFP No. 18/ Nama Supply/2023. - The Tender should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of (1%) of the tender value valid for a period of at least sixty (60) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF PROCUREMENT COMMITTEE, Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C. - The bid bond should including 5% VAT. - The bid bond should be submitted as a separate envelope. - Any tender not accompanied by a Tender Bond shall be rejected.					
Terms and Conditions	- The Tender shall be valid for a period of at least Sixty (60) days from the last date of tender submission including any extension thereof. - If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date. This applies only for Tender No. Re-RFP No. 18/ Nama Supply/2023. - NESC is not bound to accept the lowest (or highest) Tenderer. - Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization. - NESC gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. - Failure to comply with the instructions in tender document may lead to disqualification.					
Incentives and exemptions	- Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from Tender fees - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from bid bond requirements. - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from registration fees on business opportunities platform and supplier registration with Nama Group.					



Nama Electricity Supply Company SAOC
PO Box 1239, PC 131, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 24250800 | CR 1/7/1235/7
info@supply.nama.om | www.supply.nama.om





FLOWER LOVERS MAKE MERRY AS WINTER KICKS IN

SHADDAD AL MUSALMY
@shadadm

Flowers and plants when nicely blended into a lovely home garden, create blissfulness and time is ripe now for plant lovers in Oman to approach sellers as cool weather knocks our doors.

In the Sultanate of Oman, keeping plants and flowers in soaring temperatures has always been extremely difficult and this is what makes it a seasonal business for sellers who say there is always a great demand for flowers and plants during winter.

In reality, it is a win-win situation for both sellers, who are looking forward to a spike in sales, and also for buyers, who are longing for something beautiful to keep them busy during winter.

“This is a great time to make money and winter is a good time for us as it is the time we are trying to nurture seedlings, and various other plants. Even though we are in business all year round, demand is at higher end in winter which lasts about three to four months from November,” Mohammad, a plant seller in a newly established nursery in Al Amerat, said.

He added that no matter how much effort they put in, it is not always easy

to keep plants and flowers lively during summer.

Nursery workers say it is not always easy to maintain flowers and plants. “It is not easy for us to fight nature as high temperatures burn and destroy what we grow,” Saleem, another flower nursery worker in Al Seeb, said.

However, he said that flower and plant businesses flourish in winter. “This is the time when more and more people visit us looking for plants. Our sales are limited during summer as very few customers visit us,” he said, adding that seasonal plants and flowers are in high demand now.

Fatmah Saeed, a homemaker who tries hard to maintain her garden even in summer, said maintaining a garden is not something that can easily be done in Oman.

“You have to be ready to spend more on plants that you very well know will die off as soon as the temperature soars. That is why we always wait for cool weather. I don’t normally regret spending when I notice how beautiful the flowers are. It is worth the effort.” Some feel that flowers and plants relieve stress and refresh the mind,” she said.

She said her favourite is the flower called petunia. “Petunia is the most affordable seed. It’s the most sought after, too, because of its quick growth and very bright colours. They come in velvet, pink, blue, red, white and other colours. Petunia makes one’s garden look colourful and attractive,” Fatmah said.

For Said al Habsi, flowers and plants sooth the mind. “When the mind sees beautiful things, it also thinks beautifully. This is the reason why I put in much effort on my plants and flowers. I’m happy that the season for such activities is on. So for the next three months, I will enjoy my flower beds at home,” said Al Habsi.



BLOOD BANK CALLS FOR PLASMA DONATION

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The Bausher Blood Bank, under the Department of Blood Bank Services (DBBS) at the Ministry of Health (MoH), has called for plasma donation. There is a requirement for plasma due to increased demand.

One can donate blood plasma at the Bausher Blood Bank any day during official working

hours.

“We require blood plasma, especially the AB+ group, which is relatively less in supply. We also encourage platelet donors,” a statement from the Bank said.

Anyone who meets the requirements can visit the blood bank between Saturday and Thursday from 8 am to 8 pm and donate blood plasma.

The department is reaching

out to a wider community directly or through social media platforms with a renewed call urging all to donate immune plasma after it was proven to be effective as a supportive treatment for some cases and subsequent increase in demand for the same.

At the Department, the donors will be evaluated to ensure they meet all the eligibility criteria and are negative for NCDs before



One can donate blood plasma at the Bausher Blood Bank any day during official working hours

scheduling an appointment. The plasma donation is performed at the Central Blood Bank in Bausher, where plasma is collected through a special device to separate it and then divide it into two to three units, according to Dr Zainab al Arami, Head of the Department.

Further details and booking can be made on whatsapp number 94555648 or telephone numbers 24591255 or 24594255.

TENDER NOTICE

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

Tender No.	Description	Tender documents price (R.O)	Class	Last date for collection of documents	Last date for Submission of documents
1110/2023/MAFWR/HQ-121	Purchasing and supplying laboratory materials, equipment and medical equipment for laboratories and clinics for the Veterinary Hospital in Al-Bashaer in the Wilayat of Adam in Al-Dakhiliyah Governorate	25/-	Specialized	Sunday 10/12/2023	Sunday 31/12/2023
1112/2023/MAFWR/HQ-122	Renting of 45 copy machines	25/-	Specialized	Sunday 10/12/2023	Sunday 31/12/2023
1126/2023/MAFWR/HQ-123	Drilling (3) Bore wells, supplying & installing pumps and pipes to supporting the Afraj of Hajar Bani Hamid, Al Mahayza, Habisa Al Sarabi and Al Mashaykh in the Wilayat of Madha in Musandam Governorate	25/-	Fourth	Sunday 17/12/2023	Sunday 7/01/2024
485/2023/MAFWR/HQ-44 - Recall - 1	Rehabilitation and Improvement of AL-Buraimi Falaj in AL-Buraimi village in Wilayat of AL-Buraimi, AL-Buraimi Governorate	25/-	Fourth	Tuesday 5/12/2023	Thursday 14/12/2023

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

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

Annual inflation rate reaches 0.3pc



The inflation rate was driven by the increase in most main groups comprising the Consumer Price Index. – ONA

MUSCAT: The annual inflation rate in the Sultanate of Oman reached 0.3 per cent by the end of October 2023 according to data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The inflation rate was driven by the increase in most main groups comprising the Consumer Price Index (CPI), including the miscellaneous goods and services (2.6 per cent),

tobacco (2.4 per cent), food and non-alcoholic beverages (1.7 per cent), furniture, household equipment and routine household maintenance (1.7 per cent), culture and entertainment (1.1 per cent) and health (0.6 per cent).

Meanwhile, the prices of several other groups went down, such as education (2.3 per cent), transport (1.4 per cent) and restaurants, hotels and communications (0.2

per cent).

Prices remained stable for the following groups: clothes and footwear, housing, water, electricity, gas and other types of fuel.

Further, inflation rate decreased by 0.2 per cent compared to September 2023 due to the drop in the prices of the following main groups: education (2.3 per cent), food and non-alcoholic beverages (0.6 per cent) and transport (0.1 per cent).

As far as governorates are concerned, the highest inflation rate in governorates was registered by Al Dhahirah (0.6 per cent), while the governorates of Dhofar and Muscat registered a rise in inflation rate by 0.4 per cent.

An increase was also registered in the following governorates: Al Sharqiyah North , Al Sharqiyah South, Al Dakhiliyah and Al Batinah North by 0.2 per cent.

— ONA

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Dhofar Services invites the specialize companies to participate and submit their offers for the below said tender in Dhofar Governorate.

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR) Including VAT (5%)
DISC/ 2023/178	Consultancy service for Preparation of Price Control for the period from 2025 to 2027	05/12/2023	12/12/2023	52.500

- To view the tender details, you can visit www.dhofarservices.nama.om / scan the QR code.
- The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 3.00pm.
- Bids shall be submitted online through using "Isupplier portal". No hard copies are accepted.
- The company is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.
- For any clarifications contact us on:
Tel No. 23232554
email: purchase@dhofarservices.nama.om

Dhofar Integrated Services Company S.A.O.C.
CR Number 2185299 , PO Box 2609
PC 211, Salalah - Sultanate of Oman
Phone Number 23232523 , Fax 23201183
www.dhofarservices.nama.om

MoSD, ESCWA discuss Oman's experience in drafting international reports



The ministry is represented by the Department of Women's Affairs at the two-day workshop, which focuses on Oman's experience in drafting and elaborating on international reports. – ONA

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) today held a preparatory workshop during which they discussed the 4th national report of the "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)".

The ministry is represented by the Department of Women's Affairs at the two-day workshop, which focuses on Oman's experience in drafting and elaborating on international reports.

Emphasis is laid on preparing specialists to present Oman's fourth national CEDAW report before the International Committee on Women.

The session was attended by Sayyidah Maani bint Abdullah al Busaidy, Director General of Family Development at the Ministry of Social Development, members of the CEDAW and experts specialised in preparing and discussing international reports. — ONA

TENDER NOTICE

The Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs hereby announces the following tender:

Tender Number	Name/ Description	Grade	Closing Date for Collecting Tender Documents	Closing Date for Submitting Tender	Tender Document Cost
4/2023	PROVIDING CROP CARE SERVICES	EXCELLENT GRADE AND FIRST CLASS	14/12/2023	14/1/2024	RO. 25/-

All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the Tender Board participate and get the specifications and condition of the tender from the ESNAD Electronic Tendering Services website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) In exchange for paying the amount specified above electronically, which amount shall be non-refundable.

Offers must be submitted in ESNAD Electronic Tendering Services website **before (12:00) Twelve pm** on the closing date for submitting Tenders; Tenders submitted after that will not be considered regardless of the reasons for lateness, which is valid for ninety (90) days from the closing date for submitting tenders.

NOTE:
For clarifications, you may contact via ESNAD Electronic Tendering Services website mentioned above.

***The Ministry is not obliged to accept the lowest or any Tender.**



Truce in Gaza extended

CHINA'S TOP DIPLOMAT TO VISIT NY FOR MIDEAST TALKS



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi

BEIJING: China's top diplomat Wang Yi will visit New York this week to hold a United Nations Security Council meeting on the Middle-East conflict, Beijing's foreign ministry said on Monday. "As it holds the rotating presidency of the United Nations Security Council this month, China will hold a high-level meeting on the Palestinian-Israeli issue on November 29," spokesman Wang Wenbin said.

Wang Yi will preside over the meeting, he added.

After October 7, Israel has launched a military campaign, killing nearly 15,000 people, mostly civilians and including thousands of children, according to the Palestinian government.

China said last week it welcomed a truce between the warring sides, which began on Friday and led to dozens of hostages being freed and the release of more than 100 Palestinian prisoners.

Beijing hoped this week's UN talks would achieve "a ceasefire and an end to the fighting" and make "contributions to alleviating the humanitarian crisis in Gaza," Wang Wenbin said.

China has historically been sympathetic to the Palestinian cause and supportive of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Last week, Chinese President Xi Jinping has called for an "international peace conference" to resolve the fighting, as he addressed a virtual summit of fellow BRICS leaders.

"There can be no sustainable peace and security in the Middle East without a just solution to the question of Palestine," Xi said urging the "early convening of an international peace conference that is more authoritative to build international consensus for peace". Wang previously said the world must "act urgently" to calm the war as he hosted diplomats from Arab and Muslim-majority nations in Beijing.

"Let us work together to quickly cool down the situation in Gaza and restore peace in the Middle East as soon as possible," Wang told ministers at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in the Chinese capital. — AFP

GAZA: A humanitarian pause in fighting between warring sides will extend by two days, mediator Qatar said on Monday as an initial four-day truce in Gaza was set to expire.

"The State of Qatar announces that, as part of the ongoing mediation, an agreement has been reached to extend the humanitarian truce for an additional two days in the Gaza Strip," Qatari foreign ministry spokesman Majed Al Ansari said on X.

Previously the Palestinian movement Hamas said on Monday that it was drawing up a new list of hostages held in the Gaza Strip "in order to extend the truce" with Israel.

The statement from Osawma Hamdan, a senior official, came as discussions were continuing on an extension of the initial four-day pause in the fighting and exchanges of hostages for Palestinian prisoners.

Meanwhile, Israel said it was open to extending a truce if the Palestinian group continues to release hostages, as international pressure mounted for a longer pause in the Gaza fighting.

Over the course of the humanitarian pause and in weeks prior, Qatar, with the support of the United States and Egypt, has been engaged in intense negotiations to establish and prolong the truce in Gaza, which mediators had said was designed to be broadened and expanded.

After US President Joe Biden said the pause should continue to allow humanitarian relief into Gaza and more Israeli hostages to return home to their families, senior European Union and Nato officials added their voices to his call.

As part of the truce deal, Hamas has so far released 39 Israeli hostages, including a four-year-old girl orphaned by the group's October 7 attack.

Israel has freed 117 Palestinian prisoners in exchange under the terms of the agreement. A further 19 foreign nationals have also been released from Gaza under separate arrangements.

Tearful reunions of families have brought the first relief from images of civilian death and suffering



I call for an extension of the pause. This would allow for much needed relief to the people of Gaza and the release of more hostages

JENS STOLTENBERG

Nato's secretary-general

in the seven-week war, with hopes high for an extension.

"That's our goal, to keep this pause going beyond tomorrow so that we can continue to see more hostages come out and surge more humanitarian relief into those in need in Gaza," Biden said, calling for no longer operations "as long as prisoners keep coming out".

Nato's secretary-general Jens Stoltenberg also weighed in, ahead of a meeting of allied foreign ministers in Brussels.

"I call for an extension of the pause. This would allow for much needed relief to the people of Gaza and the release of more hostages," he told journalists. Hamas has signalled its willingness to extend the truce, with a source saying that the group told mediators they were open to prolonging it by "two to four days".

"The resistance believes it is possible to ensure the release of 20 to 40 Israeli prisoners" in that time, the source close to the movement said.

Israel launched a military campaign to destroy, killing nearly 15,000 people, mostly civilians and including thousands of children, according to the Palestinian government. Israel has faced mounting pressure to extend the pause mediated by Qatar, the United States and Egypt, though its leaders have dismissed any suggestions of a lasting halt to the offensive. — AFP



A Palestinian pushes a man in a wheelchair as people fleeing north Gaza move southward, during a temporary truce. — Reuters



Trucks carrying humanitarian aid enter the Gaza Strip via the Rafah crossing with Egypt. — AFP



PALESTINIANS DEMAND ISRAEL GIVE NEWS OF THE

RAMALLAH: Palestinian authorities have demanded the Israeli military release information about more than 100 people thought to have been detained in Gaza during its assault on the territory since October 7. The head of the Palestinian Authority's commission for prisoners, Qaddura Fares, said on Sunday that Israeli officials had told him at one point their side had made 105 arrests.

But he said Israel had not announced the number publicly and there was "no detail about what has become of these people".

"We fear they may have been killed after being detained and interrogated," he said.

The Israeli military on Monday said that it could

not comment on the issue at this stage.

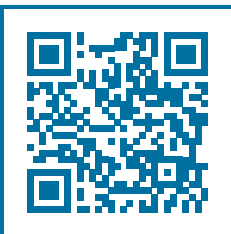
Palestinians government says the Israeli offensive has killed nearly 15,000 people, mostly civilians. The bombardments have flattened homes and displaced 1.7 million of Gaza's 2.4 million people, according to the United Nations.

The UN humanitarian affairs office OCHA said in a report that Israeli forces had detained people walking to southern Gaza from the north on the Salah al-Din road during the Israeli operations and a truce that came into force on November 24.

Red Cross medical worker Ramadan Hossu said in a video released by his organisation that Israeli forces strip-searched and handcuffed him after



Israel's military operates in the Gaza Strip during a temporary truce. — Reuters



ed by two days



A barefooted Palestinian woman fleeing north Gaza with her daughter during rainfall moves southward amid a temporary truce, near Gaza City. — Reuters



A Palestinian woman walks among the rubble, as she inspects the houses destroyed in Israeli strikes, at Khan Yunis refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip. — Reuters

THE DETAINED IN GAZA

The UN humanitarian affairs office OCHA said in a report that Israeli forces had detained people walking to southern Gaza from the north on the Salah al-Din road

detaining him on the road. One displaced Gaza resident, Sahar Awwad, said that Israeli soldiers detained her son Mohammed as he tried to leave southern Gaza on November 12. “He was freed after nine days” after “undergoing torture,” Awwad said. OCHA said families had been separated by Israeli forces at a checkpoint on the Salah al-Din road. One child “had to cross through the checkpoint on his own following his father’s arrest,” it said. On the outskirts of Gaza City, families took to the road on foot to head south, pushing luggage and relatives in wheelchairs, and carrying children

in their arms. Israel has told Palestinians in Gaza to leave the north for the relative safety of the south, but it has now sent text messages to those in the southern city of Khan Yunis warning it knows hostages are being held there. The pause in fighting has allowed more aid to reach Palestinians struggling to survive with shortages of water and other essentials. Bbut Adnan Abu Hansa, a spokesman for the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), warned of “unprecedented” humanitarian needs. “We should send 200 lorries a day continuously for at least two months,” he said. — AFP



European Union’s High Representative Josep Borrell and official delegates pose for a picture during the Union for the Mediterranean summit in Barcelona, Spain. — Reuters

EU’S BORRELL SAYS EXTENSION OF TRUCE WOULD ALLOW WORKING ON POLITICAL SOLUTION

BARCELONA: European Union’s top diplomat Josep Borrell on Monday said the extension of the current truce in Gaza is within reach and it would allow international community to work on a political solution to the conflict. Borrell made the comments during a news conference held in Barcelona during the Union for the Mediterranean summit. Almost all the participants to the summit agree on a two-state solution, he said. The four-day truce in the Mideast conflict was an important first step but much more was needed to find a way out of the crisis, Borrell said on Monday, the final day of the ceasefire. Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki, attending the summit, warned the death toll in Gaza would double if the war restarted now. Borrell said he regretted that Israel had not attended the Forum for the Union of the Mediterranean in Barcelona, a grouping of European, North African and

Middle Eastern countries. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan addressed the meeting as a representative of a group of ministers from the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. Borrell said he hoped a four-day truce that began on Friday morning would last “a few more days”. Al-Maliki said Qatar, Egypt, the United States and the European Union were working to extend the truce, adding: “Extending the ceasefire means halting the killing.” He said if the war restarted once the current ceasefire ended the death toll would double because Gaza’s population was now concentrated in the south of the strip. “We have an opportunity today that will end tonight, to extend the ceasefire... I count on the support of my colleagues... for us to all leave here with a loud and strong voice that can be heard in all parts of the world: no to the war, yes to the ceasefire,” he said. — Reuters

UN EXPERTS URGE CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY PROBE

GENEVA: UN rights experts called on Monday for independent investigations into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity carried out in Gaza war since October 7. Morris Tidball-Binz, the United Nations special rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, and Alice Jill Edwards, the special rapporteur on torture, issued a joint statement stressing the need for “prompt, transparent and independent investigations” and accountability. “Independent investigators must be given the necessary resources, support and access required to conduct prompt, thorough and impartial investigations into crimes allegedly committed by all parties to the conflict,” they said in the statement. “The duty to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity, including any act of summary or extrajudicial killing, torture or other outrages on human dignity, is a fundamental legal obligation.” Their comments came amid a four-day pause in the relentless hostilities since recent war

sparked on October 7. Israel’s military has so far killed nearly 15,000 people, mostly civilians and including thousands of children, according to the Palestinian government. The independent experts are appointed by the UN Human Rights Council but do not speak on behalf of the United Nations. Their statement urged the international community to ensure that all those responsible for the most serious rights violations – especially those with command responsibility – be “promptly brought to justice”. They pointed out that “there is no statute of limitation” for war crimes and crimes against humanity, which fall under so-called universal jurisdiction. That means that courts in any country can prosecute those responsible, regardless of their nationality and the country where the crimes were committed. “We encourage all states to play a proactive role in identifying key suspected perpetrators and helping to facilitate prosecutions through the principle of mutual legal assistance,” they said. — AFP



A missile explodes in Gaza City during an Israeli air strike on October 8. — AFP file photo

A note to teens...

You only go once through this passage and that is teenage. It is a collective process of certain years and the most difficult ones probably could be the transition ones right at the beginning of the passage.

That is the time they want to be established and create an image but there is turmoil internally for not knowing what exactly is that they want. Teenagers want to be accepted but they don't realise they are still evolving and there is time. But they are in a hurry and want to achieve quickly. The aggressive ones will pull down others not realising everyone is on their journey. Some will suffer and struggle but they will shine later as they are stretched beyond the comfort zone.

There is no easy way out because they have to go through this process to be flexible and stretchable in the next phase. So now it is not just about getting out of the comfort of home and step into nursery. It is not about being challenged in the classrooms, it is about dealing with moments interacting with others in the playground, in the classrooms, in the cafeteria and so on. The lucky ones will have empathetic teachers and friends.

Yes, at this stage of life having empathetic teachers make all the difference. The teens are going to be the future citizens and members of the society. They are in the process of going through the mold. They will learn from observing and copying and finally choosing on their own what they want to be in life. Yes it has to be their own choice because they are the ones to live their life. We simply cannot be in their shoes because our time was on another zone, our conversations were different, the prerequisites were part of another list.

But now more than ever we need to hold onto values. Because everything else can be destroyed to taken away but not our values. There is a comfort in knowing that you have done the right thing in life. The right thing, however will depend on our values.

And what happens when a teenager is hurting because he/she finds it challenging to fit in before sailing off?

Teenagers are expected to rebel, look away and find new ways to take the path



Lakshmi Kothaneth @lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

TEENAGERS WANT TO BE ACCEPTED BUT THEY DON'T REALISE THEY ARE STILL EVOLVING AND THERE IS TIME

they want. And so often they want to give up on what they have to fulfil to prove their worth. Go slow, bloom at your pace and find yourself.

Leona Ruth Wellington teaches at the university level and has her expertise in English language but she has immense experience in dealing with students no matter what their age. She is not only a teacher but also an educator. She is concerned about the overall development of a student.

This is what she has to say to students who sometimes feel like giving up, "Tell them that they just have to go over this last bridge to finish the schooling. They must be brave and do it because if they don't do it they would just hurt themselves."

Emotions can be strong and these feelings can sometimes go and store in the form of anger and they just find themselves heavy to move forward and the fact is it can only be done if they can forgive. If not what can the teens do?

"They would just have to find ways to practice kindness with others," she had explained.

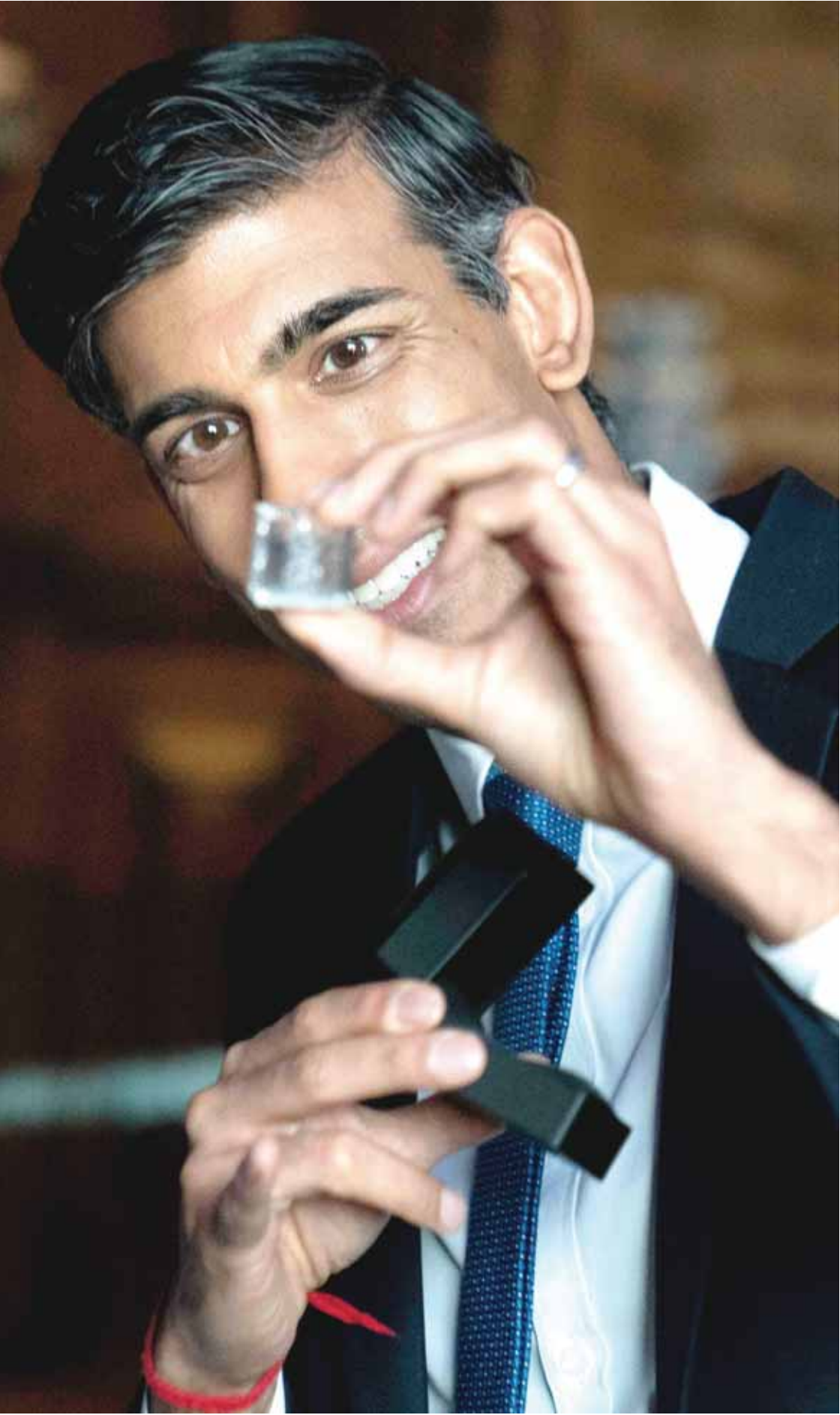
Trust me teenagers you will pass this too. This is just another test — a lengthy class test. No amount of tuition classes can prepare you for this except lot of kindness.

Kindness to receive and give. At this point of life there is a lot of 'I' talk in the mind. That's fine as we want to find ourselves. But balancing is important while crossing the river. Life is never in the same momentum and we will even find ourselves turning out to be stronger and stronger and soon you would be looking back and wondering what on earth were you worried about. But this is the time to build yourself up in knowledge and abilities, but the fact is soon you will find out it is a fabulous idea to be a student for life. But then one has to take up responsibility and soon would have to be a decision maker and that is when you realise all your observations in life matter.

The most important part to remember is success comes with sacrifice, and when you practice kindness to others don't forget to be kind to yourself.

Enjoy blooming.

FUEL FUSION ENERGY CAPSULE!



Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak examines a Fuel fusion energy capsule produced by the company First Light Fusion who are developing fusion power, as he tours exhibition stands during the Global Investment Summit at Hampton Court Palace in south west London on Monday. — AFP

How to salvage COP28

The United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai is just weeks away. But it has become increasingly clear that only a bold financing initiative spearheaded by the United Arab Emirates could provide essential funding and support to the Global South.

Despite being preceded by a summer of devastating droughts, floods, and wildfires that underscored the need for urgent action, the pre-summit talks on a Loss and Damage Fund to help the world's most impoverished countries mitigate the effects of climate change have made little progress. The fund, it was decided, will be housed for four years at the World Bank — but there has been no agreement on the obligations of the historic emitters and, as yet, no substantial flows of cash.

As the president of COP28, the UAE's Sultan al Jaber faces the crucial task of breaking the current impasse and delivering on his promise to devise a funding plan to bridge the Global South's annual \$1 trillion shortfall in financing for mitigation and adaptation initiatives.

The UAE holds the key to closing the climate financing gap. Persuading the world's wealthiest petrostates to pay a 3 per cent voluntary tax on their windfall 2022 revenues from oil and gas exports could raise \$25 billion. Such a levy could provide the initial capital required to motivate



Gordon Brown

a former prime minister of the United Kingdom, is UN Special Envoy for Global Education

AS THE PRESIDENT OF COP28, SULTAN AL JABER FACES THE CRUCIAL TASK OF DELIVERING ON HIS PROMISE TO DEVISE A PLAN TO BRIDGE THE GLOBAL SOUTH'S ANNUAL \$1 TRILLION SHORTFALL IN FINANCING FOR MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION INITIATIVES

the developed economies that account for most global greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions to issue guarantees that would enable multilateral development banks (MDBs) to boost investment.

To be sure, Al Jaber is well aware of the urgent need for decisive action. In June, in a private communication to some governments, he emphasised the importance of adopting a coordinated strategy that would use state guarantees to leverage private capital, reflecting the UAE's vision of new, innovative financial mechanisms to leverage private finance. He also wants to use large-scale state-guarantee mechanisms to mobilise significant private investments, framing this as a way to unite all parties and stakeholders in promoting climate action.

But Al Jaber is not just the president of COP28; he is also the CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company. He is uniquely positioned to lead by example and steer his own country towards contributing its fair share. A \$25 billion levy, representing less than 10 per cent of the oil and gas industry's annual revenues in 2022, should be considered the minimum contribution expected from major oil-exporting countries.

The stark contrast between the

oil-producing countries' record-breaking export earnings and the millions of people across the Global South pushed into poverty by soaring electricity costs underscores this imperative. In 2022, the export earnings of Opec countries alone totalled \$888 billion, a \$266 billion increase from the previous year. The six wealthiest oil exporters alone raked in roughly \$800 billion. The UAE's own oil-export earnings soared from \$76 billion in 2021 to \$119 billion.

The surge in energy prices has been particularly lucrative for the Middle East's petrostates. Qatar's energy-export earnings jumped from \$87 billion to \$132 billion in 2022, while Kuwait's increased from \$63 billion to \$98 billion, allowing both countries to pay a levy of \$2 billion each. Norway, having nearly tripled its export



The UAE's Sultan al Jaber faces the crucial task of breaking the current impasse.

earnings from \$48 billion to \$140 billion, could easily afford a \$5 billion levy.

But the largest contribution should come from Saudi Arabia, whose oil-export revenues skyrocketed to \$311 billion in 2022 – a staggering \$120 billion increase from the previous year. A \$9 billion contribution would be less than what the Saudis spend annually on football (soccer) and golf, and less than half of what they were reportedly willing to pay to acquire Formula One.

Moreover, a levy on windfall revenues from fossil fuels could incentivise all developed countries to contribute. The principle of fair burden-sharing is simple: those countries and industries that have historically contributed the most to GHG emissions and enjoy the highest per capita incomes should bear a

larger share of the costs.

A portion of the \$25 billion levy should be directly allocated to the Loss and Damage Fund. The rest should serve as paid-in capital for a new climate-financing facility aimed at supporting the Global South. This capital, in turn, would be supplemented with multi-billion-dollar guarantees from the world's largest emitters. MDBs could then leverage these funds and potentially quadruple the resources available to low- and middle-income countries.

This strategic use of guarantees has been endorsed by several international bodies and highlighted in three recent reports to the G20, including those authored by economist N K Singh and former US Treasury Secretary Lawrence H Summers. Adopting the Singh-Summers proposal to triple the World Bank's annual spending to \$390 billion, along with Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley's initiative to direct \$100 billion in international funding to the Global South, would represent a major step towards mobilising the \$1 trillion in annual investment required for the world's poorest countries to accelerate their transition to a climate-resilient future and achieve their development goals.

© Project Syndicate, 2023

sport

Follow us on
omanobserver.om/sports



Oman grabs Arab School Football Championship

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 27

Sulaiman al Mahrouqi powered Oman U-15 football team to grab Arab School Football Championship with a thrilling 1-0 victory against Lebanon in the final clash on Sunday night in Cairo, Egypt.

The national junior stars arrived in Muscat with a warm welcoming at Muscat International Airport following their sensational triumph. The team received by Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education and Chairman of Oman School Sports Association (OSSA) and Mohsin al Masrouri, Vice Chairman of Oman Football Association (OFA).

Oman team, coached by the national experienced head coach Anwar al Habsi, delivered an outstanding technical performance during the ten days tournament. Oman's campaign in the Arabian School Football tournament began after Oman were drawn in group B with Morocco and Lebanon teams. The Sultanate of Oman team positioned as runners-up in Group B with four points behind Lebanon who topped the group with four points too but with better goal difference. Oman boys commenced their campaign in the tournament with a 2-1 win over Morocco and then they ended their second match against Lebanon on a 1-1 draw. In the semifinals on last Friday, Oman beat Egypt 1-0 while Lebanon prevailed over Libya 4-3 in penalties after 1-1 draw at full-time. In the final clash, Oman registered a 1-0 win over Lebanon to capture the title.

The head coach of Oman team, Anwar al Habsi, thanked all the young players for their top efforts during the tournament.



Oman National U-15 football team celebrating with the trophy



“It is great achievement during November as the Sultanate of Oman marked their 53rd national day. I am very proud

of my players who managed to deliver a thrilling display in this Arabian meet. The team formation started with

proper selection of the players from different educational governorates around the Sultanate of Oman. There was



The organiser crowning the Omani player with gold medals



Oman National U-15 football team lift the trophy

a strategic work between OSSA and OFA to build up this team and provide a full support to shape them technically fit for this event. It was the first abroad assignment for this squad of the players and they managed to win the title,” he said

“Despite the challenging and competing technical level of this tournament, our boys secured successfully a direct ticket to the semifinals and then to the final match before clinching the trophy in the final tie. All the boys deserved this vital triumph following their solid show in the tournament. This is the first Arabian football school title for

Omani players and we hope to continue with more achievement in the coming period,” he ended

Following the Arab tournament, the Oman players will compete in the Under-15 West Asian Football Championship which will be hosted in Salalah during December 11 to 20, under WAFF in coordination with the Oman Football Association (OFA). The hosts Sultanate of Oman, champions in 1998, will compete against Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon in Group A while defending champions Jordan were drawn with UAE, Saudi Arabia and Syria in an exciting Group B.

Hamdan Al Khatri wins 110 km race

THE FOURTH EDITION OF HIMAM TRAIL RUN RACE CONCLUDES

MUSCAT: The fourth edition of Himam Trail Run Race, organised by the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate and with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism as main supporter, concluded last weekend in spectacular style. The closing ceremony, presided over by Dr Hilal al Sabti, Minister of Health, in the presence of Shaikh Hilal al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, and a number of notable officials, witnessed the crowning of the winners of the race categories that were organised over three days in Al Hamra, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, Nizwa and Izki, attracting more than 750 runners, male and female, from 62 countries, and two thousand participants of different ages in short community races.

Omani champion Hamdan al Khatri came in first place in the 110 km Al Hajar ULTRA race, covering the entire distance in 16 hours and 55 minutes, followed by American athlete



Himam promises runners breathtaking view

Jason Schlarb, who completed the distance in 17 hours and 23 minutes. In third place was the Iranian runner, Mohammad Reza Jelodar, who completed the race in 18 hours and 48 minutes.

In the female category, Moroccan Aziza El Amrany won first place, followed by German Isabel Martine Schüssler, and



Hamdan and Jason celebrating the success



Leaders of Al Hajar ULTRA



Hamdan al Khatri crossing the finish line in first place

international professionals to the unique Omani terrain. The Himam Trail Run Race is distinctive in its traversal through four wilayats, offering runners a unique experience amid nature, historical landmarks, and the diverse topography of the Hajar Mountains.

The classic and challenging Al Hajar ULTRA 110 KM kicked off on November 23, starting in the picturesque town of Al Hamra. Runners embarked on a journey through the rugged beauty of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar before descending into Birkat Al Mouz. They navigated rocky paths, climbed steep inclines, and took in the stunning views of the surrounding landscape, ultimately gaining a total of 5,700 metres in elevation. The technical Skyward Canyon 55KM, as well as the Scenic Sprint 20KM races, both began on November 24 in Izki and Birkat Al Mouz, respectively.

third was Dutch Kristina Skupien. In the 55 km races, the first places were entirely Omani, as Saleh al Saidi came in first place, followed by Sami al Saidi and third Amjad al Jamoudi. In the female category, first place went to British Eve Moore, second place to American Whitney Mickelsen, and third place to Danish Kristina Schou Madsen.

This annual sporting event aims not only to promote the sport of trail running locally and regionally but also to draw



VILLA MOVE UP PREMIER LEAGUE TABLE

ANDY JALIL

LONDON, NOV27

With a goal in each half, Aston Villa inflicted injury-ravaged Tottenham's third consecutive defeat in the Premier League and in the process moved into the top-four, just two points off the top, of the league table as contenders for Champions League qualification.

Not getting carried away with their position, Villa manager, Unai Emery, said: "There are seven teams who are contenders more than us. While we are there we are going to try to enjoy it and keep it. We can get confidence from games like this."

He added: "It's 38 games, we have to show consistency. We are in a good position but not a contender. But while we are there we have to try to keep it. We have to be happy, we have to enjoy it and be demanding as well."

The game began in the most entertaining and attacking display by Tottenham who had chances of being two up in the first five minutes. A shot from Dejan Kulusevski hit a post and Destiny Udogie's shot went over the bar when he was clean through from a pass by Pedro Porro. Villa too missed chances in that early stage when Matty Cash miscued within the first minute and Pau Torres headed wide.

Midway through the first half Tottenham opened the scoring with Giovanni Lo Celso scoring his first Premier League goal in three years following a corner. His shot from the edge of the box, took a deflection from the right knee of

Diego Carlos, wrong-footing the goalkeeper.

Within a minute of it, Ollie Watkins thought he had levelled the score with a header from Lucas Digne's cross but VAR ruled him off side while three scoring shots from Heung-Min Son were ruled out for offside.

The equaliser for the visitors came in the seventh minute of the first half's added time. A freekick from Douglas Luiz was met in the penalty area by Torres and his firm header at the near post beat Emiliano Martinez.

Villa nearly scored again just the break when substitute Leon Bailey's shot went against the post through the hands of Guglielmo Vicario but the goalkeeper gratefully grabbed the rebound. However, Villa struck ten minutes later with the winning goal when from a combined move with substitute Youri Tielemans, Watkins drove in a shot for his 12th goal of the season.

Spurs came close to an equaliser with five minutes remaining. Porro had a shot against the post and Son's shot found the net but he was ruled off side.

Spur's manager, Ange Postecoglou said: "The outcome is obviously disappointing but I thought they did a fantastic job in playing the football we want. Any other day it is a game we win comfortably but it's a fine margin in football".

He added: "We'll get through this as long as we show the same intent. If we keep playing in that manner when we get everyone back (from injuries) we are going to be a pretty good football side."



Aston Villa's Pau Torres celebrates scoring their first goal with Ollie Watkins. – Reuters

Al Seeb, Al Bashayer Triumph in Second Round of OBL

AHMED AL KAABI

MUSCAT, NOV27

The second-round matches of the Oman Basketball League (OBL) for the 2023-24 season, that took place at the sub-court of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, resulting in two victories. Al Seeb Club defeated Dhofar Club with a score of 99-18, while Al Bashayer Club outperformed Nizwa Club with a score of 104-51.

The first match was intense and exciting, with Al Seeb dominating its periods and exerting significant pressure on Dhofar's court. Dhofar's defence struggled to cope with Al Seeb's attacks, leading to numerous threats to their basket. Al Seeb managed to win all four periods, with standout performances from their American professional player Press, Abdulrahman al Shuaibi, Ayman al Mahrami, Rashid al Zahibi, Ahmed al Maamari, and Zakaria al Wahibi.

In the opening attack, Al Seeb swiftly scored two points through Mazin al Hadidi's shot from under the basket. The team then returned to defense, preventing Dhofar from scoring and adding 5 points, with Rashid al Zahibi and Press contributing. Despite Dhofar's attempt to score 2 points, Al Seeb responded by scoring 14 points, ending the first quarter with Al Seeb leading Dhofar 21-4.

The second quarter saw no significant change in performance, as Al Seeb continued to apply pressure on Dhofar, scoring 10 new points. Abdulrahman al Shuaibi added two more points, extending Al Seeb's lead to 33-6. The pressure



Al Seeb Club vs Dhofar at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher

continued with Al Seeb adding 5 more points through Rashid al Zahibi and Press, widening the gap to 40-6. Abdulaziz al Balushi, another player from Al Seeb, added a three-pointer, and the first half ended with Al Seeb leading Dhofar 55-6.

The third quarter saw no change, with Al Seeb maintaining dominance and multiplying the score. Ahmed al Maamari added 4 points, followed by 4 more from Rashid al Zahibi and Abdulrahman al Shuaibi, bringing the score to 63-6. Al Seeb continued their offensive efforts, adding 8 points through

Press, Ahmed al Maamari, Mazin al Hadidi, and Abdulrahman al Shuaibi, ending the third quarter with Al Seeb leading Dhofar 85-7.

In the fourth quarter, Al Seeb continued fast offensive pace, with Noah al Balushi adding two points. Al Seeb then added 6 more points through Zakaria al Wahibi and Ayman al Mahrami, leading 93-7. Despite Dhofar's efforts to score 2 points, Al Seeb continued with 6 more points, while Dhofar added 9, concluding the match with Al Seeb defeating Dhofar 99-18.

Al Bashayer Dominates Nizwa

In the second match of the evening, Al Bashayer Club demonstrated exceptional skill and coordination against Nizwa Club. The team's offensive prowess, led by players such as Diamond James, Abdulrahman al Shibli, Osama al Riyami, Bassam al Busaidy, Ahmed al Halhali, and Saeed al Saadi, resulted in a resounding victory.

Al Bashayer secured wins in all four quarters, with scores of 26-11, 20-12, 31-15, and 27-13. The match concluded with a dominant final score of 104-51 in favour of Al Bashayer over Nizwa.

Initiative to Enhance Motorcycle Safety Programmes

Al Jenaibi International Automobiles, the official importer of BMW Motorrad in Oman, collaborated with the Motorcycle Learning Center by providing the centre with two BMW Motorrad motorcycles for riders' training programmes.

The aim is to raise the efficiency of motorcycle training programmes in Sultanate of Oman and contribute to road safety by raising awareness on motorcycle safety culture and environment.

The modern motorcycles include bigger engine capacity in comparison to the centre's current training motorcycles with an option of on-road

and off-road capability, providing the trainees with the opportunity to venture into different types of riding experiences and trainings.

This provides motorcycle enthusiasts the opportunity to train on world-class motorcycles that have great technical capabilities along with the supervision of competent safety instructors who are qualified and internationally certified.

The collaboration was signed by Rashid bin Faqir al Balushi, General Manager of the Motorcycle Learning Center and Rachid Zamani, Managing Director of Al Jenaibi International Automobiles L.L.C.



Rachid Zamani (c) shake Rashid al Balushi, after signing the collaboration.

SENSATIONAL SINNER STEERS ITALY TO DAVIS CUP GLORY OVER AUSTRALIA



Italy's Jannik Sinner celebrates with the trophy after winning the Davis Cup. – Reuters

MALAGA: Italy won the Davis Cup for the first time since 1976 as Jannik Sinner crushed Alex de Minaur 6-3, 6-0 to seal a 2-0 win over Australia on Sunday in Malaga.

The world number four clinched victory in the second singles rubber after Matteo Arnaldi dug deep to beat Alexei Popyrin 7-5, 2-6, 6-4 in the opening clash.

Sinner, who remarkably beat top-ranked superstar Novak Djokovic twice in one day on Saturday as Italy eliminated Serbia, secured his country's second title against Lleyton Hewitt's 28-time winners in style.

The Italian demoralised the scampering De Minaur with a relentless performance, overpowering him with vicious ground-strokes.

Sinner had won each of the five prior meetings between the pair and the world number 12 came no closer this time, brutally dismantled in 81 minutes.

Australia's wait for a Davis Cup trophy goes on, with their last coming in 2003, but Italy, who last reached a final in 1998, celebrated wildly when De Minaur went wide to end the tie.

On Saturday Italy were on the verge of elimination, but Sinner saved three match points against Djokovic to force a deciding doubles clash.

"Yesterday we were one point away from being out and now we can celebrate winning. I think we can all be very, very happy," said Sinner, after ending Italy's 47-year wait, the third-longest gap between titles in Davis Cup history.

Sinner, who lost the ATP Finals showdown with Djokovic a week ago

in Turin, deserves special credit for his stunning displays in Malaga -- he won all five rubbers he played in.

Laser-focused from the start, he broke early in the first set for a 2-1 lead when De Minaur sent a lob long and then consolidated with a powerful forehand.

The 22-year-old brought up three set points and clinched the first set with the second of them when De Minaur volleyed beyond the baseline.

In the second set Sinner produced 19 winners to just five unforced errors to sweep to victory.

- Clinging on - Arnaldi had to cling

“Yesterday we were one point away from being out and now we can celebrate winning. I think we can all be very, very happy

JANNIK SINNER
Italian tennis player

on to beat Popyrin in the first match.

"I think I won one of the most important matches in my life, I don't know what to say right now," said an emotional Arnaldi.

Australia captain Hewitt opted to maintain Popyrin in the first singles rubber, while Italy's Filippo Volandri returned to Arnaldi ahead of Lorenzo Musetti, despite his defeat in Italy's 2-1 quarter-final win over the Netherlands.

Popyrin, whose nerves were jangling in the semi-final singles first set against Finland, started his first service game with a double fault after

Arnaldi held to love.

Arnaldi, ranked 44th, brought up three break points the next time around with a fizzing forehand and took the third of them when Popyrin went long, for a 3-1 lead.

However world number 40 Popyrin reacted immediately by breaking back and holding, both to love, showing he would not be overawed by the occasion.

Arnaldi earned three set points but the Australian rescued them and completed a tough hold for 5-5, although he eventually pushed a return into the net to hand the Italian a tense first set.

The Australian was far stronger in the second set against Finland and it proved the case again, as he raced into a double break against Arnaldi, saving a break point as he held for 4-0.

Arnaldi finally got on the board in the fifth game but Popyrin -- who produced six aces in the second set to the Italian's zero -- served it out to force a decisive third.

The erratic Arnaldi saved break points in his first, second and fourth service games without putting pressure on Popyrin's serve until earning a break point which the 24-year-old saved, holding for 4-4.

Popyrin was on top but could not make it count to get the breakthrough, with Arnaldi saving yet another break point on his way to a 5-4 lead.

Despite being outplayed for the best part of the third set Arnaldi converted his first set point to put Italy ahead in the tie with a powerful forehand, with Sinner completing the job without a fuss. — AFP



Italy's Jannik Sinner, Lorenzo Musetti, Matteo Arnaldi, Lorenzo Sonego, Simone Bolelli and captain Filippo Volandri celebrate after winning the Davis Cup. – Reuters



Dr Ali al Shaithani, Under-Secretary for Communications and Information Technology at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, cutting the ribbon.

3rd Future Tech Summit showcases tech innovations

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, NOV 27

The 3rd Future Tech opened at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre here on Monday, under the auspices of Dr Ali al Shaithani, Under-Secretary for Communications and Information Technology at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

A dedicated conference on Banking & Fintech which will be inaugurated today by HH Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said.

The two-day Future Tech forum is being held under the patronage of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and is supported by the Central Bank of Oman, Oman Vision 2040, Telecommunications Regulatory Authority and Capital Market Authority.

Future Tech is Oman's foremost B2B and B2G bespoke Technology Event.

It is a definitive meeting place facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue with power packed networking opportunities among C-Level executives, leading industry experts, decision makers, policy makers and government officials from across the value chain to foster collaboration, discuss current challenges, business opportunities, develop market strategies, share knowledge and identify solutions. The Summit features an expansive line-up of stellar speakers, case studies, panel discussions, unique presentations providing

access to a wealth of industry leading knowledge, sharing best practices and experiences, spotlighting trends, information exchange, insights and outlooks with actionable takeaways.

The event has over 50 speakers speaking at the two tracks of the conference: Track 1 on Tech (Cyber, AI, Cloud, Digital Transformation and more), and Track 2 on Banking & Fintech.

B2B Expo

Furthermore, the event includes a comprehensive B2B Expo with 60+ exhibitors from over 11 countries showcasing an array of avant-garde solutions, latest technologies, unique launches, cost-effective products, services and solutions.

Notable sponsors contributing to the success of the event include VISA, Oman Data Park, MCI, SMEs Development Authority, Infoline, Kissflow, Recorded Future, Resecurity, Tatweer Cyber Security, Rockwell Automation, Technical Lines Investments LLC, Alibaba Cloud, Easy Coins, GBM, Insight, Smart Fintech Middle East, Manage Engine, Piratech, Planisware, PHI Wallet, Settlemint, Smart Chain Technology, and Securado. Networking sponsors include Awahr, Business Secrets, Genetec, GulfHR, Intertec, National Centre for Statistics and Information, Shepherd Technologies, Talabat, and UAE Trade Connect, showcasing a strong collaboration between public and private entities in advancing the technological landscape in Oman.

Construction begins on Oman's first green hydrogen-ready steel plant

HIBBA AL KINDI
DUQM, NOV 27

Construction of Vulcan Green Steel's (VGS) plant — the Sultanate of Oman's first green-hydrogen-ready steel project — commenced on Monday under the auspices of Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ).

The plant, located in the Duqm Special Economic Zone, aims to be powered entirely using green and renewable energy, and will produce 5 million metric tonnes per annum (5 MTPA) of green steel.

Speaking to the press, Dr Ali al Sunaidy, OPAZ Chairman, highlighted the significance of this project.

"This project aims to produce 5 million tonnes of green steel with an investment of up to \$3 billion.

The significance of this project is paramount as it will produce steel for the automotive sector, electrical tools sector, and also the wind turbine sector." According to the chairman, the Authority is currently in discussions with buyers in European and Asian markets.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Vulcan Group Senior Adviser Khalid al Jashmi explained that the project will use natural gas in the first phase pending the availability and supply of green hydrogen to the site.

However, he shared that the project's steel output will still remain low in carbon due to the use of advanced technology which will reduce emissions by 40 per cent in comparison with that of regular steel plants.

Following the first year of the project, the plant will slowly reduce its reliance on natural gas by a rate of 50 per cent until the project becomes green entirely, Al Jashmi said.

Vice Chairman of Vulcan Green Steel, Venkatesh Jindal, highlighted the significance of the plant in his keynote address. "Vulcan Green Steel stands hand in hand with Oman as we



Officials commemorate Vulcan Green Steel groundbreaking ceremony.

collectively strive for a cleaner and greener industrial economy.

"Our green pledge, made just weeks ago, is not a mere proclamation.

It is a substantial and real investment of more than \$3 billion in a state-of-the-art green hydrogen ready steel plant in Duqm, the first of its kind and the largest globally."

Monday's groundbreaking ceremony, which was combined with a symbolic planting of an 'Eternal Green Tree', attracted a number of dignitaries representing Omani government and public sector organisations, and executives from Jindal Group as well, notably Naveen Jindal, Chairman — Jindal Group.

Scheduled for completion by 2026 and with production starting in 2027, the green steel project of VGS in Duqm will establish a fully integrated green hydrogen-ready steel plant with approximately 85% fewer CO2 emissions than

This project aims to produce 5 million tonnes of green steel with an investment of up to \$3 billion

DR ALI AL SUNAIDY

OPAZ Chairman

the current global average, before the end of the decade.

This project is estimated to achieve a significant 12 million tonnes per annum in CO2 savings.

Another key innovation involves the extensive utilisation of renewable energy sources in steel production.

While wind and solar power will provide around 16 hours of electricity, VGS is actively

exploring additional storage options to source 24x7 green energy to bridge the remaining 7 – 8 hours.

This will be done in partnership with Vulcan Green Energy (VGE) and OQAE that have signed an agreement to explore joint development of Integrated Energy Valley (IEV), first-of-its-kind project in GCC, that combines solar, wind and energy storage to provide round the clock, cost competitive green energy to meet the growing decarbonisation needs of large industries in Oman such as VGS.

The Direct Reduction Iron Plant for which the foundation is laid in this ceremony, is going to be a green steel plant with the flexibility of transition from 100 per cent natural gas to 100 per cent green H2, with a unique combination of hot DRI and hot briquetting system. It is going to be the largest single module plant (2.5 MTPA) in the world.

OQ's \$10 bn outstanding debt within safe limits: Group CEO

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, NOV 27

OQ, the global integrated energy group of the Sultanate of Oman, says its outstanding debt — presently amounting to \$10.6 billion as of end-2022 — is well within prudent bounds.

Group CEO Talal al Aufi said the Group's assets of \$31 billion ensure ample financial stability for the wholly government-owned conglomerate, part of Oman Investment Authority (OIA).

"It is essential to highlight that as of 2022, OQ holds over USD 31 billion in assets, positioning us strongly in terms of financial stability," the Group CEO said in an interview featured in the latest edition of Enjay & Eejaz, the quarterly newsletter of OIA.

"With a total outstanding debt of \$10.6 billion, we have achieved



Graphic illustrating OQ Group's operational performance during H1 2023

a favourable debt-to-equity ratio of 0.78:1.

This, coupled with our substantial annual profits, showcases our effective debt management, reinforcing our financial stability and continuous commitment to value creation."

In the interview, Al Aufi affirmed OQ's commitment to "honouring its commitments to its debt creditors". He underlined the importance of debt as a "common financing tool" adopted by local and international energy companies alike to finance their projects and operations.

OQ, for its part, has taken steps to significantly reduce its debt through a balance sheet optimisation initiative, said the Group CEO.

"This initiative led to an upgrade in OQ's standalone credit profile from b+ to bbb- in July

2023. These actions underscore our proactive approach to financial management and reinforce our strong financial position," he added.

In revising up OQ's standalone credit profile (SCP), international ratings agency Fitch Ratings cited four criteria: Material debt reduction and sharply lower EBITDA net leverage; Greatly reduced subordination and improved access to cash flow within the group structure; Establishment of a financial policy; and Improved scale and integration.

During the first half of this year, OQ Group recorded EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation) of about \$2.3 billion with net profits amounting to \$1.1 billion, and recorded assets worth \$31.2 billion.

The Group also reported a 7 per cent increase in total oil production from assets operated by it and by investment partnerships to about 222k bpd during H1 2023.

Production from its flagship upstream asset, Block 60, climbed to 61k barrels of oil equivalent per day, compared to 49k barrels of oil equivalent in the first half of 2022.

Natural gas production reached 471 million cubic feet per day, of which 18 million cubic feet per day of gas came from assets operated by OQ.

OQ's Board and shareholders have also approved the partial divestment of a 40 per cent interest in Block 60, as well as its exploration licence, Block 48.

The transaction, stemming from a sale-purchase agreement signed on August 22, 2023, is currently awaiting approval from the regulatory authorities.



An image of Bank Muscat Head Office.

Bank Muscat’s funds now accessible for online investment

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat Asset Management is the largest asset manager in Oman and one of the leading asset managers in the GCC region with approximately USD 2.6 billion of assets under management.

The business has a long and proven track record of delivering attractive returns since 1994.

Bank Muscat Asset Management offers a series of investment solutions across diverse asset classes including equity, fixed income, real estate and private equity investments to retail as well as institutional investors.

Recently, Bank Muscat has enabled online subscription and redemption options for its top performing mutual funds.

Thus, retail customers of Bank Muscat can now invest and redeem their investments in Bank Muscat Oryx Fund and Bank Muscat Money Market Fund through the Bank’s Mobile Banking and Internet Banking platforms.

These funds are the largest open-end funds listed on Muscat Stock Exchange and they have consistently been offering attractive returns to investors since their inception in 1994 and 2012 respectively.

Bank Muscat Oryx Fund caters to medium to long-term GCC equity investments, while Bank Muscat Money Market Fund is ideal for short-term liquidity, providing daily returns.

The digitalisation of mutual fund offerings simplifies the investment process online, eliminating the need to visit Bank Muscat branches.

Oryx Fund, with a robust 29-year track record, achieved a remarkable 20.2 per cent return in the first eight months of 2023 and was recognised as the Best Performing Fund in MENA for 2022.

Its 10-year average return of 11.5 per cent outperforms alternative options.

Crowne Plaza Muscat OCEC: pioneering sustainable hospitality

MUSCAT: Crowne Plaza Muscat OCEC reaffirms its unwavering dedication to sustainability and environmental responsibility.

We’ve been taking substantial steps to reduce our environmental impact, and we’re proud to share that we hold both the IHG Green Engage and LEED Gold certifications, a testament to our long-standing commitment to environmental sustainability.

Eliminating Plastic Waste with a Water Bottling Plant. In a significant effort to reduce plastic waste, Crowne Plaza Muscat OCEC has implemented a state-of-the-art water bottling plant on its premises. This innovative solution will eliminate the need for approximately 350,000 plastic bottles annually. By producing clean and safe drinking water in reusable containers, the hotel is taking a significant step towards reducing its environmental impact.

Supporting Electric Vehicles with EV Charging Stations Crowne Plaza Muscat OCEC is committed to supporting the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) and has installed two electric vehicle charging stations on its property.

These charging stations will provide a convenient and eco-



An image of Crowne Plaza Hotel Muscat.

friendly option for guests and visitors travelling in electric cars, contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Cutting Food Waste with Winnow Waste Food Management System To combat food waste, Crowne Plaza Muscat OCEC has implemented the Winnow Waste Food Management System, an AI-enabled technology that helps optimise food preparation, minimise food waste, and improve sustainability in the kitchen. With this system, the

hotel aims to achieve a 30 per cent reduction in food waste, aligning with its sustainability goals. Partnership with Oman Food Bank Crowne Plaza Muscat OCEC has also signed a significant partnership agreement with the Oman Food Bank, further exemplifying its commitment to the community and those in need. This partnership will facilitate the donation of surplus food to beneficiaries and reduce food waste by spreading the

culture of preserving blessings and recycling unusable food materials, converting them into local added value. This value is reflected in the economy, environment, and society. Wooden Keys Replace Plastic Key Cards As part of its comprehensive sustainability strategy, the hotel has made a significant change in its guest room key cards. Crowne Plaza Muscat OCEC has replaced traditional plastic key cards with environmentally friendly wooden keys.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds opens 335th showroom in Canada

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds has scripted history as the first Indian International jewellery retailer to open in Canada with their new showroom in Mississauga, at Heartland Town centre within the Greater Toronto Area.

Currently ranked as the world’s 6th largest jewellery retailer, Canada has become the 12th country in Malabar Gold & Diamonds’ global operational map and the 2nd country in North America. Currently, the brand has an extensive retail presence of over 335 showrooms spread across UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, KSA, Bahrain, Singapore, Malaysia, the USA, the UK, Canada and India.

The showroom was inaugurated by Ms. Nina Tangri, the Associate Minister of Business for Ontario, in the presence of Mr. Shamlal Ahamed, Managing Director – International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds; Mr.

Ameer CMC, Director of Finance & Administration, Malabar Gold & Diamonds; Mr. Joseph Eapen, Regional Head - North America, Malabar Gold & Diamonds; other Malabar Gold & Diamonds management team members, customers and well-wishers.

“The opening of our 1st showroom in Canada brings me immense pride and joy, marking a significant milestone for us as the first Indian International jewellery brand to begin operations in Canada.

Located at Heartland Town Centre in Mississauga within the Greater Toronto Area, our new showroom stands as the largest jewellery showroom in the country.

The expansion into Canada presents us with a unique opportunity to showcase our jewellery to a diverse customer base who truly appreciate the artistry and craftsmanship of Indian jewellery.

On behalf of Malabar Group,



The inauguration at Canada.

I would like to thank all our customers, management team members, shareholders and other stakeholders for being an integral part of helping us craft this historic moment and move one step closer towards our goal of being crowned as the world’s no.1 jewellery retailer”, said Malabar Group Chairman, M.P Ahamed.

Spread across 7,800+ sq.ft, the

new outlet is the largest jewellery showroom in Canada, housing over 30,000 designs across 25 exclusive brands and collections in gold, diamond & precious gem jewellery.

The new store will also showcase an extensive collection of bridal jewellery, alongside a wide range of options for occasional wear, daily wear & office wear.

Liva Insurance partners with OAB for exclusive EMI payments



Liva and Oman Arab Bank signing ceremony.

MUSCAT: Being steadfast in providing value-added products and services, Liva Insurance has joined forces with Oman Arab Bank (OAB) to offer exclusive benefits to its growing customer base across the Sultanate of Oman. The official signing ceremony, at OAB’s Head Office in Muscat, attended by senior officials from both parties, marks the beginning of this promising collaboration.

Commenting on the signing ceremony, Hanaa al Hinai, CEO of Liva Insurance, said, “As a fully integrated regional insurance company, we are delighted to join hands with OAB to offer convenient payment facilities, ensuring that our customers have an exceptional overall customer journey.

This step comes in line with our strategy of providing the best insurance solutions while adding value to customers and enriching their lives.” As per the agreement, OAB Credit Card holders will benefit from an Easy Payment Plan on insurance products and services, allowing customers to pay the insurance premium in Equal Monthly Installments (EMI) for a minimum transaction of RO 100 and above. “OAB’s unwavering commitment to prioritising customer needs and delivering an unparalleled banking experience is reflected in our new partnership with Liva Insurance.

Taageer Finance honours commitments: repays bonds on maturity

MUSCAT: Taageer Finance, a leading financial and leasing company (FLC) committed to delivering exceptional value to its stakeholders, announces the successful repayment of its bonds issued in 2021, totalling to an amount of RO 13.3 million.

This significant milestone underscores the company’s commitment to financial stability and transparent business practices, reaffirming its position as a trustworthy investment partner.

Taageer Finance has strategically diversified its funding sources, including



Shahin bin Mohammed al Balush, Chief Executive Officer of the Company.

bank borrowings, bonds, and corporate deposits, to establish a resilient and sustainable financial foundation.

Currently, the third issuance in consecutive years is open to investors as the company continues to provide investors with opportunities for growth and returns.

As a key player in the financial landscape, Taageer Finance focuses on fostering the financial growth of Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and individuals, aligning its strategies with the evolving needs of the market. The

company acknowledges banks as its most valuable partners, recognising the significance of collaborative efforts in achieving overall success. Expressing his satisfaction with the bond repayment, Shahin bin Mohammed al Balushi, CEO of Taageer Finance, stated, “The repayment of the RO 13.3 million bonds reflects our commitment to financial excellence. Our diverse funding strategies, ongoing bond series, and strong partnerships with banks have contributed to this accomplishment.

We remain dedicated to providing our investors with

exceptional opportunities and sustaining their trust in Taageer Finance.”

Taageer Finance invites investors to explore the continued opportunities it provides, backed by a track record of financial prudence, strategic growth, and a commitment to delivering value.

Offering a diverse range of financial and leasing solutions, for businesses and individuals, Taageer Finance is headquartered in Al Khuwair in Muscat.

The company has an extensive nationwide network, through branches at Wattayah, Suhar, Al

Kamil W’al Wafi, Barka, Nizwa, Salalah and most recently Seeb. By offering customers a cutting-edge digital platform, upholding the highest corporate governance standards, implementing resilient systems and procedures, and utilising state-of-the-art technology, Taageer has established itself as a trusted ally for customers.

This includes the integration of Point of Sale (POS) machines at all branches to facilitate a streamlined cashless payment process, as well as the efficient processing of customer requests through its mobile application.



Oman Broadband eyes partial divestment

MUSCAT: The Omani Broadband Company is taking on the responsibility of providing quality services, including support and assistance to major communication service providers in the Sultanate of Oman. It also operates the largest optical fibre network in the Sultanate of Oman.

Engineer Sultan bin Ahmed al Wahaibi, the CEO of Oman Broadband, emphasised that the company is committed to continuing the expansion and improvement of the network infrastructure, enabling residents to access high-speed, broadband internet.

The CEO of Oman Broadband Company stated that the total number of units covered by the company's optical fibre network reached 735 thousand units in various governorates of Oman by the end of September 2023.

This is distributed to about 387,528 units in Muscat and 322,995 units outside Muscat.

He pointed out that the total number of subscribers by the end of September 2023 reached 255,886 subscribers, expecting that Oman Broadband will cover more than 99% in Muscat and about 50% outside Muscat of the total units in Oman over the next three years.

He explained that the company's investments and movable assets have exceeded 276 million Omani rials since its establishment in 2014, confirming



An image of an Oman Broadband Company staff member at work.

that the company has achieved several positive results. One of the most prominent is its total reliance on external financing for its projects instead of government support, and the construction of infrastructure used by all licensed telecommunications operators in Oman.

Additionally, he stated that the company works to empower

small and medium enterprises by assigning several projects directly or indirectly to entrepreneurs with expertise in the company's field.

The value of projects directly assigned to these enterprises has reached over 43 million Omani rials.

The CEO highlighted that Oman Broadband Company has implemented various initiatives to

support Omani youth, including the "Empowerment" programme for job-seekers and new graduates, as well as the "Path" programme for company employees.

The Omanisation rate in the company has reached 99%, employing more than 200 Omani nationals in various specialties.

Regarding the public offering of the company's shares, Engineer

Sultan bin Ahmed al Wahaibi confirmed that the company witnessed the acquisition by the Omani Fund for Infrastructure Investments "Rakiza" of 39% of ITHCA Group shares in Oman Broadband. He mentioned that a partial exit of approximately 10% to 26% will take place before the end of this year, depending on negotiations with other investors.



Engineer Sultan bin Ahmed al Wahaibi, the CEO of Oman Broadband.

The CEO emphasised that the public offering of the company's shares will enhance the public ownership base, provide liquidity for planned expansions, and attract foreign investment to Oman.

It will also offer savings tools to shareholders, supporting the state's plans to promote financial inclusion.

Concerning the "Affaq" project for covering rural villages, he mentioned that this initiative aims to cover 600 villages distributed across the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, reducing the digital divide.

He concluded by stating that the company continues its efforts to enhance partnerships with governorates to provide broadband infrastructure, improve internet services, and support the economic system, contributing to increasing local output and creating job opportunities. — ONA

Asian markets experience a drop as US inflation comes into view



Picture for illustration purposes only.

CHINA: Asian markets dipped on Monday as investors look ahead to the release this week of key US inflation data that could provide a guide for the Federal Reserve's plans for interest rates going into the new year.

With Wall Street seeing little action at the back of last week owing to the Thanksgiving break, traders had few catalysts to drive action, though analysts were upbeat about the end of the year.

The retreat in equities comes after a recent run-up across world markets fuelled by bets the US central bank has finished lifting interest rates as inflation comes down and the jobs market comes off the boil. The main focus this week is the release on Thursday of the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index, the Fed's preferred gauge of inflation.

"These numbers will be

closely scrutinised for insights into inflation trends and their potential implications for monetary policy decisions," said SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes.

"While the current backdrop does not signify 'mission accomplished' in terms of addressing inflation, policymakers must now focus on planning for the next phase of the economic battle."

After a tepid half-day of business on Friday in New York, Asia drifted lower.

Hong Kong, Shanghai, Tokyo, Sydney, Seoul, Singapore, Taipei, Mumbai, Bangkok and Wellington were all in the red.

Still, observers were upbeat about the outlook, with the latest weakness blamed on traders taking a breather after a strong month.

Tony Sycamore, at IG Group, said early December could see

some selling as investors "rebuild energy and (look) to set up for the end of year fireworks".

Others said a drop in Wall Street's VIX "fear gauge" — a measure of equity volatility — to its lowest since January 2020 suggested investors were getting their mojo back.

Eyes are also on developments at OPEC after the group and its allies delayed a meeting aimed at agreeing production quotas, with some African countries said to be baulking at Saudi Arabian calls for more cuts.

The group is thought to be close to reaching an agreement that could see the Saudis and Russia extend output reductions into the new year.

Crude prices have fallen in recent weeks as demand is seen coming down owing to slowing economies, particularly China's, and the Middle East crisis appears to be contained. — AFP

COP28 host UAE 'ready for rising heat risk'

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates is ready for soaring temperatures that are feared to make parts of the Gulf uninhabitable by the end of the century, the oil power's climate change minister said.

Long experience of the harsh desert summers has taught the country to live with temperatures that regularly flirt with 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit), she said.

"We've actually been on the journey of adaptation for many years now," Mariam Almheiri, the UAE's minister of climate change and environment, said in an interview ahead of the COP28 United Nations climate talks in Dubai.

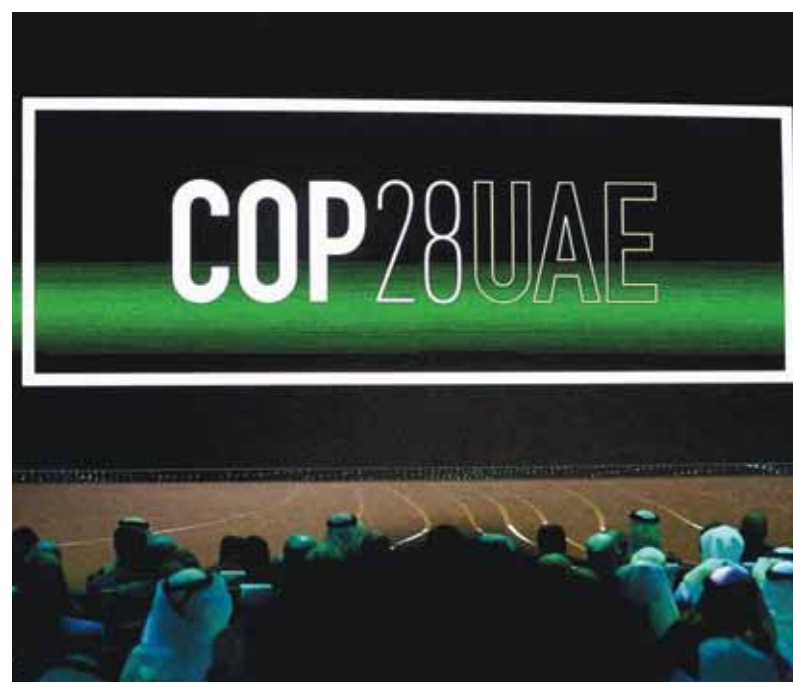
"When you look at the temperatures now currently in the summer, there are people from around the world that say: 'How do you live in that temperature?' "But actually we can stay here during the summer and we live fine. We're able to do the activities we want to do.

It's just we have already adapted since many, many years."

The UAE's scorching summers, when many flee for cooler climes and the streets empty, look set to worsen due to climate change, various studies show.

The Gulf region's extreme heat and high humidity are a dangerous mix as in such conditions the human body struggles to cool itself by evaporating sweat on the skin.

The combination is measured by a thermometer wrapped in a wet cloth to calculate the "wet



'Cop28 UAE' logo during a recent opening ceremony.

bulb temperature" — the lowest possible through evaporative cooling.

The Gulf is one of the few places to have repeatedly measured wet bulb temperatures above 35C (95F), the threshold of human survivability beyond which heat stress can be fatal within hours, regardless of age, health and fitness.

It is for this reason that experts warn accelerated climate change will make parts of the Gulf region unlivable by the end of this century.

Carbon footprint — As global temperatures tick higher, with this year on course to be the hottest on record, the UAE is changing its building designs and urban planning to create cooler living environments, even outdoors, Almheiri said.

More parks and vegetation,

including a plan to plant 100 million mangroves — an effective carbon sink — by 2030, will also mitigate the heat, she added.

"People don't realise that actually, already more than 70 per cent of our economy is non-oil-based.

We have actually already set up a lot of the renewable energy infrastructure," she said.

"We've also made sure that buildings are set or start to be built at a certain level to take care of any sea-level rise that the models are looking like it might come up soon."

The high temperatures mean air-conditioning is used nearly year-round in the UAE's homes, offices, malls, cars and even bus stops, a key factor in making its carbon footprint one of the world's biggest per capita.

— AFP

Why society needs an anti-human trafficking association

Despite global efforts to combat human trafficking, the number of people exposed to this trade is increasing every year. Global estimates indicate that up to 800,000 men, women and children are trafficked across international borders every year, besides those who are exploited in cases of prostitution, forced labour, domestic slavery and other methods used by violators. This is what led human trafficking to be considered the third largest profitable criminal activity after drug and weapons smuggling in the world.

From this standpoint, the concerned authorities in the Sultanate of Oman are working to deal decisively with these issues, and to educate individuals and institutions about the need to



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

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

exercise caution, so they do not fall into legal accountability. Recently, the Foreign Ministry in cooperation and partnership with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, organised an introductory symposium on the subject of human trafficking, in the presence of those interested in these issues and laws.

The symposium addressed several topics, including the concept of human trafficking and its types, focusing on the current situation in the country, in addition to the efforts made to combat it, and the economic, social and psychological effects of this phenomenon, in addition to the role of civil society institutions in addressing these issues.

International conventions affirm that human trafficking is

a crime, a violation of human rights, and a form of modern slavery, as it involves the transfer or recruitment of men, women and children through deception or coercion for the purpose of exploitation.

The foreign expert at the Omani Foreign Ministry believes that these methods are sometimes used by some against the families of workers coming from foreign countries under threat, which forces them to work in prostitution or be transferred from one place to another without their desire and to work long hours, and not to report these violations so their family members don't be exposed to any harm or killing.

In the case of construction work, the expert believes that some commercial establishments

in the region, including Oman, are placing large groups of expatriate workers in narrow living spaces in large numbers, which violates local and international laws, not to mention the long hours that some of them work without taking into consideration. Their rights on holidays and official occasions, and in weather conditions characterised by high temperatures are ignored sometimes.

From this standpoint, the expert sees the need to raise awareness among institutions and members of Omani society in these issues, stressing the necessity of working to establish an Omani association to combat human trafficking, similar to other professional associations that work on various issues of concern to members of Omani

society.

The Sultanate of Oman, through its National Committee which includes representatives of various bodies from the relevant ministries, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the National Human Rights Committee, works to combat human trafficking, and to develop national action plans that include organising awareness and training programmes that enhance the capabilities of law enforcement workers, as well as contributing to the implementation of many of care and rehabilitation programmes.

It also follows up on everything related to this matter, whether in Oman or outside, in terms of human trafficking methods, and imposes penalties on violators in accordance with the Anti-Human Trafficking Law of 2008.

When the picture of China is complete



YASIR AL SHABIBI

The People's Republic of China extends over a vast area of more than 9.6 million square kilometres. Its borders intersect with 14 countries and its terrain varies between forests, plains and deserts, in addition to the differences in weather across 22 provinces.

The republic is distinguished by its ancient history and huge achievements and political, military and economic weight.

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit the People's Republic of China - which is called in Chinese 'Zhong Guo' - to participate in one of the courses of an ambitious programme sponsored by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce.

Professionals, businesspersons and journalists from a number of Asian and African countries are invited to attend this programme.

Participants are invited to learn about the Chinese experience in the field of e-commerce, media, finance, logistics, information and communications technology, and other vital sectors.

As part of this programme, lecturers and specialists organised a number of workshops and lectures.

It also included visits to a number of government institutions and private companies, such as technology giants Alibaba, Tencent and Huawei, in addition to car manufacturers, companies specialising in oil and gas, electricity, healthcare, transportation and logistics.

These are vital sectors that countries must push forward to develop by benefiting from the Chinese experience.

Aside from the training programme that I was honoured to attend, I

What really surprised me most was its friendly, cooperative and organised people; with whom you always start your conversation with a Chinese smile that indicates high morale.

must confess to having an incomplete picture of the Republic of China and its people.

Geographical distance, language differences, and weak media marketing may have played a role in its incompleteness in my perception of China.

In fact, I was surprised by a country that is ancient in its history and huge in its technological, economic and political achievements.

What really surprised me most was its friendly, cooperative and organised people; with whom you always start your conversation with a Chinese smile that indicates high morale.

In this republic that flourished in the past on the Yellow River basin were the most important and fastest growing economies around the world.

This republic was able to harness its enormous human power amounting to more than 1.450 billion people to serve its economy and achieve comprehensive development, unlike many countries that did not exploit human power to their advantage, until it became an obstacle to its development.

The bottom line: This Chinese giant is a role model in various fields. We must benefit from its experiences.

At the same time, it will contribute to achieving balance in the region based on multipolarity and political and economic alliances instead of a single alliance.

This is a principle that the Sultanate of Oman has adopted for generations and decades.

Investors, entrepreneurs and SMEs can also seriously consider creating promising cooperation with various companies in the Chinese market.

China turns to households in fight to slash carbon emissions

BY DAVID STANWAY AND DAVID KIRTON

At a gleaming new metro station on the edge of Shenzhen, the local government is promoting "carbon coins" to commuters to earn and trade for shopping vouchers and travel cards in a push to get households to join China's fight against climate change.

The southeastern city's "Carbon Road for Everyone" scheme, which rewards people for logging their use of public transport, is one of dozens around China encouraging citizens to ditch cars, plant trees and cut energy use.

The so-called "carbon inclusion" programmes are part of the ruling Communist Party's campaign to mobilise the whole of society, not just industry, to transform the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitter into a carbon-neutral country by 2060.

China's efforts to tackle climate change will come under intense scrutiny as negotiators from around the world gather for the COP28 meetings in Dubai next week.

While the country's emissions reduction task is massive, potential cuts by individuals could be huge.

A 2021 study by the China Academy of Sciences said households contribute more than half of China's total emissions of over 10 billion metric tons per year.

"Carbon inclusion is a huge platform and an effective way to mobilise the public to practice low-carbon, zero-carbon and negative-carbon activities," said Xie Zhenhua, China's top climate envoy, during the launch of a government carbon inclusion committee in August.

Eventually, China wants the schemes to be integrated into national emissions trading and generate credits that can offset emissions by industrial polluters, government plans show.

PERSONAL CARBON TRADING

China's carbon inclusion ambitions have been in gestation since 2015, when



Staff work at a desk beside Shenzhen's metro carbon scheme exhibition in Pingshan subway station, Guangdong, China.

the southeastern province of Guangdong published rules on how to convert low-carbon activity into credits.

Since then, dozens of schemes have emerged across the country, accessing personal data like step counts, the use of transport, and the purchase of efficient or environmentally friendly products to generate carbon coins.

Banks have also been testing "personal carbon account" systems.

The People's Bank of China set up a pilot "carbon to gold loan" scheme in the city of Quzhou, allowing customers to earn carbon points that could improve credit ratings.

Other countries have toyed with the idea of personal carbon trading, with pilot schemes set up in Finland and Australia's Norfolk Island.

The British environment ministry also commissioned a study into the possibility in 2006 but concluded it was not yet politically or economically feasible.

Singapore is currently running a scheme that rewards efficient electricity users with "leaf" tokens that can be exchanged for shopping vouchers.

"Various actors have tried voluntary schemes that do things

like visualisations or the sharing of energy or emissions data at a smaller scale," said Benjamin Sovacool, a professor of Earth and Environment at Boston University.

"But they lack the scale and sheer scope of what the Chinese are conceiving, and they were not integrated into carbon coins, which is a clever idea."

QUANTIFICATION, TRADING HURDLES

A major challenge is how to commodify carbon dioxide emissions reductions from a wide range of human behaviour - including the way people go to work, heat their household or put out the trash.

"It's all about verification," said Yifei Li, professor of Environmental Studies at New York University's Shanghai campus.

"When it comes to the level of variability, how people conduct their lives is so wildly different. That is a big problem."

Zhang Xin, vice-chairman of the environment ministry's carbon inclusion committee, said better standards were needed to quantify low-carbon behaviour, warning in comments published this year that the proliferation of schemes "has resulted in confusion and inconsistency."

Scholars also say it is unclear whether the schemes generate new cuts in carbon dioxide emissions or merely record those that happen anyway.

Shanghai said in regulations that came into effect this month its schemes would eventually be "fully connected" to the local carbon market, with enterprises allowed to apply to use household carbon cuts to meet targets.

Guangdong also allows enterprises to meet 10 per cent of carbon reduction obligations through carbon inclusion credits.

China is still a long way from fulfilling such emissions trading ambitions.

Most users remain passive participants: one Beijing-based scheme claims more than 30 million users, but only 1.4 per cent are active, according to research published this year.

And there are worries the carbon inclusion schemes could let industrial polluters off the hook by shifting the burden of emission cuts to households.

"The direction they're going in at the moment is indeed to transfer climate responsibilities from these big firms and more towards individuals," said Li.

"That is extremely dangerous," he added, as it can "alienate individuals from climate action."

— Reuters

Classifieds

For service please contact: (+968) 99357404

SALES & marketing
profesional with 27 years
of Oman experience,
having driving licence
& all types of products/
services sales experience.
78501743.

WE ARE HIRING



**ROYAL PLAZA
HOTEL**

Urgent Recruitment @ Al Baraka Group Oman

Passionate about hospitality? Thrive in a dynamic environment? Exciting job opportunities await you at our upcoming hotel project. If you're experienced and enthusiastic, we want to hear from you!

Be a part of a great future with Al Baraka Group Oman. Join us in shaping the hospitality landscape.

Position	Experience
Hotel Marketing Executive	3 years in Hotel and Hospitality Marketing
Accountant	3 to 5 years in Hotel and Hospitality
Kitchen Staff -Commi (1)	3 to 5 years
Kitchen Staff -Commi (2)	3 to 5 years
Kitchen Staff -Commi (3)	3 to 5 years
Waiter	3 years Minimum



مجموعة البركة
AL BARAKA Group

Candidates may Email their updated CV to [✉ hr.albarakagroupintl@gmail.com](mailto:hr.albarakagroupintl@gmail.com)

CV must be in MS Word of PDF format. Please mention the post in the subject line



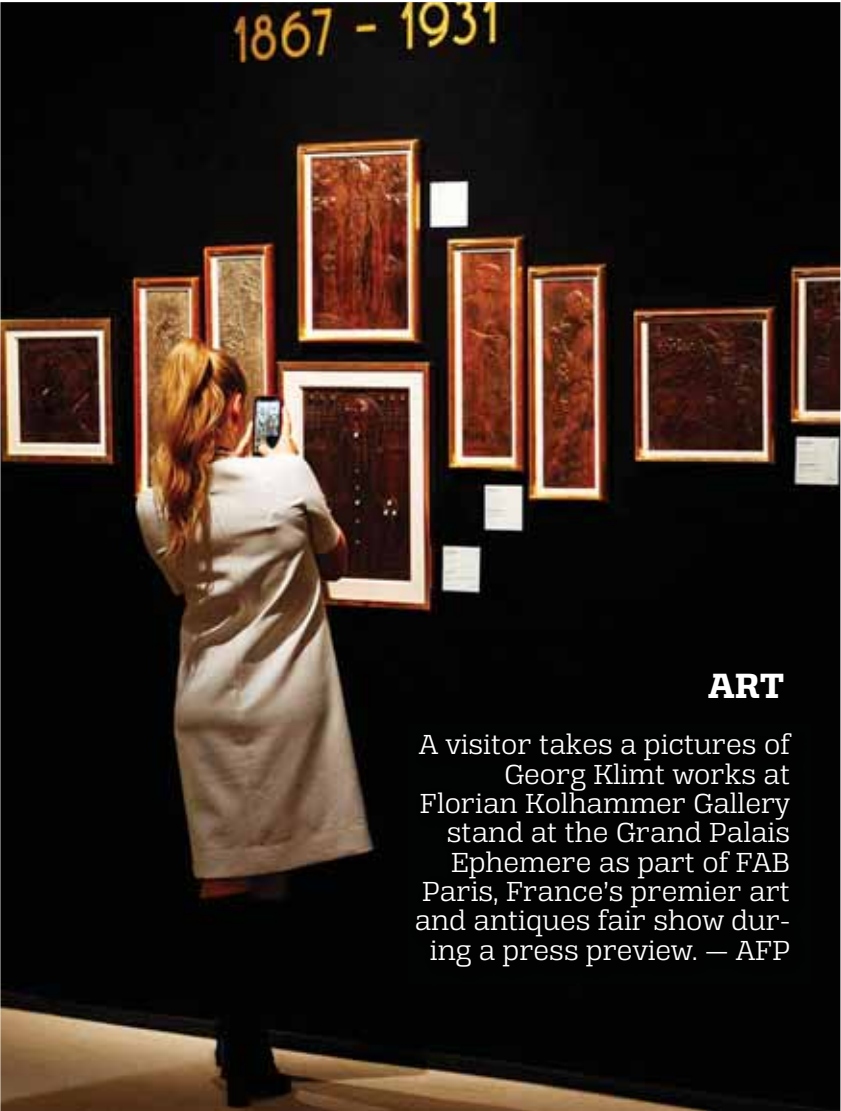
CHANGING WORLD

Shukri Abdi Osman, 34, who has been displaced by devastating floods, gets ready to cook a meal for her family in Dolow, East Africa. — AFP



FILM

Bollywood actress Ananya Pandey attends the premiere of Indian Hindi-language thriller film 'Farrey' in Mumbai. — AFP



ART

A visitor takes a pictures of Georg Klimt works at Florian Kolhammer Gallery stand at the Grand Palais Ephemere as part of FAB Paris, France's premier art and antiques fair show during a press preview. — AFP



TRAVEL TALE

Egrets were seen flying over the beach in Beihai, in China's southern Guangxi region. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

A farmer checks his buckwheat fields in Yuli township in Hualien, eastern Taiwan. — AFP

art & life

TUESDAY | NOVEMBER 28, 2023 | JUMADA AL ULA 14, 1445 AH  OMAN OBSERVER        www.omanobserver.om features@omanobserver.om

It's the season of pink lakes in Oman

Oman's captivating pink lakes had always been a source of fascination for people in the country. If you haven't seen one in person, the next few weeks are perfect. Here are some things you have to remember if you're going for a pink lake trip... **P20**

Photo by Khamis al Alawi

ART

Transforming natural vistas into experiential light art exhibition

LIGHT ART EXHIBITION Manar Abu Dhabi opened to the public, showcasing compelling light artworks installed across various islands, mangroves, and natural vistas in the capital.

A key pillar of the Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi's (DCT Abu Dhabi) Public Art Abu Dhabi initiative, Manar's inaugural edition is held under the theme Grounding Light, rooted in the concept of grounding and self-enlightenment and the belief that light is a reflection of our inner selves, body, mind, nature and spirit. Curated by Reem Fadda and Alia Zaal Lootah, the citywide exhibition features an array of artworks by over 20 local, regional and international artists from Argentina,

Taiwan, Germany, France, India, Japan, Mexico, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and the United States.

On Fahid Island, Jim Denevan has created Self Similar, a monumental land art installation illuminated by 432 solar lanterns, where towering clouds and tiny grains of sand coalesce into a symphony of interconnectedness. Meanwhile, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer takes over Lulu Island with Translation Island, an interactive journey through 10 large-scale audiovisual multimedia artworks. An ambitious technological tour de force, the works employ ultrasonic atomisers, Geiger counters and thermal cameras, among other equipment.

Some of the installations use light to represent or interact with natural and cosmic phenomena, while others reflect on the transient nature of existence, human understanding and misunderstanding. Ultimately, the exhibition is a platform for self-representation and participation by the visitors.

Developing the participatory element further, on Corniche Beach Carsten Höller creates with Abu Dhabi Dots a game that invites visitors to interact with light and change its properties, while Shilpa Gupta reflects on humans' ability for change in an



artwork presented in Arabic, English, and Urdu.

Merging sound, digital technologies, light, and water, Jumairy celebrates the ethereal beauty of bioluminescent Abu Dhabi beaches, provoking reflection on the interconnectedness of all living beings. Luciana Abait compiled her extensive col-

lection of visual and audio recordings from around the world in Agua, an interactive experience where viewers are invited to immerse themselves in a large-scale waterfall projection, symbolising a spiritual cleansing process. Shezad Dawood's four-meter-high iridescent Coral Alchemy (Acropora Grove) sculpture on Corniche

Beach promotes environmental awareness, highlighting the endangered acropora coral species.

Other artworks reflect on Abu Dhabi's history and modernity. On Lulu Island, Nujoom al Ghanem celebrates Abu Dhabi seafaring heritage with a large-scale installation of dhow boats. Exploring Abu Dhabi's traditions and cultural practices in a series of artworks, Ayesha Hadhir, Rawdha al Ketbi and Shaikha al Ketbi create a playful journey through the Eastern Mangroves. Abu Dhabi's ever-evolving landscape is captured by Ahmed al Areef in his video projection on the Abu Dhabi Chamber Building, featuring archival photos of the city's old and contemporary skylines.

Exploring the interaction of time and spatial perception with her sculptural piece, Asma Belhamar reflects on how those who grow up in the UAE experience the changes in architecture and landscape through transient moments. Groupe F's drone and light painting shows transform the night sky, previewing Saadiyat Island's landmark architectural future. Drawn by the medium of light itself, Latifa Saeed and Nadia Kaabi-Linke envisage their architecture-focused artworks as vehicles or lenses for the immaterial medium - light - that makes the world visible without being seen.

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

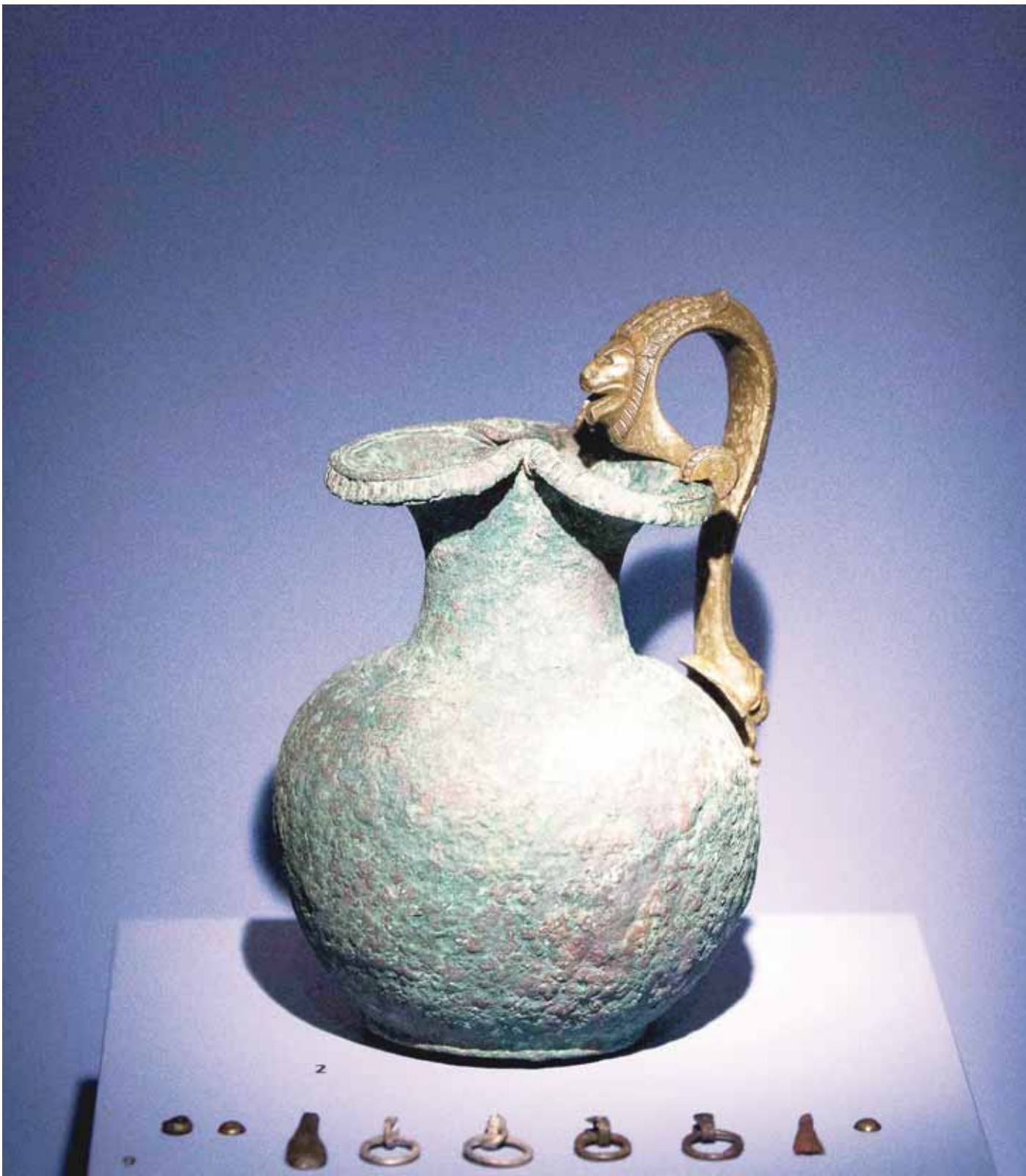
We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

Crimean treasures return to Kyiv after years of legal battles

ANCIENT CRIMEAN gold treasures returned to Kyiv on Monday after being stuck in a Dutch museum for nine years, where they were on show when Russia took over the Black Sea peninsula in 2014. The Scythian artefacts — some around 2,000 years old — were on loan to Amsterdam's Allard Pierson museum when they were suddenly at the centre of a geopolitical crisis following Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea. Years of legal battles ensued, with both Kyiv and Moscow-controlled Crimean museums filing suits that the jewels should be in their hands, before the Dutch Supreme Court ruled this summer they should go to Ukraine. "After almost 10

years of trials, artefacts from four museums of Crimea... returned to Ukraine," the National Museum of the History of Ukraine (NMHU) said on its website. "They will be kept in the NMHU until the de-occupation of Crimea," it added. Their return comes 21 months into Moscow's war, and is a symbolic victory for Kyiv, which has repeatedly vowed to retake Crimea. Moscow has insisted that the hundreds of artefacts — which include a golden helmet — should be kept in Crimea, territory which it claims as its own. "It belongs to Crimea, it should be there," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday in response to the jewels arriving in

Ukraine. The treasures were kept at the Allard Pierson museum throughout the legal battles, awaiting a ruling. In June, the Netherlands' top court ruled they should be handed to Ukraine, and not to the four Crimean museums. "This was a special case, in which cultural heritage became a victim of geopolitical developments," Allard Pierson director Els van der Plas said on the museum's website. She said that, during the legal battles, the museum "focused on safely storing the artefacts until the time came to return them to their rightful owner." "We are pleased that clarity has emerged and that they have now been returned," she added. — AFP



A picture shows artefacts on display during the exhibition 'Crimea: Gold and Secrets of the Black Sea' at the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam. Ancient Crimean gold treasures returned to Kyiv on Monday after being stuck in a Dutch museum for nine years. — AFP

TRAVEL TALES

A lion and several bears go wild in snow in Kosovo



WORKERS AT A BEAR sanctuary in Pristina are working hard to look after a lion that wants to play in the snow and bears who were removed from their natural habitat when they were cubs and also enjoy the snowy conditions because they do not hibernate any more. As the winter's first snowfall blanketed Pristina Bear Sanctuary in the Kosovan capital, visitors enjoyed the sight of a lion playing before quickly taking shelter indoors where a heater was installed to fend off temperatures which fell below freezing. "We know that this is not their perfect environment to survive but we have created a nice place for the winter and we have installed a heater that helps him a lot because big

cats need much warmer temperatures," Albana Hoti, head of animal and facilities management at the sanctuary, said. The lion, named Gjon, was rescued last year from a local restaurant where it was kept to amuse clients. It is expected to be transported to South Africa once legal hurdles are overcome. The sanctuary, home to 20 brown bears, is managed by Four Paws International, a non-profit dedicated to animal welfare. The bears

have a similar story to Gjon's, in that they were caged in local restaurants — having been removed from local forests — before being rescued. "Four or five of our bears do not go on a full hibernation because they never experienced their wild life and this is all what they can do, they hibernate a little bit and then again they go out." Hoti said 16 of the sanctuary's other bears do go into full hibernation. — Reuters

LIFESTYLE

Dragon boat races return to Cambodian capital for water festival



TENS OF THOUSANDS of spectators thronged the riverfront in the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh on Sunday for an annual dragon boat race — the centrepiece of the kingdom's three-day water festival, cancelled during the Covid pandemic. Around 300 boats, their crews dressed in matching bright T-shirts, strained for the win as they dipped their colourful paddles into the Tonle Sap river with the royal palace behind them. Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni, Prime Minister Hun Manet, his father Hun Sen and senior government officials looked on as the yearly extravaganza began,

with crowds urging the canoes over the final line. Concerts, parades of lantern floats bedecked with colourful neon lights — each representing a government ministry — and fireworks are all part of the three-day festival that will last until Tuesday. "I am happy that we can meet to celebrate the water festival," 38-year-old rower Hom Phos said. "I am so excited because it is our national festival."

The festival was last held in 2019, after which it was halted during the pandemic. "During the Covid pandemic, everyone was worried about it, and we were not happy. But now we are happy again," fellow rower Yorn Vorn, 45, said. The festival marks the end of the rainy season when the Tonle Sap river, which joins the mighty Mekong River in front of the Royal Palace, reverses flow. — AFP

It's the season of pink lakes in Oman

BY YERU EBUEN

Travelling to Sur and farther west to Ashkarah, one might stumble upon a natural phenomenon that defies the ordinary: the mesmerising pink lakes.

These stunning bodies of water captivate travellers with their vibrant hues, owing to the presence of unique microorganisms and environmental conditions that create this remarkable spectacle.

The pink lakes in Oman are seasonal, and certain specific conditions had to be met in order for them to manifest. Some years, these lakes can be larger, but there have also been instances where the lakes have totally dried out due to the country's often challenging weather system.

This year, however, the lakes are in their full glory, which gives a lot of people an opportunity to actually go see them in person and be quite mesmerised by their unique beauty.

We had been hunting down these pink lakes every year, and from the salt ponds in Qurayat to the shores of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali to the corners of Al Ashkharah and even the remote beaches of Al Shuwaymiyyah has become a central hub for investors looking for promising investment opportunities in Oman's mining sector. This article explores these opportunities and highlights the advantages of investing in each specific domain... Read more on: <https://www.omanobserver.om/article/1142691/opinion/opportunity>

oman-al-shuwaymiyyahs-treasures, these lakes never fail to impress.

Each of these pink lakes stands as a testament to nature's artistry, showcasing a symphony of colours sculpted by environmental conditions and microorganisms.

In Oman, these marvels exhibit a subtle yet captivating pinkish tint owing to the presence of a specific variety of bacteria thriving in the hypersaline waters. Set against the stunning Omani desert backdrop, these lakes present a serene and extraordinary sight, enticing travellers with their understated elegance and the stark beauty of the surrounding landscapes.

It is frequently asked on social media how to find these lakes. What one has to understand is that the lakes are dependent on a lot of environmental factors, so while locations can be pointed out, they might be there after a couple of weeks as the water dries out.

If you've been dreaming of seeing and interacting with Oman's pink lakes, the next two weeks will be the perfect opportunity. As you drive the road between Ras Al Hadd and Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, make sure to look at the left side of the road, and one of these seasonal pink lakes will definitely capture your attention not just by its size but also because of its captivating colour.

To fully appreciate these pink lakes, it actually helps to see them from a bird's-eye view, but that doesn't mean that their beauty diminishes if viewed from the ground.

There are stark reminders that can be eye-opening when you visit these lakes. Because of the lake's high level of salinity, no animals usually survive, so when you walk across the lakes, you will easily find a lot of dead fish and birds preserved by the salty water's ideal conditions.

While it looks fun to run around and wash your feet with this salty water, it can also strip and dehydrate your skin easily, and as in the case of one of our companions, if unwashed right away, it can actually dry your skin and create some skin issues.

Salt draws moisture out of the skin, potentially leading to dehydration if one fails to replenish fluids adequately. This can cause discomfort, contribute to skin dryness, or exacerbate existing skin conditions like eczema or psoriasis.

It's important to understand that there are no clear roads to go into these lakes. A lot of visitors during our trip had to find their own parking, and some even ventured near the lakes and parked their cars right at the end of the water. Unfortunately, this destroys some of the rock formations that are entertaining and educational to watch.

PINK LAKES AROUND THE WORLD

Pink lakes are actually not exclusive to Oman. Among the renowned pink lakes, Lake Hillier in Western Australia stands as a beacon of nat-

ural wonder. Nestled on Middle Island, its surreal bubblegum-pink coloration defies logic and enchants visitors. A helicopter ride or a hike to an observation point unveils its picturesque allure, contrasting vividly against the lush greenery and blue sky.

Similarly, Lake Retba in Senegal, often referred to as Lac Rose, presents a captivating sight near the bustling city of Dakar. Its rose-tinted waters, owing to the salt-loving Dunaliella salina algae, beckon travellers to immerse themselves in this unique natural palette. The contrast between the pink water and the surrounding arid landscape paints a striking picture, especially during the dry season when the lake's colour intensifies.

Further east lies Lake Masazirgol in Azerbaijan, where the saline waters host an ensemble of pink microorganisms, casting a delicate pinkish hue across the lake's sur-

face. Visitors are drawn to the serenity of this lesser-known pink oasis, offering a tranquil escape amidst Azerbaijan's diverse landscapes.

While Lake Hillier and Lake Retba capture attention with their bold and intense hues, the lesser-known lakes like Lake Masazirgol and the unique pink lakes of Oman offer a quieter, more nuanced beauty that complements their surroundings.

Whether it's the vivid pink of Lake Hillier or the subtle charm of Oman's pink lakes, these natural wonders beckon adventurers to witness the breathtaking fusion of biology and geography. As travelers embark on a quest to discover the world's marvels, these pink lakes stand as vivid reminders of nature's extraordinary palette, each with its own tale of allure and uniqueness.

