

MUSCAT: A programme to encourage online public participation in selecting topics to be debated during the forthcoming period kicked off last week. This public voting programme forms part of the second edition of a forum titled 'Together We Make Progress' that is organised by the Secretariat-General of the Council of Ministers in response to the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to establish bridges of communication with members of the public through open dialogue. The forum seeks to enhance community presence and public participation in formulating future approaches, visions and strategies.



DEMANDS 'BINDING'
UN RESOLUTION TO STOP
ISRAELI 'AGGRESSION'

REJECTS JUSTIFYING
GAZA WAR AS
ISRAELI SELF-DEFENCE

OMAN REAFFIRMS ITS
POSITION IN SUPPORTING
RIGHTS OF PALESTINIANS

URGES GAZA-WEST
BANK UNITY
FOR FUTURE STATE

Arab-Islamic Summit calls for end to war

OMAN SAYS SELF-DEFENCE DOES NOT JUSTIFY KILLING PEOPLE

RIYADH: Assigned by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, headed the Sultanate of Oman's delegation to the Joint Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit which was held in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to discuss the situation in the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian territories.

The Arab-Islamic summit hosted by Saudi Arabia on Saturday called for an end to the war in Gaza and rejected justifying Israel's actions against Palestinians as self-defence.

The summit condemned "Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, war crimes and barbaric and inhumane massacres by the occupation government," a final communique said.

The communique also called for an end to the siege on Gaza, allowing



A woman and a child look out from the window of a damaged building following Israeli bombing on Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, on Saturday. — AFP

humanitarian aid into the enclave and halting arms exports to Israel.

Speaking at the summit, Sayyid Badr said he was honoured to express the sincere greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and his wishes for success for the summit in Riyadh.

"The Palestinian people are facing a dreadful humanitarian suffering, heart-wrenching and painful, amid the stagnation of the UN Security Council and its failure so far to take decisive action to stop this brutal war waged by Israel on the Palestinian Gaza Strip, under the pretext of self-defence," he said.

Self-defence does not justify killing people, displacing and deporting innocent civilians, killing unarmed children, women and men, demolishing homes, places of worship and facilities, schools, hospitals, cutting off services,

depriving residents of water, food, fuel and medicine, and imposing an unjust and stifling siege on the Gaza Strip.

It truly saddens us, the positions of some countries who are our friends, which defend international law and its application in other parts of the world, while they do not condemn Israel's violation of the same international law in relation to Palestine!

The Sultanate of Oman, from this esteemed platform, reaffirms its steadfast position in supporting the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to life, freedom, dignity and self-determination.

Today and every day, we reaffirm our sincere stand with conscience, calling for an end to this senseless war, opening and facilitating humanitarian corridors for the entry of all humanitarian and relief needs into the Gaza Strip, ...

HM message to Saudi Crown Prince

RIYADH: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a written message to His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, Crown Prince, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, related to the strong brotherly relations binding the two brotherly countries and peoples and ways of fostering them in various fields.

The message was delivered by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, during his meeting with HH Prince Faisal bin Farhan al Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Sayyid Badr conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to his brother King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, Crown



Sayyid Badr delivers the written message during his meeting with HH Prince Faisal in Riyadh on Saturday.

Prince, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, along with his wishes of good health and happiness to them. On his part, HH Prince Faisal bin Farhan al Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs, asked Sayyid Badr to pass on the greetings of King Salman and Prince Mohammed bin Salman to His Majesty the Sultan and their wishes to His Majesty the Sultan. — ONA

OMAN BOTANIC GARDEN TRIAL RUN NEXT YEAR



The trial run of Oman Botanic Garden will take place next year with the implementation rate now standing at 90 per cent. Some facilities have already been completed while others are under implementation. This was stated by Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, in an exclusive interview. The minister stated that the work on the project is progressing as per schedule and the facilities are being completed gradually as the ministry continues to build its operational capabilities for the project and complete all basic requirements. **DETAILS ON P4**



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Muscat, Salalah airports mark milestones

STAFF REPORT
MUSCAT, NOV 11

Oman Airports on Saturday celebrated the fifth anniversary of the opening of Muscat International Airport, and the eighth anniversary of the opening of Salalah Airport.

Since its opening on November 11, 2018, Muscat International Airport has jumped 52 places to 11th spot in the list of the best airports in the world in services and passenger satisfaction in the category of 15-25 million passengers.

It also won a series of international awards that confirm its leadership in the aviation and travel sector.

Muscat International Airport was the first airport in the Middle East to obtain a health accreditation certificate for travel and safety procedures during the Covid-19 pandemic as it provided a safe passage to and from the Sultanate of Oman during that period.

Immediately after the end of the pandemic, it also won the best airport award of the International Airports Council and the Skytrax award for the best airport employees in the Middle East.

Muscat International Airport has become the first airport in the Middle East to provide global educational roaming service for students, researchers and academics. To encourage small and medium enterprises, Oman Airports provided sales outlets for them at Muscat International Airport.

The passenger terminal contains 40 air bridges to transport passengers to and from aircraft through 29 waiting lounges and 16 additional waiting lounges to transport passengers to and from aircraft via buses when necessary, in addition to aircraft parking with

a capacity of 59 spaces.

Salalah Airport in Dhofar Governorate is one of the few airports in the world that has been classified as five-star from 2019 until the current year in the category of airports with less than two million passengers by Skytrax.

Salalah Airport is an integral part of Oman Vision 2024. In addition to being a modern architectural icon, it links Dhofar Governorate and the rest of the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman and is Oman's second gateway to the world.

Since its opening in November 2015 until today, the airport has won a number of international and regional awards, including obtaining the carbon accreditation certificate from the Airports Council International.

Salalah Airport was also crowned with four awards: the Best Airport Award in the Two Million Passengers category in the Middle East; the Most Dedicated Airport Staff Award in Serving Passengers in the Middle East; the Easiest Travel Procedures Award in the Middle East; and the Cleanest Airport in the Middle East Award within the International Airport Service Quality Awards.

In September 2022, Salalah Airport also won the award for the best airport in the Middle East in terms of quality of services.

During the Khareef Dhofar season 2023, the airport saw 29 per cent in total air traffic and 34.4 per cent in the number of passengers. Air traffic at the airport in July and August reached about 3,168 flights, compared to 2,455 flights in the same period last year.

In a first logistical support of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman, Oman Airports on September 7 linked sea/air freight operations between Salalah Airport and the Port of Salalah.

Leaders demand end to Gaza war



Leaders and ministers at the summit in Riyadh on Saturday.

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries called on Saturday for an immediate end to military operations in Gaza, rejecting Israel's justification of its actions against Palestinians as self-defence.

The extraordinary joint Islamic-Arab summit in Riyadh urged the International Criminal Court to investigate "war crimes and crimes against humanity that Israel is committing" in the Palestinian territories, according to a final communique.

Saudi Arabia has sought to press the United States and Israel for an end to hostilities in Gaza, and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman gathered Arab and Muslim leaders to reinforce that message.

Dozens of leaders including Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who was welcomed back into the Arab League this year, attended.

Prince Mohammed affirmed the kingdom's "condemnation and categorical rejection of this barbaric war against our brothers in Palestine".

"We are facing a humanitarian catastrophe that proves the failure of the Security Council and the

OMAN STANDS BY PALESTINE

FROM P1

...lifting the siege imposed on it, releasing hostages and detainees, and urging countries supporting Israel to avoid double standards in applying international law.

The only solution to the Palestinian issue lies in political action aimed at ending the occupation, establishing an independent Palestinian state, with its borders as of June 4, 1967, and its capital East Jerusalem, in accordance with international law and United Nations resolutions, ensuring justice, security and peace for all.

In the Sultanate of Oman, we affirm our continuous

efforts in serving the causes of security and peace, believing that we are an integral part of this interconnected world, sharing interests and destiny with its peoples.

Therefore, standing by the just Palestinian cause is a duty incumbent upon every discerning person in our contemporary world.

The situation has reached its limit, the violence has lengthened, and it is time for the voice of truth to resound with truth and wisdom until Palestine obtains its rights guaranteed by international law and becomes a full-fledged member of the international community, a free and proud state on its land.

international community to put an end to the flagrant Israeli violations of international laws," he said in an address to the summit.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said Palestinians were facing a "genocidal war" and urged the United States to end Israeli "aggression".

Raisi's trip to Saudi Arabia is

the first by an Iranian head of state in more than a decade.

Erdogan called for an international peace conference to find a permanent solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestinians.

"What we need in Gaza is not pauses for a couple of hours, rather we need a permanent ceasefire," Erdogan told the summit.

Qatar's emir said his country was seeking to mediate the release of Israeli hostages and hoped a humanitarian truce would be reached soon.

"For how long will the international community treat Israel as if it is above international laws?" he asked.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan told reporters there could be no talks about the future of Gaza except "talks about an immediate ceasefire".

The summit also demanded an end to the siege of Gaza, access for humanitarian aid, and a halt to the sale of arms to Israel.

The kingdom had been scheduled to host two extraordinary summits, of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Arab League, on Saturday and Sunday, but opted for a joint summit because of the "extraordinary" Gaza situation, the Saudi Foreign ministry said.

Some Arab countries, led by Algeria, called for a complete cut in diplomatic ties with Israel, two delegates told Reuters.

Other Arab countries that have established diplomatic relations with Israel pushed back, stressing the need to keep channels open with Netanyahu's government, they said. — **Reuters**

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Fest for physically challenged on Nov 27

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The annual sports festival for people with various physical disabilities will be conducted from November 27 to December 3 at the Sultan Qaboos Sport Complex in Bausher, according to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

The exclusive sports festival for the disabled aims to qualify cadres working in programmes and activities for persons with disabilities and encourage the private sector to adopt and care for this category of athletes, select best players for Paralympics and highlight the issues that face this segment of the society.

A number of ministries, associations and committees including the Ministry of Social Development, the Association for the Care of Disabled Children, the Association for the Early Intervention of Children with Disabilities, the Omani Association for Persons with Disabilities, the Omani Association for People with Hearing Disabilities, Al Noor Society for the Blind,

the Omani Special Olympics Association, the Omani Paralympic Committee, and the Omani Sports Committee are expected to participate in the 3-day sports festival.

People with hearing difficulties, Ministry of Education, special centres concerned with the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, a number of lecturers from outside the Sultanate of Oman, sign language interpreters, medical staff and referees are also taking part in the one-of-its-kind sports event.

Speaking to the Observer, Mohanna al Khashouwi from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth said that people suffering from any disability can register themselves to the event, the details of which will be publicised in the coming days.

"The sports festival was first held for 3 years from 2008 until 2011, and the total beneficiaries reached 4,405 people from 3 different governorates and we are coming back after a short hiatus. Preparations are currently underway for the fourth festival," he said.



Project to provide high yielding wheat seeds

MUSCAT: A project to expand the cultivation of quality of improved varieties of wheat is undergoing in various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. The project is implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and funded by the Agricultural and Fisheries Development Fund.

Yahya bin Hamdan al Saadi, head of the Horticultural Crops Department, said it is considered one of the strategic projects to support food security, and aims to provide 54 tonnes of wheat seeds annually to farmers.

He explained that the project includes the purchase of modern equipment for planting and harvesting wheat, training and qualifying employees to use harvesters and automatic seeders, purchasing 54 tonnes of wheat seeds and free wheat harvesting service by the ministry.

Al Saadi said the ministry bought six wheat harvesters, tractor and seeder to reduce operating costs. He pointed out that Oman harvested more than 7,119 tonnes of wheat from an area of 6,359 acres in 2022-2023.

He said Dhofar ranked first in cultivated area with 5,112 acres (80 per cent of the total wheat cultivated area) and productivity with 5,940 tonnes (83 per cent of the total production).

It is worth noting that work has been implemented to support local wheat production at a cost of RO 5 million for 5 years until 2027, taking into consideration the strategic importance of the wheat crop in strengthening the food security and achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040. — **ONA**



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Salalah receives over 73mm of rain on Friday



MUSCAT: The city of Salalah and the surrounding mountain areas witnessed rainfall of varying intensity on Friday.

Waterlogging was reported in some parts of the city, which led to the slowing down of vehicular traffic.

At 10 pm on Friday, Salalah received more than 73 mm of rain and after midnight the monitoring station at Salalah Airport recorded 90.2 mm, Port of Salalah 27.6 mm of rain.

A senior official at Oman



Meteorology said that there were no indications of such heavy rain and the effects of air trough were to end on Thursday.

“Some indicators hinted at rainfall of less than 5 mm, but not

this quantity and intensity.”

For Saturday, Oman Meteorology reported a flow of low and medium clouds over parts of the Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates, and clouds flow from the Arabian Sea onto their coasts with chances of heavy rains, which will lead to the overflow of wadis in many areas.

Salalah is expected to get around 21mm of rain on Saturday, and the wet conditions are expected to continue until Sunday morning.

SQU opens IELTS Open Centre

MUSCAT: The Centre for Preparatory Studies at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) inaugurated its IELTS Open Centre in an event graced by Professor Salim al Harthy, SQU's Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Community Services. The IELTS Open Centre, closely affiliated with the British Council (BC) Oman, strengthens the enduring partnership between BC and SQU.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Dr Zahra al Lawati, Director of the Centre for Preparatory Studies, SQU, reflected on the journey of the IELTS Centre, which had initially served as a Closed Centre for approximately 12 years. Establishing the IELTS Open Centre aligns with SQU's core community service mission. Dr Zahra expressed her gratitude towards Prof Salim and the senior SQU administration for their unwavering support, enabling the open centre to fruition. She also extended thanks to the British Council for the long-continued partnership.

Dr Zahra highlighted the accomplishments of the previous IELTS Closed Centre, emphasising its remarkable performance. A recent audit conducted by Cambridge Assessment classified it as a low-risk centre. On June 12, 2023, the centre was bestowed with the prestigious 'Compliance Excellence Award' by the British Council, Oman.

With the IELTS Open Centre now accessible to a broader community beyond SQU, individuals from various walks of life can take IELTS tests.

Endowment Foundation launches RO 9 million real estate portfolio

KABEER YOUSUF
@KABEERYOUSUF

The Bausher Endowment Foundation, under the slogan 'Waqf is better than ever', launched its real estate portfolio, which aims to reach the value of its real estate assets to RO 9 million, during the foundation's announcement ceremony last week, under the auspices of Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA).

Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, and officials from the public and private sectors and representatives of civil society institutions were present.

The Bausher Endowment Foundation was established based on Ministerial Resolution No. 801/2022 and operates in accordance with the approved governance system. It is the first public endowment institution in Muscat Governorate that seeks to invest and manage endowment funds in accordance with the provisions and principles of legitimate and legal endowments and in a way that achieves benefits to individuals and society.

During the ceremony, the Bausher Endowment Foundation reviewed its investment plan to

develop and invest in its current assets and launch a number of new real estate development projects in several locations and for different uses, the implementation of which will begin early next year.

A detailed presentation of the Foundation's five-year strategic plan in several areas was also presented during the ceremony, through which the Foundation sought to achieve a set of strategic objectives, including renewing the investment development role to endow projects with developmental dimensions approved by the Board of Directors of the Foundation.

“Waqf institutions are a successful investment in developing society and enhancing the spirit of solidarity, cooperation and compassion in it, and the Bausher Endowment Foundation, which was launched today, will work to achieve this through its ambitious programmes that are diverse in their fields and the deserving groups that they meet,” Al Murshidi, Chairman of the OIA, said.

The Foundation also signed a number of agreements and memorandums of cooperation with the Nidaa Charitable Team and the Zakat Committee in Bausher.

TAS opens transfer service till Thursday

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, NOV 11

The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) announced the opening of its student transfer service, allowing students to seamlessly move between branches within the same programme or specialisation.

This announcement, issued by the Deanship of Admission and Registration, opens up a significant avenue for academic mobility.

Eligible students can apply for transfers from Sunday to Thursday providing them with the opportunity to experience different academic environments within the university.

Prospective applicants are advised to thoroughly review

the transfer regulations before submitting their requests to ensure a smooth and well-informed process as they consider a change in their academic path.

The university encourages students to take advantage of this transfer opportunity, fostering a dynamic and enriching academic experience.

For further details and to initiate the transfer process, students are directed to visit the official university portal.

UTAS also notes that students are required to use the same login credentials for the CIMS system to access the page dedicated to transfer requests.

The online service is not available for requests from the batches of 2023 or 2024 and for those whose transfer requests

have been previously approved.

In the 2022 annual report of UTAS, Dr Mahad bin Said bin Ali Baowain, Minister of Labour and Chairman of the University Council, emphasised the institution's commitment to preparing generations with academic, technical, and professional prowess in applied fields.

This involves a focus on cultivating creativity, innovation, and scientific research.

UTAS aims to develop a skilled cadre of human resources across diverse fields, meeting the demands of sustainable development and the dynamic public and private sectors. These objectives align with a broader dedication to prioritise the education sector at various levels.



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OMAN BOTANIC GARDEN TRIAL RUN IN 2024



SALIM BIN MOHAMMED AL MAHROUQI
Minister of Heritage and Tourism



SUHAIL AL NAHDI
MUSCAT, NOV 11

THE trial run of Oman Botanic Garden will take place next year as 90 per cent of construction is over. Some facilities have already been completed while others close to completion.

This was stated by Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, in an exclusive interview with the Oman newspaper.

The minister stated that the work on the project is progressing as per schedule and the facilities are being completed gradually as the ministry continues to build its operational capabilities for the project and complete all basic requirements. The implementation of the road linking the Botanic Garden from Al Jifnain is among the priorities that the ministry is working to achieve at the current stage. It is hoped that the road will reduce pressure on the current main entrance to the Botanic Garden as well

as facilitate access for visitors coming from various governorates.

The Oman Botanic Garden will serve as an enabler for many sectors and there is a partnership between the government, the private sector and the wider society. It will include several facilities and services that will provide investment opportunities for entrepreneurs. The project will also have adventure tourism facilities and research centres. There is also a plan to shift the Natural History Museum to be

- LOCATION**
Al Khoud, Wilayat of Al Seeb
- AREA**
5 million square metres
- COLLECTION**
Over 1,200 species of plants that mimic the nature in various governorates
- CABLE CAR**
The 860 metres-long cable car lines, which are almost complete, will enable visitors to traverse the garden in 5 minutes.
- SUSPENDED PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE**
The garden will have suspended pedestrian bridge linking the Hajar Mountains Greenhouse and the Dhofar Mountains Greenhouse
- ROAD AND GREEN ENERGY**
A renewable energy centre and a road linking the garden to Al Jifnain
- JOBS FOR CITIZENS**
Hotel establishments and service facilities provide job opportunities for youth and small and medium enterprises
- SHIFTING OF MUSEUM**
Natural History Museum to be part of the garden's facilities

part of the Botanic Garden facilities, the minister said.

The Minister of Heritage and Tourism explained that the official launch of the project requires more time as well as financial and human resources, expressing his hope that all these requirements will be met soon.

Situated in Al Khoud village in the Wilayat of Al Seeb, the Oman Botanic Garden celebrates the unique plants, landscapes and cultural traditions of Oman. The garden will be situated on a 430-hectare protected natural area, surrounded by the Northern Mountains of Oman. The garden showcases all the native plant species of Oman in a series of carefully created, naturalistic habitats from the dry deserts to the rich monsoon cloud forests. The garden will also showcase the traditionally cultivated crops and the many ways that people use plants in Oman.

The inventorying operations of the scientific teams in the garden resulted in the collection and documentation of hundreds of plants native to Oman. The garden also contributed to discovering

20 exclusive plant species that are found in the world only in Oman.

The minister said Oman Botanic Garden will be one of the landmarks in the country like the Royal Opera House Muscat, Oman Across Ages Museum and the National Museum.

FIVE MAIN BUILDINGS

Oman Botanic Garden, which extends over an area of 5 million square metres, has five main buildings, the most important of which are the Dhofar Mountains Greenhouse, the Hajar Mountains Greenhouse, the vehicle parking building, the Renewable Energy Centre, the Environment Centre, the Visitor Centre, and the VIP building.

At the site, giant cranes and hundreds of people are working tirelessly. The 860 metres-long cable car lines, are almost complete, which will enable visitors to traverse the garden in 5 minutes. The garden has approximately 500 parking spaces, which is ready. The garden will have suspended pedestrian bridge linking the Hajar Mountains Greenhouse and the Dhofar Mountains Greenhouse.





■ EVACUATION FOLLOWS FRENCH FLOODING



French firefighters evacuate residents and their dog by boat as the Aa River overflows in Blendecques near Saint-Omer, after heavy rain caused flooding in northern France. – Reuters

FBI agents seized New York mayor’s cell phones: lawyer

NEW YORK: FBI agents seized the New York mayor’s cell phones and other devices, his campaign lawyer said Friday, in an apparent escalation of a federal investigation into campaign fundraising.

The seizure appears to be part of a corruption investigation into whether Eric Adams’ 2021 campaign conspired with Turkey’s government and others.

“On Monday night, the FBI approached the mayor after an event. The Mayor immediately complied with the FBI’s request and provided them with electronic devices,” said Boyd Johnson, the campaign’s attorney, in a statement.

“The mayor has not been accused of any wrongdoing and continues to cooperate with the investigation,” the attorney added.

The federal probe into Adams’ campaign went public last week



New York’s Mayor Eric Adams delivers a speech prior to the 52nd Edition of the New York City Marathon

when FBI agents searched the home of his former top fundraiser -- a 25-year-old one-time intern, Brianna Suggs -- seizing laptops, cell phones and a manila folder labeled “Eric Adams.”

News of the raid prompted the mayor to reverse course and abruptly return to New York from Washington, where he was to have met with officials at the White House and Congress over

an influx of migrants into his city.

In a statement on Friday, Adams, a former police officer, said that “I expect all members of my staff to follow the law and fully cooperate with any sort of investigation.”

“I will continue to do exactly that,” the mayor said. “I have nothing to hide.”

The FBI’s warrant to search Suggs’ home sought evidence of conspiracy between the mayor’s campaign, the Turkish government and a Brooklyn-based developer whose owners are Turkish, according to The New York Times.

The warrant reportedly indicated that authorities were probing whether donations from either Turkey’s government or Turkish nationals were made to Adams via a scheme under which false contributors would be listed.

— AFP

Moscow targets Kyiv region after lengthy calm

KYIV: A missile targeted Kyiv on Saturday, ending nearly two months of relative calm in the Ukrainian capital, while frontline regions fended off waves of drone attacks overnight.

Ukraine is bracing for a renewed Russian aerial onslaught this winter, after systematic strikes last year targeted the country’s energy grid, leaving thousands without heating or electricity in freezing temperatures for long periods.

“After a long pause of 52 days, the enemy renewed missile attacks on Kyiv,” said the head of the Kyiv city military administration Sergiy Popko.

He added that the Russians had launched a missile attack on the capital on Saturday morning. Journalists in central Kyiv heard two strong explosions and saw trails in the sky at dawn.

Air sirens sounded soon after that. Asked why the alarm had gone off after the explosion, air force spokesman Yuriy Ignat said on television that “ballistic missiles fly extremely fast and

President Zelensky says Ukraine has deployed more Western air defence systems, as it braces for a second full winter of Russian attacks on energy facilities

are not as visible as cruise missiles on the radars.”

The air force said it was clarifying whether the capital had been targeted by an Iskander ballistic missile, or by an S-400 anti-aircraft missile.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Tuesday that Ukraine had deployed more Western air defence systems, as it braces for a second full winter of Russian attacks on energy facilities.

Air defences last downed a missile in Kyiv on September 21. The falling debris wounded seven people, including a child.

There were no reported casualties or damage in the

capital itself on Saturday.

But two missiles hit a field between two settlements in the wider Kyiv region, the head of the regional military administration said.

“The blast wave damaged five private residential buildings. In particular, roofs and windows were smashed,” Ruslan Kravchenko said.

Other regions of Ukraine meanwhile fended off drone attacks overnight.

The air force said it downed 19 of the 31 attack drones launched by Moscow between Friday evening and Saturday 3 am. “The Russian occupants sent most of the attack UAVs to the frontline areas,” it said.

It added Russia used several missiles overnight, but did not specify if any of them were downed.

Ukraine warned it may attack Russian oil and gas infrastructure if Moscow repeats its campaign of strikes on energy infrastructure over the winter.

— AFP

Sudan fighting destroys strategic Khartoum bridge

WAD MADANI: A strategic Nile bridge in Sudan’s capital has collapsed, the army and rival paramilitaries said in separate statements on Saturday, trading blame for its destruction nearly seven months into their devastating war.

Witnesses reported “clear signs of destruction on the Shambat Bridge” which crosses the White Nile and connecting Khartoum’s sister cities of Khartoum North and Omdurman.

Images posted online, which AFP was unable to immediately verify, showed a section of the bridge about halfway across the river had disappeared. Vehicles, apparently damaged, lay on the part of the bridge still standing.

The army, led by Sudan’s de facto ruler Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, said in a statement that “the rebel fighter destroyed the Shambat Bridge early this morning... adding a new crime to their record.”

The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by Burhan’s former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, denied the accusation.

— AFP



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Tender No.	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (RO)
037/2023	Building Works - MAM	First & above	23 Nov 2023	25 Dec 2023	145/- RO
040/2023	MEP Works - Jabel Al Akhader	First & above Specialized in MEP Works	23 Nov 2023	25 Dec 2023	105/- RO

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

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

Indian PM Modi’s millet music gets Grammy nod

NEW DELHI: India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made an entry into the halls of global music with a song featuring him and his passion for millet nominated for a Grammy.

“Abundance In Millets” by Falu and Gaurav Shah, a tune the musicians say was “written and performed” with the prime minister, features speeches by Modi expounding the benefits of his favourite grain.

India is the world’s largest producer and second-largest exporter of millet, a gluten-free grain which can grow on marginal land with limited water, and Modi’s government has been working to boost its production and consumption since coming to power in 2014.

“Millets are a wonder”, Falu and Shah sing, pondering “what if we could change the world?”

The tune was nominated on Friday in the Best Global Music Performance category, alongside six others, ranging from Nigerian Afrobeat star Burna Boy and Davido, to Mexico’s Silvana Estrada and Franco-Lebanese trumpeter Ibrahim Maalouf.

Grammy-winning Indian-American singer Falguni Shah, popularly known as Falu, has said the song was a “smart idea” from Modi himself who collaborated in its making to realise his “vision” of helping overcome hunger and alleviate poverty in the world.

The song was “written and performed with Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi to help farmers grow millets and help end world hunger”, Falu said on X in June.

Modi, 73, has called the tune “very creative” and said he believes it “will inspire more people to embrace millets for healthy living!”

It was India’s suggestion that the United Nations declare 2023 as the International Year of Millets, and at the G20 summit in September in New Delhi world leaders were served an all-vegetarian dinner dominated by millet. Millet was a staple food in many regions of India for thousands of years, and was eaten as porridge, flatbread, dosa pancakes and with lentils.

— AFP

TENDER NOTICE



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

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

Tender No.	Description	Tender documents price (R.O)	Class	Last date for collection of documents	Last date for Submission of documents
1033/2023/ MAFWR/ HQ-115	Supply and installation of floating pontoons at Fishery Harbours & Fish Landing Centers	150/-	Specialized	Monday 27/11/2023	Sunday 17/12/2023
1034/2023/ MAFWR/ HQ-116	Consultancy services for design of fish landing centres (Marfa) at Al-Daffah, Al-Ruwais and Swayeh in Ash-Sharqiyah South Governorate	125/-	First	Monday 27/11/2023	Sunday 17/12/2023
1035/2023/ MAFWR/ HQ-117	Design and build services for detailed design and construction of 'Marfa' - small scale fish landing centre at hadbin in Sadah Willayat, Dhofar Governorate, Sultanate of Oman	300/-	Excellent	Monday 27/11/2023	Sunday 17/12/2023

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

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources



Patients die at hospit

TURKIYE CALLS FOR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE TO REACH PERMANENT PEACE



Turkiye's President Tayyip Erdogan attends Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. — Reuters

ANKARA: Türkiye's President Tayyip Erdogan said on Saturday that an international peace conference should be convened to find a permanent solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

Erdogan was addressing a joint Islamic-Arab summit in Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh, where leaders gathered to urge Israel to end hostilities in Gaza.

"Israel is taking revenge... on Gazan babies, children and women," Erdogan said, renewing his call for an immediate ceasefire. "What is urgent in Gaza is not pauses for few hours, rather we need a permanent ceasefire."

Turkiye, which has sharply escalated its criticism of Israel as the humanitarian crisis in Gaza has intensified, supports a two-state solution.

"We cannot put Palestinians defending their homeland in the same category as the occupiers," Erdogan said.

A permanent solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestinians depends on the formation of a Palestinian state based on 1967 borders, Erdogan said.

"We believe that an international peace conference will provide the most suitable basis for this. We are ready to make the necessary efforts, including as a guarantor, to preserve the peace to be established in this context," he said.

Israel's Heritage Minister Amihay Eliyahu's remarks on the idea of Israel carrying out a nuclear strike on Gaza revealed the existence of Israel's nuclear weapons, Erdogan said, calling for an international investigation.

"If there are nuclear bombs that were hidden from the examination of the International Atomic Energy Agency, they should be revealed as well," Erdogan said. — Reuters

GAZA: A baby died in an incubator at Gaza's largest hospital after the facility lost power, and another person was killed by an Israeli shell in intensive care, a spokesperson for the Palestinian health ministry said on Saturday.

Israel's military, which residents said had been fighting Palestinian gunmen all night in and around Gaza City, did not immediately respond to questions on the comments from health ministry spokesperson Ashraf Al Qidra.

"The situation is worse than anyone can imagine. We are besieged inside the Al Shifa Medical Complex, and the occupation has targeted most of the buildings inside," said Qidra, who represents the health ministry in Gaza.

The Israeli military has said that fighters who rampaged through southern Israel last month have placed command centres under Al Shifa Hospital and others in Gaza, making them vulnerable to being considered military targets.

Palestinians have denied using civilians as human shields and health officials say growing numbers of Israeli strikes on or near hospitals put at risk patients, medical staff and thousands of evacuees who have taken shelter in and near their buildings.

Qidra said Israeli army snipers commandeering rooftops of buildings near the hospital fired into the medical complex from time to time, limiting the ability of medics and people to move.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The hospital suspended operations after fuel ran out, Qidra said, adding: "As a result, one newborn baby died inside the incubator, where there are 45 babies."

Palestinians deny using the hospital for its military purposes and has asked the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross to send missions to come to Shifa to investigate the Israeli allegations.



39 premature babies in Al Shifa Medical Complex are threatened with death at any moment. Failure to bring fuel into the hospitals will be a death sentence for the rest

MAI ALKAILA

Palestinian health minister

The Palestinian Health Ministry said that 39 babies were at risk at the hospital.

Minister Mai Alkaila had initially said they had died because they could not get oxygen or medicine to them and electricity was cut off, but the ministry later corrected the information to say that one had died and 39 were at risk.

"39 premature babies in Al Shifa Medical Complex are threatened with death at any moment, and one of them died this morning. Failure to bring fuel into the hospitals will be a death sentence for the rest. The incubators will only be able to work until this evening, after which the fuel will run out."

On Friday, Gaza officials had said missiles landed in a courtyard of Al Shifa, killing one person and wounding others.

World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said health workers the group was in contact with at Shifa had been forced to leave the hospital in search of safety.

"Many of the thousands sheltering at the hospital are forced to evacuate due to security risks, while many still remain there," Tedros wrote on social media on Friday. — Reuters



This aerial picture shows people gathered around a destroyed building following Israeli bombing, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. — AFP



Children react during the funeral of the Faojo family, killed in Israeli bombing, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. — AFP



MIDDLE EAST LEADERS SLAM ISRAEL AT SAU

RIYADH: Arab leaders and Iran's president meeting on Saturday in the Saudi capital roundly condemned Israel's actions in its war in Gaza.

The emergency meeting of the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) comes after October 7 attacks that Israeli officials say left about 1,200 people dead, and 239 taken hostage.

Israel's subsequent aerial and ground offensive has killed more than 11,000 people, also mostly civilians and many of them children, according to the health ministry in Gaza.

Host Saudi Arabia "confirms that it holds the

occupation (Israeli) authorities responsible for the crimes committed against the Palestinian people," Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said as Saturday's summit began.

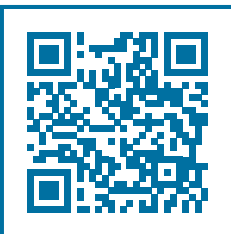
"We are certain that the only way to guarantee security, peace and stability in the region is to end the occupation, siege and the settlements," he said of Israel's actions in Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, on his first trip to Saudi Arabia, said Islamic countries should designate the Israeli army a "terrorist organisation" for its conduct in Gaza.

Some countries, including Algeria and



General view of heads of states attending Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. — Reuters



tal besieged by Israel



A child and woman wait for help as they remain trapped inside a building destroyed during Israeli bombing, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. – AFP



Smoke rises over Gaza as seen from Southern Israel. – Reuters

UDI-HOSTED SUMMIT

“
We are certain that the only way to guarantee security, peace and stability in the region is to end the occupation, siege and the settlements

MOHAMMED BIN
SALMAN

Saudi Crown Prince

Lebanon, proposed responding to the devastation in Gaza by threatening to disrupt oil supplies to Israel and its allies as well as severing the economic and diplomatic ties that some Arab League nations have with Israel, the diplomats said.

Syrian President Bashar al Assad said a lack of concrete punitive measures against Israel would render the summit toothless.

“If we do not have real tools for pressure, then any step we take or speech we give will have no meaning,” said Assad.

He said no Middle Eastern country should engage in any “political process” with Israel,

including developing economic relations, until a lasting ceasefire is reached.

Israel and its main backer the United States have so far rebuffed demands for a ceasefire, a position that drew heavy criticism on Saturday.

“The US has prevented the ceasefire in Gaza and is expanding the scope of the war,” Raisi said before departing from Tehran.

Turkiye’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said at the summit that “it is a shame that Western countries, which always talk about human rights and freedoms, remain silent in the face of the ongoing massacres in Palestine.”

— AFP

THOUSANDS MARCH IN LONDON IN PRO-PALESTINIAN DEMO



Protesters holding placards and flags take part in the 'National March For Palestine' in central London. – AFP

LONDON: Huge crowds marched through the British capital on Saturday, as pro-Palestinian supporters made their latest mass call for a ceasefire.

The “National March for Palestine”, organised by the Stop the War Coalition, set off after a two-minutes’ silence to remember Britain’s war dead on Armistice Day.

Huge crowds of protesters waved black, red, white and green Palestinian flags and held aloft placards proclaiming “Stop Bombing Gaza”, just over a month of recent war. Five weeks of an Israeli military campaign has left just over 11,000 people in Gaza dead, according to the health ministry in the coastal enclave. – AFP



A picture shows smoke rising on hills near the Israeli town of Metula as a result of a strike reportedly coming from Lebanon. – AFP

DRONE STRIKES DEEP INTO LEBANESE TERRITORY: OFFICIAL MEDIA

BEIRUT: An Israeli drone struck on Saturday a vehicle deep in Lebanese territory, official media in Lebanon said, after weeks of skirmishes mainly limited to border areas since Gaza war began.

Lebanon’s National News Agency (NNA) said “an enemy drone targeted a pick-up truck” on a farmland in the Zahrani area on Lebanon’s coast, some 45 kilometres from the Israeli border, without reporting any casualties. The frontier between the two countries has seen daily exchanges of fire since October 7.

Saturday’s was the deepest Israeli strike on Lebanese territory since the latest hostilities began.

The Lebanese army prevented journalists from approaching the area, which is near the Zahrani power plant, one of Lebanon’s ailing energy facilities.

The NNA reported Israeli

attacks on areas near the border on Saturday, while a correspondent in northern Israel reported apparent incoming rocket fire after air raid sirens sounded.

Lebanese fighters said it carried out two cross-border attacks on Israeli troops on Saturday, claiming they caused casualties.

They said on Friday that Israeli fire had killed seven of its fighters, without specifying where or when they died.

Several statements were released claiming attacks on northern Israel near the border, including three drone assaults – one of them on an Israeli army barracks.

Military spokesman Daniel Hagari said Israeli forces were “striking extensively in the north” in response to three drone “infiltrations”.

At least 90 people have been killed on the Lebanese side in cross-border skirmishes since last month.

– AFP

ISRAEL PRESSED OVER CIVILIANS DEATHS IN FIGHTING

GAZA: Israel faced growing calls on Saturday to protect civilians in Gaza as combat intensified around hospitals where Palestinians have sought refuge from intense bombardment and gun battles.

The director of the besieged territory’s largest hospital, Al-Shifa, said the compound was struck repeatedly overnight Friday-Saturday and lost power for hours after its generator was hit.

“We received calls about dozens of dead and hundreds wounded in air and artillery strikes, but our ambulances weren’t able to go out because of gunfire,” said hospital director Mohammed Abu Salmiya.

The suffering and death in Gaza has prompted growing calls for a halt in five weeks of fighting in order to protect civilian lives in the densely populated territory.

French President Emmanuel Macron called on Israel to stop bombing civilians in Gaza, saying there was “no justification” and the deaths were causing “resentment”.

Macron said Israel had the right to protect itself, but he added: “These babies, these ladies, these old people are bombed and killed.”

The health ministry in Gaza says Israeli fighting has killed more than 11,000 people, also mostly civilians and many of them children. – AFP



Palestinians search for casualties as they inspect the site of an Israeli strike on a house, in Rafah. – Reuters

Palestinian lives do matter



Dr Hamed al Sinawi
@ alsinawi

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

Last week I was teaching a group of medical students about medical ethics. I started by presenting the Islamic version of the Hippocratic Oath that doctors from around the world swear before starting to deal with patients. The oath summarises the main ethical principles that govern how doctors treat their patients respecting the decisions patients make, focusing on doing what is good for the patients, and avoiding what is harmful while observing patients’ privacy and keeping their secrets. The oath reminds us to respect all humans regardless of differences in race, religion, or political affiliation. At this stage, one of the students raised his hand and asked “Dr did you see the news about the Israeli doctors who called for bombing hospitals in Gaza? Did these doctors ever study medical ethics? The past few days and the events in Gaza

showed the dark side of the human race. From celebrities dressing their kids for Halloween in costumes to look like the innocent children who were bombed in Gaza to the shameful petition signed by criminal doctors dressed in white coats calling for the destruction of the few remaining hospitals in Gaza, to outrageous suggestion from an Israeli minister that “dropping a nuclear bomb on the Gaza Strip was one of the possibilities”. Many news channels and social media platforms continue to show the Israeli government as the victim in this conflict and brainwash the public in an attempt to enforce their blinding biases and negative attitudes to the Palestinians considering them worse than animals and denying them their basic rights refusing calls for ceasefire. If this is not racism, I don’t know what it is. The current situation of the world is yet to be understood if that is even possible. It’s a matter of standing with the truth or standing with genocide

IT’S A MATTER OF
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US’

and this has shown many of us the unravelled truth of the people surrounding us. It has also been a great deal at freeing us from the celebrity worship culture, that blinded this generation from the reality that just because you love someone doesn’t mean they’re good people. We are not freeing Palestine, but it is freeing us by strengthening our faith in god almighty and believing that justice will be served eventually. The fake propaganda being spread through the Western media no longer has the same impact it did in the past. The world is also waking up to the repugnant double standards where you cannot “assume a gender” but someone can kill and occupy a country for 74 years. So let us continue boycotting companies that financially support the occupational forces and contribute to the continuous manslaughter of innocent lives in the city of Gaza, that is the least we can do. Remember that your actions do matter.

Spain: Sanchez’s risky bet of a Catalan alliance

MATHIEU GORSE

Spain’s Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has taken a big risk allying with Catalan separatists, opening up a breach in Spanish society and even within his own political family. In exchange for providing the votes needed to form a new government, Sanchez agreed to Catalan separatist Carles Puigdemont’s demands that hundreds of separatists pursued by Spanish prosecutors for their role in a failed 2017 declaration of independence be amnestied. Any amnesty talk is controversial in Spain, seen as an assault on the rule of law after the secession attempt set off the worst political crisis in modern Spanish history. “We appeal to all outraged citizens, to all Spaniards who will not give up, to all those that want to raise their voices,” on Friday said Cuca Gamarra, the number two of the centre-right Popular Party (PP), which has called for protest rallies across the country to intensify this weekend. Sanchez’ decision is already reflected in opinion polls. According to the latest survey by the CIS institute released on Friday, support for the Socialist Party (PSOE) has already dropped 1.3 percentage points in a month, falling to 31.3 per cent, while the PP gained 1.7 points to 33.9 per cent. Right and far right in the streets The PP and its allies finished first in July’s legislative elections but was not able to form a workable majority in parliament. The PSOE finished second, but after PP leader Alberto Nunez Feijoo failed to cobble together a majority, the mandate was given to Sanchez and he succeeded only at the cost of winning over Puigdemont. In response, the PP has sought to mobilise public opinion against the amnesty law, organising rallies in all the main cities in the country. The far-right nationalist Vox party has gone even further in its rhetoric, calling for “resistance” against the state. “We have the duty to resist a government and a tyrant that will be sworn in thanks to enemies of Spain,” Santiago Abascal, the party’s head, said Thursday during a demonstration in front of PSOE headquarters in Madrid. The demonstrations, held every evening for a week, have started to degenerate with 24 arrests on Thursday, according to police. Opposition is rising in the ranks of the judiciary, and not just among conservative judges. The main magistrates’ associations, representing all political stripes, said Sanchez’ accords with Puigdemont represent a “rupture in the separation of powers” and an “unacceptable disrespect for the role of the legal system.” — AFP



Manuela Andreoni

The writer started writing for The Times in 2018 working out of the Brazil bureau

DROUGHT HAS ALSO
DISPLACED TENS
OF THOUSANDS OF
PEOPLE AND HELPED
PUSH MILLIONS INTO
HUNGER

Climate change is causing severe drought in a volatile Mideast zone, study finds

Human-made climate change is driving a year-long extreme drought in Iran, Iraq and Syria, an area that encompasses a region known as the Fertile Crescent and a cradle of civilisation, scientists said on Wednesday. The scientists stressed that years of conflict and political instability combined with the challenges of rapid urbanisation in the region have limited the ability of local communities to respond to the drought, transforming it into a humanitarian crisis. In the last three years, the drought, the second worst on record, has shrivelled wheat crops and led to tensions between neighbouring countries and communities over access to dwindling water supplies. It has also displaced tens of thousands of people and helped push millions into hunger. The crisis is evidence of how global warming caused by the burning of fossil fuels can act “as a threat multiplier,” said Rana El Hajj, a technical adviser at the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Center in Lebanon and one of the 10 authors of the study. It was put out by the World Weather Attribution initiative, an international scientific collaboration that specialises in rapid analysis of extreme weather events. The drought, she added, “is just an indication of a reality which could affect vulnerable groups across the globe as human-induced challenges, including environmental degradation and conflict, can compound the increasing risk of climate change to yield unprecedented impacts.” The researchers studied the effects of climate change on the low rains and high temperatures experienced by the Fertile Crescent, the region around the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, and Iran, between July 2020 and June 2023. Although the study was not peer-reviewed, the findings are based on standardised methods that have been. The researchers found that the warming caused by the burning of fossil fuels didn’t significantly affect rainfall but made the high temperatures that continue to bake the



Sinkholes and land subsidence in the Dasht Bozorg Area of Khuzestan, southern Iran.

region 16 times as likely in Iran and 25 times as likely in Iraq and Syria. Such heat would have been “virtually impossible without climate change,” said Ben Clarke, one of the authors of the study and a researcher at the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at Imperial College London. High temperatures cause dry conditions because they increase evapotranspiration, or how much water evaporates from the soil, water bodies and plants. Combined with lack of rainfall, it’s what experts call an “agricultural drought.” In a hypothetical world where humans hadn’t released huge amounts of heat-trapping gases into the atmosphere, the weather conditions in the region analysed by the study would be so much less severe that they wouldn’t be considered a drought at all, the researchers said. “One thing is very, very clear, though, that this is already touching the limits of what some people are able to adapt to,” said Friederike Otto, one of the authors of the study and a senior lecturer in climate science at the Grantham Research Institute. “As long as we keep burning fossil fuels or even give out new licenses to explore new oil and gas fields, these kind of events will only get worse.” The Middle East is among the regions that are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. It has suffered from almost continuous drought since

1998, though rainfall in 2020 brought some respite. Still, a large part of its population depends on rain to nurture wheat crops and provide drinking water to livestock. The effects of climate change have been compounded not only by political instability, but also by weak governance over water sources and reliance on wasteful irrigation techniques across the region. A growing population with rising water needs as well as rapid urbanisation are adding more pressure to the region’s insufficient water infrastructure. In Iraq, 61 per cent of households faced water shortages, according to a survey published last year that was led by the Norwegian Refugee Council, an aid group. One-fifth of respondents said that they had run out of water entirely. Iran, the region’s largest producer of wheat, was forced to increase imports after the drought led to large crop failures last year. Food prices skyrocketed in the country even as the war in Ukraine had already fuelled food inflation around the world. In Syria, an 11-year war and economic meltdown combined with the drought to push 12 million people into hunger, according to the International Rescue Committee, a nonprofit humanitarian group. The crowding of communities around whatever water sources remain also led to cholera outbreaks. — The New York Times

Cats and dogs rule. OK!

One of my work colleagues, who has just got herself her first ever puppy dog, said to me last week, “It’s weird. I never ever thought of myself as a ‘dog person,’ but now I can’t imagine life without him.” Another, refers to hers as her “emotional support doggo.”

Pets can change your life in so many ways, and Jak, who has ‘Cooper,’ a Golden Labrador puppy, getting under her feet all day and half the night, is just one of the billions of us who get companionship and affection from their pets. Is it love? Is it unconditional? Pets have become adeptly tuned to human behaviour and emotions. And the philosopher Immanuel Kant wrote of the relationship between humans and their animals as being determined by man’s heart being, “determined by how he treats his animals.”

Pets have observable therapeutic benefits as, especially cats and dogs ease loneliness. Pet owners report that their pets have a soothing presence, as simply stroking a cat for instance, draws that almost somnambulant purring sound. Children almost ‘get away with murder’ with pets, as they climb all over and around them, push and pull them, and evolve, or grow up with them in often unique relationships. I guess the payback is that when they are a little older, caring for an animal can help children and young adults grow up more secure and active.

Pets certainly provide valuable companionship for all ages, but are particularly responsive to those with needs, such as children, the sick or infirm, and older adults, while research has shown that pet owners have significantly lower rates of depression, anxiety, lower cholesterol, lower blood pressure, stress levels, and demonstrate faster, and better statistical responses to heart attacks and strokes.

Dogs, in fact, are believed to be able to understand much of our vocabulary but are even better at interpreting our measure of need, our tone, our gestures, our body language, and the unique combinations of any or all of those. Any canine owner will tell you their dog can



Ray Petersen
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The writer is a media consultant

PETS HAVE OBSERVABLE THERAPEUTIC BENEFITS AS, ESPECIALLY CATS AND DOGS EASE LONELINESS

look into your eyes, assess your mood, what you are thinking, and feeling. They encourage exercise and contribute to cardiovascular health by ‘taking their owners for walks.’ They are also incredibly resilient, recognising, and forgiving unconditionally, while their protective instincts are legendary.

Personally, I believe that dogs have major failings. First, they very much live ‘in the moment,’ and as such, tend to forgive bad behaviour by some owners. Second, they are very much slaves to doggie treats, doing anything for a tiny reward. But most sadly, they don’t live long enough, and we will always outlive them. I have experienced just how cruel it can be to see a canine friend pass away, and in that moment, strength is only a word, and you would give anything to have your time over again. A decade is not enough time.

Christopher Hitchen observed the difference between cats and dogs to be thus: Dog owners will have noticed that given food, water, shelter, and affection, they will think you are their God, and be truly devoted to you. However, if you give cats the same food, water, shelter, and affection, they will take it to mean that they are Gods. The shift in the dynamic is resoundingly perceptible, and never more so than in our home, where our three cats Bronny, Antar, and Persy (yes, with an ‘S’) very much rule the roost. Or as my wife puts it, “It’s their home, and they let us sleep and eat here.”

Pets don’t really need much, but I feel that most have read Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs and made it their own domain. I’ll let you check it out for yourselves, and you will see that whatever we humans achieve, cats will do even better. That shelter, some food and water, and affection we spoke of earlier, and when you consider all that we get in return, it’s a pretty good deal for us humans either way, isn’t it?

Just remember what George Elliot said, “Animals are the most agreeable of friends, asking no questions, and never criticising what we do.” Would that some of our friends, family and colleagues kept similar counsel.

SHROUDED IN FOG



A wind turbine is shrouded in fog at the Low Carbon Energy Generation Park on the Keele University campus, Keele, Staffordshire, Britain, on Saturday. – Reuters

Getting from climate pledges to climate action

The Paris climate agreement, concluded in 2015, has been instrumental in rallying countries around the world to commit to reducing greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions. But setting ambitious climate targets has not always resulted in meaningful action. The United Nations’ recent “global stocktake” report shows that we are falling short of the drastic cuts needed to achieve climate stability, underscoring the urgent need for governments to act swiftly and decisively to keep global warming within safe limits.

As former regulators, we are confident that developing effective solutions is still feasible. While four economic sectors – industry, transportation, electricity, and buildings – account for 75 per cent of global GHG emissions, well-designed public policies could effectively reduce pollution from these sectors, promote consumer savings, safeguard public health, and stimulate sustainable economic growth.

But crafting effective policies to transform our fossil-fuel-based economies in time to avert climate catastrophe and meet humanity’s energy needs is a daunting task. Tackling it head-on requires a combination of technical, economic, and political expertise, along with significant financial resources and labour, but the agencies charged with devising and implementing these



Christopher Grundler,
Senior Adviser to the Crux Alliance, served at the US Environmental Protection Agency for more than 40 years



Ajay Mathur
is a former director general of the Indian Bureau of Energy Efficiency, is Director General of the International Solar Alliance

critical policies are understaffed and underfunded. Too often, regulators have no choice but to rely on the information provided to them by the very industries they are charged with overseeing. This dynamic can result in weak regulation and missed policy objectives.

Crucially, independent NGOs can diminish this power imbalance by providing policymakers with the information and technical know-how they need to design robust regulations that reduce harmful emissions effectively.

The US Environmental Protection Agency’s efforts to reduce truck pollution are a case in point. In 2016, when the EPA was drafting rules to limit GHG emissions from heavy-duty vehicles, like commercial trucks, various industry bodies provided policymakers with contradictory data. The International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT), an independent think-tank, undertook its own comprehensive study, which included detailed cost projections for the proposed regulations.

The ICCT’s impartial analysis provided the EPA with data demonstrating the cost-effectiveness of a stringent pollution standard. Consequently, these regulations are expected to result in emission cuts equivalent

to 294 coal plants, save truck owners \$170 billion in fuel costs, and prevent up to \$209 billion in damages over the next 30 years, positioning the United States as a world leader in truck efficiency.

Since then, the ICCT has assisted several governments in crafting regulations to improve commercial-truck efficiency. Using the organisation’s research, the European Commission drafted its first-ever rule targeting pollution from commercial trucks, which is projected to reduce truck emissions by 150 million tonnes by 2035.

Specialised NGOs can also assist emerging economies, particularly those with fewer resources, in kickstarting transformative climate

programmes. By facilitating the rapid adoption of clean-energy solutions, such organisations can increase access to affordable, pollution-free electricity. Moreover, rules that promote the use of cutting-edge technologies can foster innovation, enhance competitiveness, and help countries position themselves as climate leaders, benefiting their people and the planet.

In 2006, for example, India launched a nationwide appliance-efficiency programme. Through a dedicated division of the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), officials collaborated with NGOs such as CLASP (formerly known as the Collaborative Labeling and Appliance Standards Programme) to adapt

key features from successful efficiency-labelling programmes to the Indian market. CLASP’s in-depth analysis also helped the BEE identify which appliances it should focus on.

These insights enabled the BEE to launch its star labelling programme rapidly. The agency then collaborated with another NGO, The Energy and Resources Institute, to develop an efficiency programme tailored for small businesses. By facilitating cooperation with business leaders, TERI played a pivotal role in creating robust and cost-effective efficiency rules.

Since its launch, India’s appliance-labelling programme has offset 400 million tonnes of GHG emissions – roughly equivalent to the annual emissions from India’s transportation sector – and is projected to account for 30 per cent of the country’s emissions reduction by 2030. In addition, India has established itself as a leading manufacturer of energy-efficient air conditioners, owing to the growing demand for sustainable cooling solutions amid rising global temperatures. With efficiency programmes cutting corporate emissions by 105 million tonnes annually, Indian industry now ranks among the world’s most energy-efficient.



Governments need to act swiftly and decisively to keep global warming within safe limits.

sport

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ABDILKHAIR, DANZANJUNAI CLINCH MEN’S AMATEUR CHESS TITLES

A N U J I N , A M A S H T A K E W O M E N ’ S T R O P H I E S

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, NOV 11

Kazakhstan’s Abilmansur Abdilkhair (Open U-2300 category) and Mongolian players Dashtogtokh Amarsaikhan (Open U-2000) and Ganbat Danzanjunai (Open U-1700) claimed the championships in the men’s section as the World Amateur Chess Championships concluded in Muscat on Friday.

In the women’s section, Mongolia’s Bat-Amgalan Anujin was supreme in the U-1700 category, while Kazakhstan’s Bauyrzhan Amash grabbed the U-2300 title.

Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, was the chief guest of the closing ceremony attended by several dignitaries, national chess federations’ officials, and ambassadors from participating countries at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex.

The tournament was marked by amazing battles throughout all rounds among 389 players representing 64 countries from all over the planet. This diverse line-up of participants added an atmosphere of artistic competition, where the young challenged the old and the old challenged the young in thrilling matches.

The tournament garnered widespread attention, and over the course, it witnessed significant participation from heads of national chess federations in Asia, Fide, and other international entities. Each round commenced with an inaugural move made by one of the distinguished attendees, including HH Sayyida Hujaija bint Jaifer al Said and Fide President Arkady Dvorkovich.

In the men’s U-2300, Abdilkhair delivered exceptional performance throughout the nine rounds, securing the first position with 8 points. In the final round, he faced Mongolia’s Naranbold Sodbilegt in a tough match, where Abdilkhair dominated throughout, playing on the king’s side, enabling him to win and earn the crucial match point. Following closely in the standings was India’s Kartavya Anadkat with 7 points, securing the silver medal, and in third place was Egypt’s Marco Fadi with 7 points.

Dashtogtokh Amarsaikhan from Mongolia excelled in the U-2000 category, securing victories in all rounds. He particularly shone in the match against Alikhan Khazhatuly from Kazakhstan, a highly challenging encounter for both players. In a game where both players attempted to seize the points, Amarsaikhan ultimately emerged winner, clinching the category title with 9 points. In second place was India’s R Sham with 7.5 points, and the bronze medal was won by another Indian player, Ragavesh Velavaa, with 6.5 points.

In the U-1700 category, Danzanjunai excelled with 8 points. In the decisive confrontation with India’s Batra Deepak in the ninth round, the match was sensitive and challenging. It witnessed exciting clashes on the king’s side, and the bishop’s side, and high pressure in the centre. The Indian player’s attempts to win the match to snatch the category title created intense pressure on Ganbat. The match ended in a draw due to time constraints, securing the title for Ganbat.

In second place was Vadim Pak from Kyrgyzstan with 7.5 points, and in third place - his compatriot Medet Dzhaparov with the same score.

In the women’s U-1700, players from Mongolia dominated the top three positions. Anujin claimed the gold medal



Group photo of 2023 World Amateurs Chess Champions



Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, honouring Ganbat Danzanjunai, U-1700 category winner



Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, honouring Ganbat Danzanjunai, U-1700 category winner Dashtogtokh Amarsaikhan



KAZI Bauyrzhan Arnash celebrating after winning U-2300 category title



Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour honouring Abdilkhair, men’s U-2300

with 7.5 points after her victory in the ninth round against Wanjiru Kimani from Kenya. In the second position was her team-mate Tsogdelger Anudari with 7.5 points, and the third place was taken by Baldanjantsan Khuslenzaya with 7 points.

In the women’s U-2300, Arnash won the top spot with 5 points. Balandin Naymanova Patricia of Bulgaria came second with 5 points. While Lukina Aleksandra (Fide) won the bronze medal with 4.5 points.

At the closing ceremony, a visual presentation was delivered that encapsulated the days of the championship and its nine rounds, highlighting the most notable games and challenges faced by players in some exciting encounters.

RICH EXPERIENCE

Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain awarded the winners of all categories, as well as organising committee members and honoured the companies and supporting



Fogo Esquivel from MEX, competing in U-2000 category

entities that contributed to the success of the championship. Dr Mahad was accompanied by the Fide Executive Director Victor Bologan and Oman Chess Committee Chairman Ahmed al Balushi to honour the winners and organisers.

Dr Mahad stated, “Naturally, there

are numerous sports initiatives, and the Sultanate of Oman is capable of hosting global tournaments, whether at the amateur or professional level. The OCC efficiently organised this tournament, with the participation of around 400 players from 64 countries. This is a significant success for the committee and the game itself.”

Baowain further said, “Sports is one of the crucial aspects supporting tourism, placing countries on the global tourism map. These games have followers from various continents, and when countries host such tournaments, players and followers begin searching for the hosting country. Consequently, the country’s culture, history and civilisation are showcased. Therefore, hosting international tournaments contributes to tourism marketing, and world countries are keen on hosting tournaments to achieve these goals.”

OCC chief Ahmed al Balushi, said: “Thanks to the collective efforts of all partners and organisers, we have

successfully organised and hosted the tournament, described by participants as a brilliant success. The tournament attracted a large number of players, representing 64 countries, surpassing all previous editions. This greatly motivates us to host major international chess tournaments, and we are already preparing a file to host a world championship, which will be announced upon completion.”

Al Balushi said that the tournament achieved many goals and dimensions, including the tourism aspect. Through this tournament, we managed to introduce participants to the history of the Sultanate of Oman and its civilisational achievements.

Al Balushi said the Omani players gained a lot, playing with many ranked players, and some managed to improve their international rankings. One of our players achieved the tenth position in his category, which is a commendable achievement for an Omani player.



Taha al Kishri heads the executive office meeting.

Executive office of AAF discusses forthcoming events in Muscat

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 11

Muscat city hosted the Executive office meeting of Arabian Aquatics Federation (AAF) on Saturday. The meeting was chaired by Taha bin Suleiman al Kishri, Chairman of Arabian and Oman Aquatics Federation in presence of Yousef bin Ahmed al Saai, the honourable Chairman of the federation and the board members.

The meeting featured different topics including the revision on the submitted report of the 6th edition of Arabian Senior Swimming Championship which was held in Abu Dhabi during October 27 to 30.

The UAE event featured participation of more than 75 swimmers representing 16 countries namely: Sultanate of Oman, Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria, Djibouti, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Iraq, Qatar, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Yemen and the hosts UAE.

The executive office members reviewed the amendments made to the comments received from FINA, the international governing body of swimming and they were approved the final draft to be presented during the forthcoming meeting of the General Assembly for final approval.

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The meeting addressed also the latest ongoing preparations towards hosting the Second Arabian Water Games Championship for junior categories which is scheduled to be in Doha during January 10 to 15, which will include six aquatics sports namely: swimming, artistic swimming, diving, water polo, open water swimming, and high diving. The competitions will be held in three main venues including: Aspire, Hamad Aquatic Center, and Doha Port.

The organising committee distributed the invitation to all the Arabian countries to participate in the tournament which is considered an opportunity for the hosts to gear up ahead of Doha hosts for the 21st World Aquatics Championships which will be held in February 2024.

Messi celebrates Ballon d'Or with fans but Miami fall in friendly

FORT LAUDERDALE: Inter Miami saluted Argentine star Lionel Messi's eighth Ballon d'Or on Friday, but their friendly match to mark the achievement ended in a 2-1 loss to MLS rivals New York City FC.

The defeat, in a match between two teams long out of the MLS championship running, was just a footnote on a celebratory night that began with Messi offering his thanks to fans for the welcome he'd received in Florida.

Fans, many of them shouting "Messi! Messi!" in unison, nearly filled the DRV PNK stadium -- despite the fact that the club's MLS season ended last month.

"Thank you for being here, for this beautiful tribute," Messi said after raising the trophy he'd collected in Paris last month. "I have been here for a short time, but it seems like a lot of time."

"I want to thank all the people of Miami, not only those who are here, but in the city in general, for the treatment I and my family have received during this time."

"They showed me a lot of affection, they made me feel at home."

The 36-year-old superstar received a rapturous welcome when he arrived at Inter Miami in July and powered the struggling franchise to the Leagues Cup title in a tournament with MLS and Mexican league clubs in August.

He played his first MLS regular season match for Miami on August 26 as a second-half substitute, scoring a goal in Inter's 2-0 win at New York Red Bulls to snap an 11-match winless streak.

But nagged by a late-season leg injury, Messi was unable to lift Miami from the league cellar into the MLS Cup playoffs.

Even so, he has electrified the US league, his appeal underscored by a spike in jersey sales and a rise in sales of MLS season pass viewing subscriptions as well as ticket sales wherever Miami played.

Fans were chanting for him again late in Friday's match, but he was unable to produce an equalizer in a contest won by NYCFC with goals from Talles



Magno and Julian Fernandez.

Messi's latest Ballon d'Or rewarded exploits achieved well before his move to MLS, namely his inspirational performances at last year's World Cup in Qatar where he scored seven goals and was named the tournament's best

player as he carried Argentina to victory.

But Messi said he was aiming to build on Miami's Leagues Cup crown next season -- when his club will defend that title and compete in the US Open Cup and CONCACAF Champions

Cup in addition to their MLS campaign.

"I had no doubt that we were going to have a good time, that we were going to enjoy ourselves and today I have even less doubts that next year is going to be much better," he said. — AFP

Italy overcome spirited Slovenia to reach BJK Cup final



Italy's Jasmine Paolini celebrates winning her singles match against Tamara Zidansek. — Reuters

SEVILLE: Jasmine Paolini defeated Tamara Zidansek and Martina Trevisan beat Kaja Juvan as Italy secured a 2-0 victory over Slovenia in Seville on Saturday to reach the Billie Jean King Cup final and stay on course for their fifth crown in the team competition.

Paolini survived a wobble midway through the second singles clash before the world number 30 battled past Zidansek 6-2 4-6 6-3 to send her team through to the title clash, sparking huge celebrations from Italian fans at the Estadio de la Cartuja.

The 27-year-old Paolini was trailing 2-0 in the decider but quickly rediscovered her rhythm to dash the hopes of first-time semi-finalists Slovenia, who were the lowest-ranked of the 12 countries in the competition.

Trevisan earlier put Italy in front in their quest to make the final of the event for a sixth time with a battling 7-6(6) 6-3 victory

over Slovenian world number 104 Juvan.

After edging a tight opening set in the tie break, the 43rd-ranked Trevisan fought back from 3-1 down in the second set and grabbed the decisive break in the eighth game to secure the win in two hours and 20 minutes.

"I have to say that today was really tough," Trevisan said as Italy tasted success in their first semi-final appearance in the competition since 2014. "A lot of emotions and a lot of firsts ... A result obtained starting from very far."

Italy's last triumph in the competition came 10 years ago, and they could face stiff competition in Sunday's title clash.

Eleven-time winners Czech Republic, who will be high on confidence after their victory over 18-time champions United States on Friday, take on Canada - yet to win the tournament - in the second semi-final later on Saturday. — Reuters

Ducati's Bagnaia beats rival Martin to snatch pole at Malaysian Grand Prix

SEPANG: Reigning champion Francesco Bagnaia of Ducati seized pole position at the Malaysian Grand Prix by setting a lap record of 1:57.491 on Saturday, building pressure on Pramac Racing's championship contender Jorge Martin.

Bagnaia put on a brilliant final lap at the Sepang International Circuit to secure his first pole since the Catalan Grand Prix in September and beat last year's Malaysia poleman Martin, who crashed in the final minutes of the second qualifying session (Q2).

The 26-year-old Italian, chasing his second world crown, will be joined by Martin and Enea Bastianini of Ducati on the front row on Sunday as he looks to increase the gap to title-rival Martin, who trails by 13 points in the standings.

"It's one of the most important," Bagnaia said when asked how this pole position rated in his career. "Most of the lap times were incredible. I'm very happy. Being back in pole position is fantastic and it's going to be very positive for us this afternoon," he said, referring to the sprint race.

Martin, 25, looked on course to grab his fourth pole of the season and carry his flawless form from last month's Thailand Grand Prix until the Spaniard's dramatic crash at turn four, after which his provisional pole time of 1:57.549 was not enough.

"I feel good. We have to understand why the crash and don't repeat it in the race," Martin said.

Gresini's Alex Marquez will start fourth after showing promising pace throughout qualifying.

VR46 Racing duo Luca Marini and Marco Bezzecchi, third in the title race, took the fifth and sixth slots, respectively.

Brad Binder of KTM, Yamaha's Fabio Quartararo and Maverick Vinales of Aprilia were the other riders in the top nine.

Marc Marquez's qualifying ended painfully after the six-time MotoGP champion crashed in Q1 and will only start 20th on Sunday. His Spanish compatriot Aleix Espargaro, who sits fifth in the championship, also missed on a Q2 spot. — Reuters



Mitchell Marsh celebrating after the winning



Australia’s Marsh glad as Bangladesh hundred follows ‘negative 50’

PUNE: Mitchell Marsh joked he was glad to go from “negative 50” to an unbeaten 177 in a crushing eight-wicket win over Bangladesh that set Australia up for Thursday’s World Cup semifinal against South Africa in Kolkata.

Saturday’s victory meant Australia ended the group stage with a seventh successive win after two defeats at the start of their quest for a record-extending sixth World Cup title.

They were already assured of a last-four clash with the Proteas — a repeat of the dramatic 1999 tied semifinal between the countries that allowed Australia to reach that year’s final — before a ball was bowled in Pune.

But they will go into the knockout game buoyed by chasing down a target of 307 against strugglers Bangladesh with 32 balls to spare.

Marsh’s second hundred of the tournament, following 121 against Pakistan, was also his highest score but only third century in 87 one-day internationals.

He also shared century partnerships with David Warner 53 and Steve Smith, the

star batsman 63 not out after returning from vertigo.

“It’s always a great honour to score a hundred, but I was pretty cooked to be honest,” said Marsh, now batting at number three. “I was just starting to cramp at that stage, so I was trying to keep my heart rate low and not exert too much energy,” the 32-year-old added following a 132-ball innings including 17 fours and nine sixes.”

The paceman said he felt he owed Australia runs after conceding an expensive 48 in four wicketless overs during Bangladesh’s 306-8 — their highest total of the tournament.

“I started at negative 50 after my bowling, so I had to get a few (runs) back.

“With the amount of improvement with all cricket teams around the world, there’s been not one easy game so to get to the semifinals is great. But we’re very excited about what lies ahead.”

CHASE WHATEVER IS IN FRONT OF US

Australia, however, have conceded several totals of over 300 during the 10-team round-

robin phase of the World Cup, notably during a 134-run defeat by South Africa and, despite scoring 388 themselves, in a thrilling five-run win over New Zealand.

Afghanistan’s 291-5 almost proved too much for Australia in Mumbai on Tuesday before Glenn Maxwell’s stunning unbeaten 201 secured a three-wicket triumph after a collapse to 91-7.

But Marsh said there were explanations for Australia’s relative lack of wickets with the new ball.

“There’s probably a number of things that that comes down to. There’s been some really ‘fat’ (batsmen-friendly) wickets and some small grounds,” he said.

“I didn’t realise how small this one was, even though I played here a little bit. There’s a lot of good teams out there, a lot of teams have chased down big totals.

“So I think it’s about having a mentality to keep taking wickets, but understanding that when guys get on top that that’s going to happen at this level and whatever is put in front of us, we try and chase it down.” — AFP

England send Pakistan crashing out with thumping win

KOLKATA: England sent Pakistan crashing out of the World Cup with a convincing 93-run win as Ben Stokes and David Willey helped their team end their miserable title defence on a high in Kolkata on Saturday.

Stokes, who came out of ODI retirement for the World Cup, scored 84 while Joe Root hit 60 to lift England to an impressive 337-9 in their 50 overs before Pakistan folded on 244 in 43.3 overs.

Willey, who already announced he will retire from international cricket after the World Cup, removed Pakistan openers Abdullah Shafique (nought) and Fakhar Zaman (one) before dismissing Agha Salman for 51 to finish with 3-56.

With Salman’s wicket, Willey also completed 100 wickets in his 73rd ODI.

Fellow fast bowler Gus Atkinson (2-45) had Babar Azam for 38, caught at short mid-wicket off a miscued pull to end the Pakistan skipper’s below-par tournament on 320 runs with four fifties but without a century.

Spinners Moeen Ali (2-60) and Adil Rashid (2-55) took care of the middle-order as only Salman defied the bowling with a fighting 45-ball knock studded with six boundaries and a six.

Tail-enders Shaheen Shah Afridi scored 27 and Haris Rauf made 35 to at least take Pakistan past the 200-mark.

Ali removed Mohammad Rizwan for a 51-ball 36 and Iftikhar Ahmed for three while Rashid had Saud Shakeel bowled round his legs for 29 before bowling Shadab Khan for four with a googly.



David Willey celebrates after taking the wicket of Pakistan's Fakhar Zaman. — Reuters

Pakistan started the day needing to beat England by 287 runs in order to squeeze into the semifinals on net run-rate but that escape route was immediately closed when Jos Buttler won the toss and chose to bat first.

As a result, New Zealand became the fourth team into the semifinals and will face undefeated India in Mumbai on November 15.

A day later, Australia and South Africa will meet in the other semifinal in Kolkata. Stokes — dropped on 10 by Shaheen off his own bowling — rode his luck during a 76-ball innings.

WAYWARD BOWLING: Root added a

72-ball 60 after England won the toss and batted.

Stokes and Root built on a solid opening stand of 82 between Jonny Bairstow (59) and Dawid Malan (31), taking full advantage of a slow Eden Gardens pitch and some wayward bowling.

Bairstow hit seven boundaries and a six in his 61-ball knock — his second fifty in an otherwise lacklustre performance in the tournament.

Malan was the first to go, miscuing a reverse sweep off spinner Iftikhar Ahmed while Bairstow was caught in the covers off Rauf, Pakistan’s best bowler with 3-64.

Once Stokes, who came out of ODI retirement for the World Cup, got a life he continued to bat like he did during his century against the Netherlands in Pune three days ago, cracking 11 boundaries and two sixes. He was finally yorked by Shaheen in the 41st over after adding 132 for the third wicket with Root.

Root hit four boundaries in his third half century of the World Cup before he was caught off a leading edge against Shaheen who finished with 2-72.

Harry Brook made 30, with two sixes and as many fours, and Buttler hit 27 with a six and three boundaries as the pair added a quick 45 with England scoring 97 runs in the last ten overs.

Pakistan finished in fifth place in the 10-nation table while England are a further two places down, but still able to qualify for the 2025 Champions Trophy.

— AFP



Ben Stokes reacts. — Reuters



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Oman’s new tourism campaign to target Europe, GCC markets

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, NOV 11

A new digital tourism marketing campaign kicks off shortly with an eye on markets in Europe and the GCC region, according to key official of Visit Oman, the National Travel Operator of the Sultanate of Oman.

Shabib al Maamari, Managing Director, said the campaign, first unveiled by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism on November 6, 2023, will get underway on November 20. Dubbed ‘Gift For Life’, the campaign will run until the start of ITB Berlin 2024, the world’s premier travel trade show, which is due to take place in the German capital during early March 2024. The Sultanate of Oman is the official host country of ITB Berlin 2024.

Speaking to Breaking Travel News (BTN) during the World Travel Market (WTM), which concluded in London last week, Al Maamari said the ‘Gift For Life’ campaign encompasses what Oman has to offer as a holiday destination.

“We’re encouraging people to reach out to their loved ones and give them something that they can enjoy: which is Oman, in this case. We have a wealth of content,



Shabib al Maamari, Managing Director - Visit Oman

a wealth of experience that we want to promote through this digital campaign. And what better way than gifting someone that you love with an experience of a lifetime in Oman.”

Holiday packages on offer as part of this initiative centre around adventure tourism, solitude, culture and other themes characteristic of Oman’s diverse tourism attributes, Al Maamari said.

“We also have 3, 000 kilometres of coastline, we have the mountains, we have the desert, and we have culture. So there are a lot of different offerings for different market segments.”

Visit Oman’s presence at WTM 2023, which is essentially a B2B-focused travel fair, was an opportunity to showcase

Oman to participants eyeing new destinations and events, Al Maamari noted.

Source markets for Oman, he said, are those that can be reached by national carrier Oman Air. While the list includes neighbouring GCC countries, West Europe and India, Oman is also eager to expand into East European markets, he stated.

Visit Oman also leverages its relationships and arrangements with over 60 airlines to connect with destinations around the world, including North and South America and the Far East, he said.

During the 3-day WTM, which ran from November 6 – 8, Visit Oman signed a number of agreements with leading travel service providers to help broaden the appeal of its integrated digital travel booking platform.

Notable was a partnership pact signed with global connectivity platform Proticket, which will enable all B2B stakeholders, including online travel agents, hotels, tour operators, and destination management companies, to explore Oman’s full range of offerings. The partnership will facilitate mobile transactions, timely bookings, and a higher level of digital maturity, ensuring seamless interactions between industry resellers.

Total investments in Khazaen climb to RO 323m by Q3 end

MUSCAT: Khazaen Economic City continues to invest in infrastructure and services to enhance its appeal to local and international investors, according to Eng Salim bin Sulaiman al Thuhli, CEO.

In a statement to ONA, Al Thuhli said the hub has been able to attract a large number of local and foreign investments in key sectors such as the logistics, industrial, food, pharmaceutical and clean energy sectors.

By the end of Q3 2023, Khazaen had pulled in RO 323 million worth of investments (approx. \$840m). As many as 110 projects promoted by investors from 17 different countries are in various stages of development and operation. Thirty of these ventures are under construction, he said.

Twenty of the projects pertain to the logistics sector. Worth RO 65 million in investments, the most notable are Khazaen Dry Port,



Eng Salim bin Sulaiman al Thuhli, CEO, Khazaen Economic City

the logistics centre of the Qatari Gulf Warehousing Company, the logistics facility of Naqel Express of Saudi Arabia, and a similar facility of Qatari SARCO. Additionally, Omani logistics company Nol is launching a similar facility, while National Gas Company is establishing the first integrated truck rest station in Oman, with an investment value of RO 2.7 million.

Work is also progressing on the Khazaen Central Market for

vegetables and fruits. Already about 85 per cent complete, the facility is slated to open during Q2 2024, he said.

Also making headway is Khazaen’s first integrated Workers’ Village, offering around 2,500 beds for workers, 300 rooms for employees, and cafeteria, entertainment, health centre, and shopping services. The project, costing around RO 12 million, will launch around the middle of next year.

In the Food Cluster of Khazaen, projects under development include a frozen bakery products factory of Salalah Mills, a beverages plant of Crystal Barka Carbonated Water Factory, the Yasmina Al Sharq Food Manufacturing Complex, and Al Safwa Factory for Hospitality and Packaging Services. In all, 15 projects of a total value of RO 85 million are under development in the Food Cluster.

— ONA

Dhofar Governorate wins award for sustainability and beauty

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, NOV 11

Dhofar Governorate has won an award for being a distinctive and sustainable city. The award was conferred by the Arab Towns Organisation in recognition of the

governorate’s efforts to protect the environment, preserve its traditional culture, and create a livable and vibrant community for all.

In line with its commitment to sustainable development, Dhofar Governorate has implemented a number of initiatives to reduce

its environmental impact. These initiatives include planting trees and creating green spaces, developing renewable energy sources, and promoting energy efficiency. The governorate is also working to protect its natural resources, such as its coastline and mountains.

 AL TASNIM التسليم وزارة العمل In collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Al Tasnim Enterprises LLC, we delighted to announce exciting employment opportunities for Omanis. We are offering the following positions for projects associated with our company at Oil and Gas sites			
Position	Education	Experience in Years	Job Requirements
Planning Engineer	Degree in Any Discipline Engineering	6	Profound knowledge in Primavera and working with EPC contractor in Oil & Gas Construction projects like Cross Country Pipeline, Well Hook-ups etc..
Project Engineer	Degree in Any Discipline Engineering	8	Must have knowledge of project cost control and planning systems. Should be aware of the challenges of EPC contract like Design, Procurement etc.
Design Engineer	Degree in Any Discipline Engineering	8	Experience in design of Oil & Gas facilities with extensive experience in front end and detailed design, plus proven experience in AutoCAD
Estimation Engineer	Degree in Any Discipline Engineering	8	Responsible for providing accurate and timely cost estimates based on the project scope, specifications, and market prices.
Quantity Surveyor	Degree in Any Discipline Engineering + RICS	5	Responsible for Estimating quantities, costs and time scales for material and labour. Identifying and weighing up commercial risks. Should have experience of Sub-contract management. Monitoring and controlling the costs and progress of the project. Capable to provide cost-effective and sustainable solutions.
Supply Chain Manager	Degree in Any Discipline Engineering	15+	Responsible for overseeing and optimizing the end-to-end supply chain processes. Developing and implementing supply chain strategies that align with the business objectives and market conditions.
Procurement Executive	Degree in Any Discipline Engineering	5	Responsible for all expediting activities from the purchase order placement to material delivery.
Construction Engineer	Degree in Any Discipline Engineering	10	Single point responsibility for the execution of project construction activities during the execution phase. This includes assuring that all Construction works are carried out as per Company standards, specification, with quality assurance and HSE requirements.
QC Inspector Civil	Degree in Civil Engineering	5	Responsible for monitoring and administering the QA/QC plan or program and ensuring compliance with the project requirements, inspecting the materials and components before, during, and after installation.
QC Inspector Welding	Degree in Mechanical Engineering	5	
QC Inspector E&I	Degree in Electrical Engineering	5	
Testing Engineer (PDO Approved)	Degree in Electrical Engineering	10	Experience in testing and commissioning of large gas turbine power stations, high voltage transmission system, and high voltage substations etc. is a must, as appropriate for the certification category requested. He should have a good knowledge of latest electrical protection relays and testing equipment. He shall be well versed with PDO Electrical Safety Rules & Electrical Safety Operating Procedures and electrical permit system.
Site Engineer - Permit Civil	Degree/Diploma in Civil Engineering	5	Responsible for applying for and obtaining the necessary permits and approvals for the execution. Reviewing the project scope, specifications, and requirements and identifying the relevant permits and approvals needed from PDO authorities.
Site Engineer - Permit Mechanical	Degree/Diploma in Mechanical Engineering	5	
Site Engineer - Permit Electrical	Degree/Diploma in Electrical Engineering	5	
Site Engineer - Permit Instrumentation	Degree/Diploma in Elect/Electronics/ Instrumentation Engineering	5	Responsible for ensuring the health, safety, and environmental aspects of the Oil & Gas Construction. Ensuring compliance with all relevant HSE regulations, laws, and best practices. Developing and implementing HSE policies, procedures, and standards.
HSE Manager	Engineering Degree with NEBOSH	15+	
HSE Lead	Degree/Diploma in Engineering with NEBOSH	10	Responsible for all day to day activities supporting the management and administration of activities governing HSE management standards and systems, across assigned company projects and businesses. Responsible to develop a safety conscious culture within the projects and business units. Responsible to ensure productivity targets, financial objectives & KPIs as set are achieved and that all HSE processes are running smoothly and promptly.
Road Safety Manager	Degree/Diploma in Engineering with NEBOSH	10	Responsible for Implementation of road safety standard in the company operations, coordinating all interior clusters Planning and implementation of people commuting policy. Responsible for providing assurance on absolute compliance with regards to HSE MS and legislation in relation to road transport safety.
HSE Advisor	Diploma with NEBOSH certification	5	Responsible for all for day to day activities supporting internal and external HSE audit programs, remedial actions and non-conformity management, ensuring seamless documentation and knowledge sharing through Intelix and other management information systems. Responsible for tracking, monitoring and closeout of corrective actions.
Interested candidates, please follow the link provided below: https://forms.gle/GWorqaeHunPJArX7 Please note that all submissions must be made through the provided link by Thursday, 23 rd November 2023 Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted			

IMF team confers with Omani Economic Association experts

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, NOV 11

A team of officials from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), currently on an Article IV Mission to the Sultanate of Oman, met with representatives of the Omani Economic Association here recently. The discussions focused on macroeconomic developments and the outlook for growth. Conversations spanned critical topics, encompassing financial and monetary policies, prospects for economic diversification and competitiveness, and reforms in social protection and labour laws.

This session was part of the IMF team's consultations with the Omani authorities. A comprehensive report on Oman's economic situation will be compiled by the experts for submission to the Fund's Executive Council.

Conducted at the Omani Economic Association's headquarters, the meeting delved into reforms and mechanisms aimed at enhancing economic stability. Focus areas included strategies for economic diversification, boosting competitiveness, and a review of government plans to achieve financial sustainability. Emphasis was placed on reducing the public debt-to-GDP ratio, fostering



IMF team confers with Omani Economic Association experts

economic growth for national employment, and strengthening the role of private sector institutions in the development process.

The IMF mission commended Oman's commitment to maintaining fiscal sustainability and acknowledged efforts to mitigate economic cycle trends by establishing a spending ceiling unaffected by oil price fluctuations.

Chaired by Cesar Manuel Serra from the IMF delegation and Dr Khalid bin Saeed al Amri, Chairman of the Omani Economic Association, the meeting saw participation from experts on both sides and officials from the Central Bank of Oman.

Dr Khalid bin Saeed al Amri

underscored the meeting's focus on crucial economic and financial reforms, national economic development, and the analysis of recent economic developments and risks. The discussion also covered economic diversification and competitiveness. Dr Al Amri highlighted the importance of the IMF's visit and the Omani Economic Association's neutral stance, expressing commitment to collaborative efforts with the government and stakeholders to achieve economic and social goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040. He expressed optimism about continued joint efforts for progress and sustainability in line with the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040.

In a LinkedIn post, HH Sayyid

Dr Adham al Said, prominent Omani economist, shared insights from discussions with the IMF mission, alongside representatives from the Omani Economic Association.

The IMF routinely conducts visits to Oman as part of the Article IV consultations, engaging with government officials, experts, and civil society organisations. The discussions covered a broad spectrum of topics, including economic reforms, diversification, fiscal developments, and overarching issues. These meetings provide a valuable opportunity to gain insights into Oman's ground-level realities, fostering a rich learning experience for all involved.

Pledge to accelerate development of Al Dhahirah integrated zone

RIYADH: Eng Ali al Madawi, Deputy Secretary-General for Regions Affairs at the Economic Cities and Zones Authority in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, said Saudi authorities are making tireless efforts to support investments in the Sultanate of Oman in line with a pledge by both countries to strengthen fraternal relations and foster mutual growth and prosperity.

He told the Oman News Agency that the integrated economic zone in Al Dhahirah is an embodiment of the fraternal relations between the leaderships of Saudi Arabia and Oman, and a reflection of the desire of the two leaderships to support development and investment cooperation



Pledge to accelerate development of Al Dhahirah integrated zone

between them.

Al Madawi stressed his country's keenness to launch initial work on the infrastructure of the integrated economic zone in Al Dhahirah Governorate, following the signing of an agreement by the Saudi Fund for Development committing 1.2 billion Saudi riyals in funding for the project.

Welcoming the recent visit of a delegation from Oman's special economic zones and free zones, the official noted that an MoU has been signed to support cooperation in various fields aimed at stimulating investment inflows into the integrated zone. — ONA

Visit Oman announces partnership with Attraction World Group

LONDON: At this year's World Travel Market (WTM), Visit Oman, the Sultanate of Oman's B2B travel booking platform, announced a new partnership with Attraction World Group (AWG), a leading distributor of high-quality travel experiences and attractions.

This alliance comes on the heels of Visit Oman's recent collaboration with digital enabler Prioticket and represents a significant step in the nation's digital tourism strategy. The signing, which took place amidst the buzz and global networking of the WTM from November 6 to 8, sets the stage for a transformative collaboration aimed at digitising and diversifying Oman's travel offerings.

The signing ceremony was attended by the esteemed presence of dignitaries, among them Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism

and Chairman of Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group); Dr Hashil al Mahrouqi, CEO of OMRAN Group; and Olly Nicholls, Group CEO of Attraction World Group (AWG). This latest partnership aims to expand the digital footprint of Oman's tourism sector, harnessing the synergies of both collaborations to enhance the country's global tourism appeal and further support the growth of Omani SMEs.

AWG is known as a prominent global leader in delivering tours, excursions, and exceptional travel experiences. Their emphasis is on advanced technology solutions customised for travel and tourism industry partners. Visit Oman will leverage AWG's robust digital infrastructure and industry standing, to significantly amplify the reach and accessibility of the products offered by Omani ventures, especially those offered



This partnership stands out as a pioneering effort to position Omani tourism businesses on the global map

by small and medium enterprise.

"The alliance with Attractions World Group marks a significant leap in integrating state-of-the-art technology with our tourism initiatives," asserted Dr Hashil al Mahrouqi, CEO of OMRAN Group. "It is a move that aligns

with our unwavering commitment to cultivate novel opportunities that stimulate tourism in Oman through innovative digital platforms. This partnership stands out as a pioneering effort to position Omani tourism businesses on the global map, enabling them

to be accessible to an international audience at the click of a button. It is about simplifying the path to global visibility, minimising marketing overheads, and driving the growth and development of local enterprises."

Group CEO of Attraction World Group, Olly Nicholls, echoed this vision, stressing the strategic importance of connecting global tourists with Oman's unique experiences. "We are absolutely thrilled to announce our latest partnership with Visit Oman. This collaboration marks the beginning of an exciting journey, not only to provide unparalleled distribution opportunities for attractions, experiences, tours, and other captivating activities within Oman but also to afford Visit Oman's partners immediate access to our extensive global network. This spans retail travel

agents, airlines, cruise lines, tour operators, and loyalty schemes.

Together with Visit Oman, we're embarking on a mission to empower Omani SMEs, enabling them to put their exceptional products on the international stage. We're setting new standards in travel industry distribution and offer an incredible platform to enhance the visibility of Oman's unique tourism experiences."

"In an age where most travellers arrange their trips online, digitisation means putting Oman on the map, quite literally, in the digital world that modern tourists navigate," explains Shabib al Maamari, Managing Director of Visit Oman "We're ensuring that with just a few clicks, every Omani tourism entrepreneur and service provider can gain direct advantages from the international exposure to our vibrant culture and the diverse beauty of our landscapes."

Industrial innovation key to harnessing new energies, hydrogen

PARIS: The International Energy Agency (IEA) has underscored the importance of industrial innovation to help unlock the Sultanate of Oman's competitive advantage and boost low-carbon exports.

In a report, the Paris-based agency also urged Oman to harness its energy and mineral resources to become a leader in industrial innovation by exploiting opportunities in mining and technology manufacturing. It cited the potential for capitalising on hydrogen production as a primary sector, and investing in clean energy-powered industrial projects in the downstream sector.

These measures, the report noted, will help advance the country's future economy and must thus be integrated into a strong road-map for industrial innovation by adopting international best practices. This road-map will push Oman to the forefront of global sustainable energy, IEA stated.

The report suggested that the road-map includes topics that focus on technological development in the hydrocarbons, new energies and hydrogen sectors so that Oman can develop a diverse portfolio of both hydrocarbons and carbon capture initiatives, while at the same time moving towards developing new energies, which requires technologies such as electrolyses. Furthermore, carbon capture and storage technologies represent an opportunity to strengthen the sector and make it competitive in terms of cost and sustainability, it said.

Additionally, the road-map must adopt hydrogen as a new economic engine, positioning Oman as the sixth largest exporter of green hydrogen in the world by 2030. The road-map must include the



Abdullah al Abri, Oman's representative at the IEA

digitisation of renewable energy systems, as artificial intelligence, Internet of Things and machine learning technologies will allow Oman to enhance energy production, storage and distribution, and advanced energy storage solutions. Oman will soon begin generating many renewable energy for the uses of electricity and green hydrogen, which requires this change in the energy-to-storage mix.

Other topics that can be included in the road-map are sustainable value chains, modernising and expanding infrastructure and industrial infrastructure to accommodate the next wave of energy innovations, improving logistics services, and building capabilities for high-tech manufacturing, including establishing pioneering centres of excellence, public and private research centres, and information centres to disseminate expertise.

Dr Abdullah bin Sulaiman al Abri, the international advisor and representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the International Energy Agency, explained that there are new economic horizons for which Oman must be prepared to benefit from the potential of new energies and hydrogen to expand its industrial and innovative horizons. — ONA



Industrial cluster within Salalah Free Zone



Wall Street rebounds on doubts rates will go higher

NEW YORK: The dollar eased and global equities rebounded on Friday as Wall Street rallied on doubts that interest rates will go higher even after Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell cautioned that tighter monetary policy might be needed to tame inflation.

Powell's remarks on Thursday that the fight to restore price stability "had a long way to go" at first. But a softer labour market as seen in last week's unemployment report and speculation that next week's consumer prices index (CPI) will show slower inflation spurred bulls into action.

US consumer sentiment fell for a fourth straight month in November and households' expectations for inflation rose again, with their medium-term outlook for price pressures at the highest in more than a dozen years, the University of Michigan's preliminary reading of consumer sentiment showed on Friday.

MSCI's gauge of global equity performance closed up 0.76 per cent, while Wall Street's main indices surged 1 per cent or more. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 1.15 per cent, the S&P 500 gained 1.56 per cent and the Nasdaq Composite added 2.05 per cent, its biggest percentage jump since May.

For the week, the Dow rose 0.7 per cent, the S&P 500 gained 1.3



The Wall Street sign is pictured at the New York Stock exchange (NYSE) in New York City, United States – Reuters

per cent and the Nasdaq advanced 2.4 per cent.

Earlier in Europe, the pan-regional STOXX 600 index closed down 1.0 per cent.

US Treasury yields rose sharply on Thursday after a weak 30-year bond auction. The extra yield needed to get the issue sold was the largest in several years as was the amount dealers were forced to absorb, said Dec Mullarkey, managing director for investment strategy and asset allocation at SLC Management in Boston.

"The market continues to struggle with what is the right premium or clearing level to fund the large pipeline of government debt issuance," he said.

"Investors are worried about the prospects of higher rates for longer and the price volatility that may invoke," he said, reflecting a variance of views between bond and equity investors about rates.

The two-year Treasury yield, which reflects interest rate expectations, rose 3.2 basis points to 5.054 per cent, while the

benchmark 10-year yield slid 0.6 basis points at 4.624 per cent.

Futures show about a 35 per cent probability the Fed will cut its overnight lending rate by 25 basis points by next May, according to the CME's FedWatch tool, but the market expects that rate to stay above 5 per cent through June.

Asian stocks closed the day down as worries over China, the world's second-biggest economy, resurfaced after data on Thursday showed Chinese consumer prices dipped again. — Reuters

Germany strengthens control over energy infrastructure

FRANKFURT: Germany has successfully acquired a minority stake in local utility EnBW's high-voltage business, as reported by the company on Friday. This move solidifies Germany's influence over crucial energy infrastructure, aiming to expedite the country's transition to sustainable energy.

State lender KfW (KFW.U.L) has completed the purchase of a 24.95 per cent stake in EnBW's TransnetBW, marking a significant step that amplifies the government's involvement in the sector. This comes in addition to its existing 20 per cent stake in the rival network, 50Hertz.

The acquisition by KfW has been in the works for a considerable period and is part of Germany's strategy to fortify its



Indonesia inaugurates Southeast Asia's largest floating solar power plant in West Java province.

position in the energy transition. EnBW had previously sold a 24.95 per cent stake in TransnetBW to a consortium led by savings banks for approximately 1 billion euros

(\$1.1 billion) earlier this year. The conditions of KfW's purchase mirror those of the savings bank-led consortium, although specific details remain undisclosed. KfW

has refrained from commenting on the purchase price.

Thomas Kusterer, EnBW's finance chief, expressed enthusiasm about the new co-investors, stating, "We are delighted to welcome two long-term oriented and reliable co-investors on board at TransnetBW. This provides EnBW with additional funding for growth investments to accelerate the implementation of the energy transition in Germany." Germany aims to increase its ownership in the power transmission sector, considering it crucial for the nation's energy security. In line with this objective, Berlin is actively seeking to acquire the German division of Dutch operator TenneT for a sum exceeding 20 billion euros. — Reuters

Google in talks to invest in AI startup character



An illuminated Google logo is seen inside an office building in Zurich.

NEW YORK: Alphabet's Google is in talks to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in Character.AI, as the fast growing artificial intelligence chatbot startup seeks capital to train models and keep up with user demand, two sources briefed on the matter told Reuters.

The investment, which could be structured as convertible notes, according to a third source, will deepen the existing partnership Character.AI already has with Google, in which it uses Google's cloud services and Tensor Processing Units (TPUs) to train models.

Google and Character.AI did not respond to requests for comment.

Founded by former Google employees Noam Shazeer and Daniel De Freitas, Character.AI allows people to chat with virtual versions of celebrities like Billie Eilish or anime characters, while creating their own chatbots and AI assistants. It is free to use, but offers subscription model that charges \$9.99 a month for users who want to skip the virtual line to access a chatbot.

Character.AI's chatbots, with various roles and tones to choose from, have appealed to users ages 18 to 24, who contributed about 60% of its website traffic, according to data from Similarweb. The demographic is helping the company position itself as

the purveyor of more fun personal AI companions, compared to other AI chatbots from OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Bard.

The company previously said its website had attracted 100 million monthly visits in the first six months since its launch.

Character.AI is also in talks to raise equity funding from venture capital investors, which could value the company at over \$5 billion, sources said. In March, it raised \$150 million in a funding round led by Andreessen Horowitz at \$1 billion valuation. The talks with Google are ongoing and terms of the deal could change, said the sources, who requested anonymity as the discussions are private.

Google has been investing in AI startups, including \$2 billion for model maker Anthropic in the form of convertible notes, on top of its earlier equity investment. Anthropic uses Google's cloud services as well as its latest version of TPUs.

That is part of a recent trend in which big tech cloud services providers are striking deals with AI companies to entice them to use certain cloud or hardware in the computer-intensive race to build models and serve consumers, including Microsoft investments in OpenAI and Google and Amazon's bets on Anthropic.

— Reuters

Moody's turns negative on US credit rating

NEW YORK: Moody's on Friday lowered its outlook on the US credit rating to "negative" from "stable" citing large fiscal deficits and a decline in debt affordability, a move that drew immediate criticism from President Joe Biden's administration.

The move follows a rating downgrade of the sovereign by another ratings agency, Fitch, this year, which came after months of political brinkmanship around the US debt ceiling.

The ratings agency said in a statement that "continued political polarisation" in Congress raises the risk that lawmakers will not be able to reach consensus on a fiscal plan to slow the decline in debt affordability."

"Any type of significant policy response that we might be able to

see to this declining fiscal strength probably wouldn't happen until 2025 because of the reality of the political calendar next year," William Foster, a senior vice president at Moody's, told Reuters in an interview.

Moody's is the last of the three major rating agencies to maintain a top rating for the US government. Fitch changed its rating from triple-A to AA+ in August, joining S&P which has had an AA+ rating since 2011.

While it changed its outlook, indicating a downgrade is possible over the medium term, Moody's affirmed its long-term issuer and senior unsecured ratings at 'Aaa' citing US credit and economic strengths.

Immediately after the Moody's release, White House spokesperson



Moody's headquarters in New York, US. – AFP

Karine Jean-Pierre said the change was "yet another consequence of congressional Republican extremism and dysfunction."

"While the statement by Moody's maintains the United

States' Aaa rating, we disagree with the shift to a negative outlook. The American economy remains strong, and Treasury securities are the world's preeminent safe and liquid asset," Deputy Treasury

Secretary Wally Adeyemo said in a statement.

Adeyemo said the Biden administration had demonstrated its commitment to fiscal sustainability, including through

over \$1 trillion in deficit reduction measures included in a June agreement struck with Congress on raising the US debt limit, and Biden's proposal to reduce the deficit by nearly \$2.5 trillion over the next decade.

Treasury yields have soared this year on expectations the Federal Reserve will keep monetary policy tight, as well as on US -focused fiscal concerns.

The sharp rise in Treasury yields "has increased pre-existing pressure on US debt affordability," Moody's said.

A Moody's downgrade could exacerbate fiscal concerns, but investors have said they are sceptical it would have a material impact on the US bond market, seen as a safe haven because of its depth and liquidity. — Reuters

Economic resilience amid global challenges



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The author is a member of the International Press Association

In the face of a complex global economic landscape, the Sultanate of Oman's recent performance, as detailed in the Allianz Trade report, stands out as a testament to its robust economic policies and strategic vision. Despite the myriad challenges confronting the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, including high food and fuel prices, financial tightening, and the extraordinary uncertainty brought about by geopolitical tensions, Oman's economy has demonstrated remarkable resilience and foresight.

While countries in the MENA region are experiencing exacerbated fiscal pressures at a time when policy space is constrained due to the pandemic, Oman has navigated

these challenges with an adept hand. The nation's fiscal surplus of 7.5 per cent of GDP in 2022 is a salient indicator of its sound fiscal management, especially when compared to the region's history of fiscal responses that often led to increased budget rigidity and diminished equity.

Oman's strategic approach has been to mitigate the impact of rising commodity prices through targeted and well-planned policy responses, rather than resorting to the generalised price subsidies that have historically led to adverse fiscal outcomes in the region. This reflects a discerning use of fiscal space and a continuation of the country's progressive subsidy reform journey.

With a current account surplus of 5.2 per cent of GDP in 2022, Oman has reversed the

trend of deficits and is building a strong foundation for economic stability. This is a significant achievement in a region where economies are buffeted by the confluence of global slowdown and commodity price volatility.

On the labour front, Oman's reforms are pivotal. The introduction of a new labour law in July 2023, which incentivises the hiring of Omani nationals in the private sector, is a strategic move to reduce reliance on expatriate labour and boost national employment. This is particularly important as Oman, like its regional peers, strives to balance the need for economic diversification with the imperative of creating job opportunities for its citizens.

Economically, Oman's reliance on hydrocarbons is being strategically managed.

Accounting for approximately 35 per cent of GDP, the energy sector remains significant, but diversification efforts are yielding tangible results. The petrochemical project expansion and the landmark LNG deal with Germany signify Oman's commitment to broadening its economic base and ensuring sustainable growth.

The banking sector in Oman underscores the country's broader economic stability. With a rebound in profitability and robust capital and liquidity buffers, the sector is well-positioned to support economic growth and weather global financial shocks.

Infrastructure development, a key driver of economic diversification, is seeing significant investment in Oman. New roads, rail, and port

projects are not only enhancing domestic connectivity but also integrating Oman more closely with the economies of the Gulf and beyond. These projects are essential for the growth of the logistics sector and are a strategic complement to the nation's broader economic development goals.

In conclusion, the combination of Oman's fiscal surplus, controlled inflation, labour market reforms, strategic diversification, and solid banking sector performance positions the country as a beacon of stability and growth in the MENA region. By maintaining a steady course and investing in future-proof economic strategies, Oman is setting a course to not only navigate the present challenges but also to thrive in the years to come.

EU's industrial policy: challenges and strategies



DANIEL GROS
is Director of the Institute for European Policy-Making at Bocconi University.

The EU has never had an active industrial policy for the simple reason that, unlike China and the US, it does not have a federal budget with which to provide large subsidies to specific sectors. But the EU does have the tools it needs to implement growth-enhancing measures of its own.

"Industrial policy" has moved to the centre of economic and even national-security debates, from the United States to the European Union. But the term can be misleading, not only because its meaning is rather vague, but also because it fails to capture the true imperative facing policymakers.

Industrial policy refers to the use of a wide range of tools, from regulations to subsidies and tax incentives, to support overall economic growth or foster dynamism in specific sectors. It is as old as the state. Go back 2,000 years to China's Han dynasty, and you will find that iron-making was a state monopoly.

Europe has its own long history of pursuing industrial policy. European governments spent centuries supporting vital industries and technologies – especially those most relevant to war – in order to stay ahead of their enemies, who were often also their neighbours. More recently, they have pursued joint industrial policies to integrate, not fight, with one another.

The fundamental shift began in 1950, with the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community. Far from improving countries' chances in war, this Europe-wide industrial policy to pool the production of coal and steel discouraged fighting on the continent. Putting coal and steel – both essential to the production of tanks and guns – under the control of a joint High Authority meant that no country could arm itself against the others. At the same time, the policy supported the post-World War II economic recovery.

Other crucial steps toward European integration can also be described as industrial policy. The EU as we know it today began with a programme to abolish intra-European tariffs by creating a Customs Union in



1958. This was later followed by a major effort to reduce red tape at European borders by harmonising hundreds of regulations, culminating in the Single Market Act of 1992.

European member states also pursue individual industrial policies, though strict EU controls on state aid – intended to prevent country-specific subsidies from giving firms an unfair competitive advantage – limit their room for manoeuvre. But national governments still invest in research and development, support technical education, and build needed infrastructure.

Most economists agree that such interventions can enhance growth and dynamism. Where the debate about industrial policy heats up is over the question of whether governments should directly intervene in the economy by supporting specific sectors. A recent study by Réka Juhász, Nathan J Lane, and Dani Rodrik, which showed that government action can have very long-lasting implications for the location of certain industries, has added fuel to the fire.

But industrial policy is not high on government agendas nowadays because economic research says it should be.

Governments are motivated primarily by geopolitical tensions: both the US and China have introduced official industrial strategies that stress the need to provide support for sectors deemed critical for national security. In this sense, today's industrial great-power competition looks a lot like the old, war-ravaged Europe.

But what about a Europe-wide industrial policy? The European Commission did recently publish a list of critical technologies. But, in implementing a US- or China-style industrial policy, Europe faces a paradox: the EU's effort to end the use of industrial policy as a geopolitical tool among European countries significantly limited its member states' room to respond to geopolitically motivated policies by others.

To be sure, the EU has dealt with sectors in decline. In 1978, when the steel industry was struggling, the European Economic Community implemented the so-called Davignon Plan, which capped production across European countries in a roughly proportional manner. But the EU has never had an active industrial policy for the simple reason that, unlike China and the US, it does

not have a federal budget with which to provide large subsidies to specific sectors.

It is thus understandable that EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has called for a new European Sovereignty Fund. But it also makes sense that national leaders, who would have to finance this fund, are reluctant to hand their taxpayers' money over to the EU to foster industrial development somewhere else.

In the absence of EU-level financing for a common industrial policy, the European Commission is loosening the rules for state aid. For example, under the European Chips Act, the Commission can approve targeted national support for large semiconductor factories. But whether you believe that member states' newfound ability to support specific industries will have the desired effect depends on which side of the industrial-policy debate you land.

Those who believe that governments can identify sectors with potential for positive growth will welcome the EU's approach, especially because the Commission reserves the right to assess whether any proposed national state aid would be proportional and efficiency-enhancing.

The sceptics, on the other hand, believe that national governments are likely to finance "national champions" or politically convenient projects, and that EU bureaucrats are not well-suited to disentangle complex supply chains and pinpoint the sectors with the most potential.

Past experience, which highlights the hold national champions have on politicians, suggests that the sceptics' view might be the more realistic.

On the other hand, industrial policy can and should be about much more than providing large enterprises with billions of euros with which to construct high-tech factories at home. Increasing R&D spending would provide a stronger base for high-tech industry in general.

This indirect support could still be targeted. For example, the microchip industry would benefit from the creation of specialist technical schools and support for local expertise on key elements of the chip-making process. Such an approach is more strategy than policy – and it is likely to do far more good for Europe than would pouring public money into a few mega-factories.

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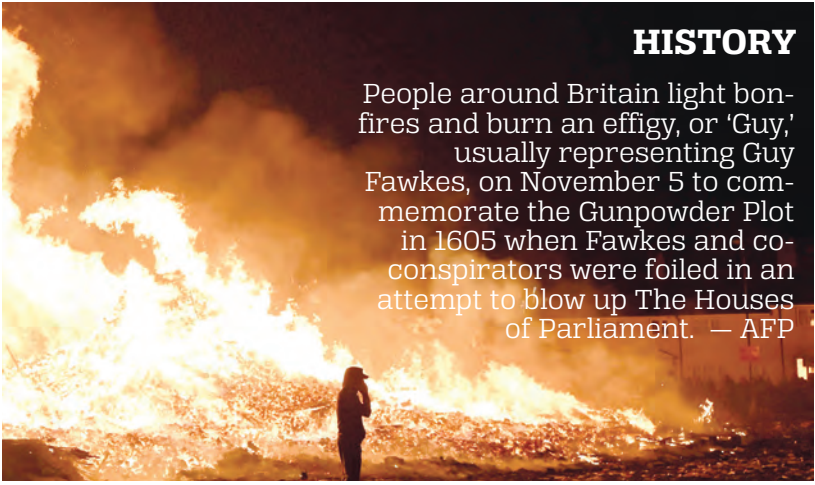
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HISTORY

People around Britain light bonfires and burn an effigy, or 'Guy,' usually representing Guy Fawkes, on November 5 to commemorate the Gunpowder Plot in 1605 when Fawkes and co-conspirators were foiled in an attempt to blow up The Houses of Parliament. — AFP



FASHION

Editor-in-Chief of Vogue Anna Wintour attends The Metropolitan Museum of Art's announcement of the Costume Institute's spring 2024 exhibition, "Sleeping Beauties: Reawakening Fashion" in New York. — AFP



CULTURE

Models present creations of traditional Indonesian attire as part of the Aceh Cultural Week in Banda Aceh. — AFP



FILM

Italian actress and model Monica Bellucci (C) arrives at the 64th Thessaloniki International Film Festival (TIFF) in Thessaloniki. — AFP



CELEBRATION

Kindergarten children with their parents attend a lantern festival to celebrate upcoming Saint Martin's day at the Auer-Welsbach park in Vienna, Austria. — AFP

art & life

SUNDAY | NOVEMBER 12, 2023 | RABEE AL THANI 28, 1445 AH

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A thrilling desert odyssey packed with unyielding challenges

Oman has some of the most challenging sand dunes in the Middle East. With a diverse landscape, dune bashing has become one of the most popular winter activities, not just for tourists but especially for the young Omanis who find joy in smashing the sands... **P20**



LOCAL FILM

Omani Film Society teases the 11th edition of Muscat Film Festival focusing on Renewable Oman

By Balqees Aloraimi

The Omani Film Society has revealed the dates for the much-anticipated eleventh session of the Muscat International Film Festival. The festival, held under the theme "Renewed Oman," aims to showcase the

Sultanate's unique filming locations, including deserts, mountains, archaeological sites, and valleys, making Oman an exceptional destination for filmmakers under the initiative "Make Your Film in Oman." This year's festival will feature a series of compelling competitions, including the International Feature Film Competition, the International Feature Documentary Film Competition, the Animation Film Competition, the Omani Short Narrative Film Competition, and the Omani Short Documentary Film Competition. Filmmakers worldwide have until January 15 to submit their entries through the festival's official website: <https://miff-festival.org/om/> form. In addition to these thrilling competitions, the festival will host a variety of accompanying events, including seminars and workshops. These sessions are designed to familiarize participants with the procedures necessary



to obtain filming licenses in Oman, in collaboration with relevant authorities. Furthermore, attendees can partake in courses related to the cinematic field. Dr. Hamid Al Ameri, President of the

Festival, expressed his commitment to the continuation of the Muscat International Film Festival, emphasizing its significance as a pioneering cinematic platform in the region. Despite various challenges, the Omani

Cinema Society's Board of Directors remains dedicated to preserving and organizing this prestigious event, recognizing the profound impact cinema has on its audience. Director Ammar Al Ibrahim shed light on the festival's theme, "Renewed Oman," aligning with Oman Vision 2040's goals of sustainable investment in heritage, culture, and arts for national economic growth. This edition aims to enhance media and community engagement with the festival, paving the way for regional and international film-related companies and institutions to view Oman as a prime cinematic production destination. Oman's geographical and cultural diversity offers a plethora of production options, fostering collaboration between local and international entities, ultimately elevating Omani creativity on the global stage. The Muscat Film Festival serves as a catalyst for Omani cinematic talents, marking the beginning of a promising journey for many in the industry.



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INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS

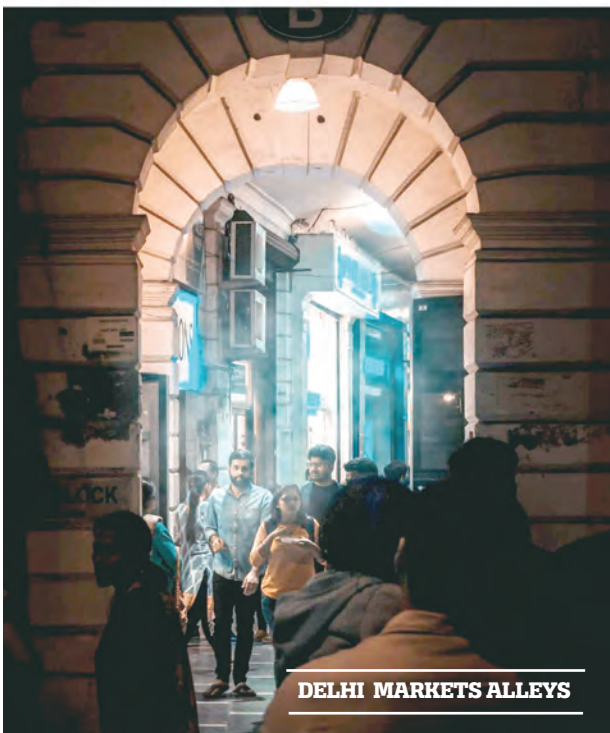


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AL KHUWAIR LOOKS LIKE ISTANBUL

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Picasso's 'Woman with a Watch' fetches \$139 mn at auction: Sotheby's

ONE OF PABLO Picasso's masterpieces, "Woman with a Watch," was sold at auction on Wednesday night for \$139.3 million by Sotheby's in New York, the second-highest price ever achieved for the artist.

The 1932 painting depicts one of the Spanish artist's companions and muses, the French painter Marie-Therese Walter, and had been valued at over \$120 million before going on the block, according to Sotheby's.

"Femme a la montre" is part of Sotheby's special sale this week of the collection of New York arts patron Emily Fisher Landau, who died this year at the age of 102.

Julian Dawes, the house's head of impressionist and modern art, called the Picasso canvas — which hung in Landau's living room — "a masterpiece by every measure."

"Painted in 1932 — Picasso's 'annus mirabilis' — it is full of joyful, passionate abandon yet at the same time it is utterly considered and resolved," he said.

Walter was considered Picasso's "golden muse", and features in another of his works on the block on Thursday at Christie's: "Femme endormie," or "Sleeping Woman", estimated to sell for \$25-\$35 million. She also featured in "Femme assise pres d'une fenetre (Marie-Therese)", which was sold in 2021 for \$103.4 million.

Walter met Picasso in Paris in 1927, when she was just 17 and the Spanish artist was still married to Russian-Ukrainian ballet dancer Olga Khokhlova. The couple had a daughter together who died last year.

Another Picasso from 1932 was sold for \$106 million in 2010.

The record sale of a Picasso was of "The Women of Algiers (Version O)," a 1955 oil painting sold for \$179.4 million.

When it was sold at Christie's New York in 2015, it was also the record for any work of art sold at auction.

It was dethroned in November 2017 by the sale of "Salvator Mundi" attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, which went under the hammer for \$450 million and holds the record to this day.

- Hot market -
Fifty years after his death in 1973 aged 91, Picasso remains one



of the most influential artists of the modern world, and is often hailed as a dynamic and creative genius.

Sotheby's is hoping to net around \$400 million in sales for pieces from Landau's collection, which also includes works by Jasper Johns, Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko and Andy Warhol.

Auction houses are enjoying a healthy art and luxury goods market, driven by China and showing no signs of a slowdown, said Kelsey Reed Leonard, head of contemporary art sales at Sotheby's.

Against a backdrop of wars in Ukraine and Gaza, as well as worldwide inflation, the two titans of the sector — Sotheby's and Christie's — will be moving a host of big-ticket lots in the autumn sales, though they may still have a hard time topping last year, when total sales hit a record \$16 billion.

— AFP

SCIENCES

Japanese billionaire's lunar SpaceX voyage postponed

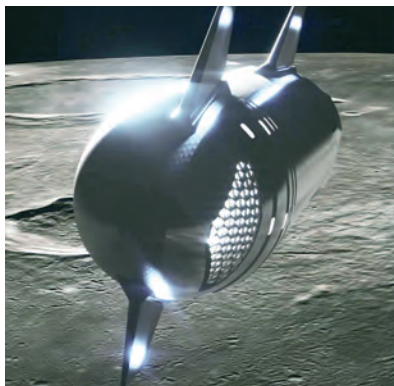
JAPANESE BILLIONAIRE Yusaku Maezawa announced on Thursday the postponement of his journey around the Moon on a SpaceX rocket, a voyage that boasts an artist-filled crew.

"We were planning for our lunar orbital mission 'dearMoon' to take place in 2023, but seems like it will take a little longer," Maezawa said.

"We're not sure when the flight will be," the entrepreneur said on X, formerly Twitter.

The crew on the mission announced in 2018 would be travelling on SpaceX's Starship rocket, which is still under development and will be the most powerful rocket ever built when complete.

The postponement was "due to the on-going development of Starship", according to a statement on dearMoon's website.



"The vehicle's first flight test in April 2023 provided numerous lessons learned that are directly contributing to upgrades being made to improve the probability of success on future Starship flights," the statement read.

Maezawa bought all the seats aboard the rocket and in 2021 created a competition in which artists could apply to join him.

From about one million applicants, Maezawa chose a multinational crew of eight: DJ and producer Steve Aoki, YouTuber Tim Dodd, artist Yemi AD, photographers Rhiannon Adam and Karim Iliya, filmmaker Brendan Hall, actor Dev Joshi, and K-pop musician TOP.

There were also two backup crew members: snowboarder Kaitlyn Farrington and dancer Miyu.

Their planned trip will last about six days and circumnavigate the Moon without landing, according to a mission profile graphic on the dearMoon website.

The Starship's second flight test "could launch as soon as mid-November, pending regulatory approval", according to the SpaceX website.

Maezawa, the founder of Japan's largest online fashion mall, flew to the International Space Station aboard a Russian Soyuz rocket in 2021. — AFP

MUSEUM

Qatar Museums Organises Large-Scale Contemporary Art Exhibition in China

QATAR MUSEUMS, in collaboration with Yuz Museum, will organise the first formative, large-scale travelling exhibition of Qatari and Qatar-based contemporary artists in China under the title "Watering the Desert.. Contemporary Art from Qatar". The exhibition will showcase the work of 34 multidisciplinary artists, designers, and filmmakers working within Qatar's artistic scene. The exhibition is scheduled to be on view from 8 November 2023 to 3 March 2024.

Chairperson of Qatar Museums Shaikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad al Thani stated "Watering the Desert is the

result of a 6-year strategic partnership between Qatar Museums (QM), Yuz Museum (YUZ), and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). Based on this partnership, the exhibition highlights the importance of cross-cultural dialogue and exchanges through art".

Justine Alexandria Tek, CEO and Director of Yuz Museum and Yuz Foundation, said "We are proud to host our trusted partner, Qatar Museums, in China for an in-depth exhibition of contemporary Qatari art that sparks a dialogue among our diverse cultures and explores the intersections and influences throughout our history. This marks a significant step forward for Yuz Museum to embrace our late founder, Budi Teks vision of promoting exchanges with the world through significant art and culture. Through the long-term partnership between the three institutions, Yuz, QM, and LACMA, we aim to continue and strengthen this unique and precious bond through



conversations and programmes, highlighting our individual distinctions while uncovering our similarities in this new era of globalisation. "

The exhibition showcases an impressive array of multidisciplinary projects that focus on four interconnected themes as vivid recollections of shared experiences, commentary on complex social dynamics regarding the concept of home, urban transformations, and the fusion of art and the natural environment. Combined, this culturally rich presentation captures the current artistic zeitgeist in Qatar. — ONA

A thrilling desert odyssey packed with unyielding challenges

By Khalid al Balushi
@khalid_albalushi94

Driving off-road on sand dunes isn't just exhilarating—it's a heart-pounding adventure that blends excitement and courage. As you conquer the towering dunes, the rush of adrenaline courses through you, amplifying the sense of thrill.

Oman has some of the most challenging sand dunes in the Middle East. In fact, in a 2017 report, it was shared that "the world's tallest sand dune has been discovered in Oman in Dhofar governorate at a height of 455 metres above sea level."

Ramlat Al Jadilah, part of the challenging Empty Quarter on the Omani side, was said to have broken the previous record of a Namibia sand dune, which was recorded at 418 metres above sea level.

Dune bashing has become one of the most popular winter activities, not just for tourists but most especially the young Omanis who find joy in smashing the sands. While it may look easy from a distance, dune bashing actually requires a lot of skills and clarity of mind to masterfully maneuver across tricky slopes.

Joining forces with seasoned experts like Hilal Hamed Al



Hilal bin Hamed al Ghadani

Ghadani, the mastermind behind Desert Flower Tours, whose 25+ years of dune bashing experience have enthralled families, friends, and globetrotters from different countries,

One of the top-rated dune bashing guides on Trip Advisor, Hilal has fearlessly maneuvered his vehicles across different Oman deserts.

Hilal shared, "Dune bashing is not just about fun. As a guide, the most important thing is our guest's safety. Before any dune-bashing adventure, we have to meticulously prepare by adjusting tire pressure for optimal traction."

Hilal explained that amid the excitement, there lies a web of risks—sand entrapment, vehicle flips, and disorientation—that demand the utmost caution.

Hilal, the voice of wisdom, emphasizes the critical importance of driving prudently and adhering to safety protocols.

"As a popular outdoor activity in Oman, there is also the possibility of accidents. It's always about taking precautions and balancing fun with accountability," he said.

Choosing the right four-wheel-drive vehicle, fine-tuning its settings for dune driving, and enhancing tire stability is paramount. For daring souls with off-road prowess, self-dune bashing is an option, but novices are strongly urged to undergo rigorous training from seasoned mentors before venturing into this audacious escapade.

For Hilal, dune bashing is not just showcasing the beauty of Oman's desert but a way of sharing culture with visitors.

"It's an honour to be able to share our skills and spirit of adventure with people coming to Oman. We also organise side trips like visiting Bedouin camps or other desert safari activities like sandboarding but dune bashing is definitely an activity that families would find entertaining," he said.

Hilal shared that beyond dune bashing, there are plenty of other activities that can be done in the Oman desert. For example, it has become



trendy to cross between deserts for a long drive, like coming into the Bidiyah Dunes and coming out in other directions.

He also shared that what usually surprises guests is that Oman dunes do not just come in one golden color but can range from yellowish to white depending on the location.

For Hilal, dune bashing isn't merely an activity; it's an awe-inspiring experience in the Omani desert. The winter months, spanning from October to March, offer a cool, enchanting backdrop. Marvel at the picturesque sunsets, bask in the brilliance of starlit nights and embrace

the serenity of the sunrise.

The best time for dune bashing in Oman is during the winter months, which typically run from October to March. During this period, the weather is relatively cooler, making the desert experience more comfortable and enjoyable. The scorching heat of the summer months can be harsh, so it's advisable to plan your dune-bashing adventure during the winter season to fully appreciate the thrill of the activity without being affected by extreme temperatures. Additionally, the winter months offer clear skies, perfect for stargazing and enjoying the serene beauty of the desert landscape.

