

HM greetings to King of Cambodia

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to King Norodom Sihamoni of the Kingdom of Cambodia, on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to King Norodom Sihamoni. His Majesty also wished the people of Cambodia further progress and prosperity.



P12

HOCKEY OMAN INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S TOURNEY FROM NOV 24



P13

CARBON CAPTURE, BLUE HYDROGEN REGULATORY FRAMEWORK



P20

BIDIYAH IS ALL SET FOR WINTER ADVENTURES



Sultan Qaboos Award winners announced

The Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science announced the names of winners of the 10th edition of Sultan Qaboos Award for Culture, Arts and Literature. This year, the award was generally allocated to Arabs, notably in the fields of media and communication studies, the role of film director and novel writers. Dr Abdullah bin Khamis al Kindi won the award set for media and communication studies (Culture branch), while Algerian novelist Waciny Laredj won the award set for literature. The award was withheld in the field of film directing (Arts branch). Habib Mohammed al Riyami, Head of the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science, said that 171 people contested the award.

SEE ALSO P3

SAYYID BADR AND BLINKEN DISCUSS GAZA SITUATION End humanitarian catastrophe

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, on Wednesday received a phone call from Antony Blinken, US Secretary of State.

During the telephonic conversation, the two sides exchanged views on the tragic situation in the Gaza Strip and the danger of the continued Israeli military escalation, as well as the severe humanitarian catastrophe that civilians are experiencing, with thousands of them martyred and wounded, and dead bodies piling up under the rubble of bombed buildings and blocks.

Sayyid Badr reiterated the necessity to contain this escalation through ceasefire in a manner that allows opening humanitarian corridors to ensure access to necessary relief aid, saving lives, and releasing hostages.

He also underlined Oman's point of view that calls for addressing the roots of the Palestinian cause politically and through diplomatic negotiations to reach the internationally desired two-state solution with the participation of all warring parties.

Despite the difference in views between the two sides especially with regard to the classification of resistance movements, the two ministers agreed



Emad El Salot's son reacts, as he mourns his father who was killed in Israeli strikes, at a hospital, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, on Wednesday. – Reuters

on according highest priority to the humanitarian aspect at this critical stage and establishing a humanitarian truce while maintaining consultations and political endeavours to prevent the expansion of the conflict through

returning to the path of realising a just and comprehensive peace and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State in accordance with the rules of the international law.

SEE ALSO P6&7

Unified Gulf tourist visa gets approval

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH & AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, NOV 8

At their 40th meeting held in Muscat on Wednesday under the presidency of the Sultanate of Oman, the GCC Interior Ministers agreed on a unified Gulf tourist visa.

In addition, an online linkage of traffic violations among the GCC countries was launched. The GCC interior ministers directed the preparation of a comprehensive GCC anti-drug strategy.

The GCC interior ministers emphasised the necessity to unify efforts to ensure the security of the GCC countries, combat crime and illegal immigration and drug trafficking. They valued efforts being made in this regard by the relevant authorities at the GCC countries and what has been achieved on the security level to protect their countries from the peril of drugs.

A unified effort to combat drugs in the GCC countries is one of the main outcomes of the ministerial meeting held at Al Bustan Palace Hotel.

Opening the meeting, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, commented on the ongoing cooperation between the GCC countries and in continuation of the sincere efforts to strengthen the role of the ministries of interior and security services in their various sectors to carry out their duties in protecting the security and achievements of the GCC countries.

TURN TO P2



مدينة السلطان هيثم
SULTAN HAITHAM CITY

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT
FOR PHASE ONE IN SULTAN
HAITHAM CITY PROJECT

إعلان مناقصات
في المرحلة الأولى
لمشروع مدينة السلطان هيثم

The Ministry of Housing and Urban-Planning with coordination with the General Secretariat of The Tender Board invites **excellent** / **First grade** companies specialised and with good track-record on respective field to participate in the following tenders:

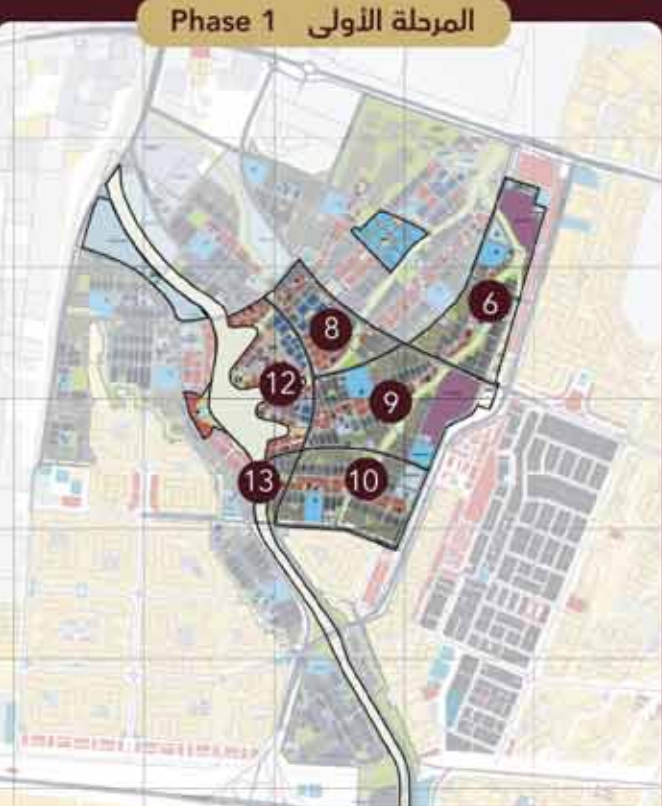
You can obtain the documents through the following website:
etendering.tenderboard.gov.om

يسر وزارة الإسكان التخطيط العمراني وبالتنسيق مع الأمانة العامة لمجلس المناقصات دعوة الشركات المتخصصة والمُفيدة **بالدرجة الممتازة** / **الأولى** من ذوي الخبرة للمشاركة في المناقصات التالية:

يمكن الحصول على المستندات عن طريق الموقع التالي:
etendering.tenderboard.gov.om

GRADE	الدرجة	TENDER NUMBER	رقم المناقصة
First	الأولى	203/2023/MHUP/HQ-41	
TENDER NAME اسم المناقصة			
Consultancy Services for Supervision of Real Estate Development Work		الخدمات الاستشارية للإشراف على الأعمال الإنشائية للمطورين العقاريين للمرحلة الأولى	
Supervision of the construction work of the Housing Units, associated services and all facilities in neighbourhoods 6, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 13 done by the Real Estate Developers, to ensure the quality and the vision of the city.			
الإشراف على الأعمال الإنشائية المنفذة من قبل المطورين العقاريين في النجاة السكنية 6 و 8 و 9 و 10 و 12 و 13 كأوحدات سكنية وكافة المرافق والخدمات، لضمان الجودة بما يتوافق مع رؤية المدينة.			
آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات Bid Submission Closing		آخر موعد للحصول على مستندات المناقصة Tender Document Sales End date	
2023/12/07 09:00 AM		2023/11/16 11:00 PM	
BID SUBMISSION DETAILS			
Please visit: etendering.tenderboard.gov.om			
يرجى زيارة الموقع: etendering.tenderboard.gov.om			
+968 9671 7716		+968 9951 1778	
shc@housing.gov.om		للتواصل والاستفسار For contact and inquiries	

GRADE	الدرجة	TENDER NUMBER	رقم المناقصة
Excellent	الممتازة	202/2023/MHUP/HQ-40	
TENDER NAME اسم المناقصة			
PHASE 01 - Works Package 01 - Enabling Works		الأعمال الأولية وتسوية الموقع للمرحلة الأولى	
The enabling works constitute the preparation of land including Wadi treatment to progress with installation of infrastructure utilities, roads and other developments spread in an area of 600+ Hectares.			
تسوية الأرض وتهديب الوادي وتجهيز الموقع للأعمال البنية الأساسية والطرق وغيرها على مساحة تزيد عن 600 هكتار.			
آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات Bid Submission Closing		آخر موعد للحصول على مستندات المناقصة Tender Document Sales End date	
2023/12/07 10:00 AM		2023/11/16 05:00 PM	
آلية تقديم العطاءات			
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shc@housing.gov.om		للتواصل والاستفسار For contact and inquiries	



Phase 1 المرحلة الأولى

LAND AREA المساحة المستهدفة 4,222,762 sqm

POPULATION السكان 35,000

NUMBER OF UNITS عدد الوحدات السكنية 6,700

BUILDING AREA مساحة البناء 2,217,970 sqm

+600 هكتار Hectare

‘Oman’s positions based on dialogue, principles of justice’

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, held the fourth annual meeting with ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions and international organisations accredited to the Sultanate of Oman. The meeting was aimed at exchanging views on issues related to economic and social development in the Sultanate of Oman, in addition to Oman’s foreign policy.

Speaking about foreign policy, Sayyid Badr stressed Oman’s permanent positions based on dialogue, its firm commitment to principles of justice and fairness, its respect for the international law and the attention it accords to constructive cooperation with other countries and peoples.

Sayyid Badr underscored the significance of dialogue as a cornerstone in handling all regional and international issues and resolving disputes by peaceful means. He expressed the view that dialogue contributes to achieving reconciliation, harmony and peace among all conflicting



Sayyid Badr underscored the significance of dialogue as a cornerstone in handling all regional and international issues. – ONA



parties.

A key issue that was accorded top attention during the meeting was the tragic situation in the Gaza Strip and the severe suffering of the Palestinian people

as a result of the Israeli occupation forces’ military operations. It was observed that those occupation forces exceeded and violated the rules of the international law and the international humanitarian

law.

Sayyid Badr underlined the Sultanate of Oman’s firm position in condemning these violations and its strive to exert efforts with Arab and friendly countries, as well as international organisations, towards the achievement of an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, the termination of escalation and the realisation of steps to allow the flow of humanitarian and relief aid into Gaza.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Sayyid Badr thanked the ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Sultanate of Oman for their efforts to enhance relations and develop cooperation between their countries and Oman.

The meeting was attended by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, and Khalid bin Hashil al Muselhi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs. — ONA

HM GREETINGS TO PRESIDENT OF EUROPEAN COUNCIL



MUSCAT: Rua bint Issa al Zedjalyah, the Sultanate of Oman’s ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium, an extraordinary ambassador and non-resident commissioner to the European Union and the European Commission conveyed greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the President of the European Council Charles Michel. This came when the President of the European Council received Rua bint Issa al Zedjalyah who presented her credentials as head of Oman’s mission to the European Union (EU). – ONA

Majlis Ash’shura to elect chairman, deputies today

MUSCAT: The Majlis Ash’shura will hold an extraordinary session on Thursday to elect a chairman and two deputy chairmen for the Majlis’s 10th term (2023-2027).

Electing the chairmen and his deputies will be conducted

electronically as the oldest member will preside over the session if he is not a candidate wishing to contest the position of chairman or deputy chairman. The extraordinary session’s chairman will be assisted by two younger members. — ONA

Oman participates in human rights conference

COPENHAGEN: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC), took part in the 14th International Conference of National Human Rights Institutions, held in Copenhagen, Denmark. The conference was themed ‘Torture and Other Ill-treatment: The Role of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)’.

Further, the conference discussed the critical role of independent and



effective NHRIs in addressing torture and other ill-treatment, as well as mechanisms followed in rehabilitating victims of torture and awareness programmes regarding such issues.

Unified Gulf tourist visa gets approval



FROM PAGE 1

The minister said the security challenges accompanied by rapid advancements in the methods used in committing crimes that exploit technology, require continuous strengthening of coordination and consultation to confront them, along with developing technical means, creating the necessary legislation, harnessing the necessary capabilities to combat them, and supporting the efforts made to keep pace with every advancement that is brought about.

GULF ACTION

GCC Secretary-General, Jassim Mohammed al Budawi, in his address, said, “The joint Gulf action enjoys support and unremitting efforts to enhance this blessed process and its progress, to achieve the goals of the aspirations of the citizens of the GCC countries and strive for greater interconnection, cooperation and integration.”

He said: “The increasing danger of the drugs that our countries are witnessing is something that is worrying for the Gulf society, which requires us to work side by side to confront this phenomenon.” He urged that steps must be taken, “To stop its spread among our youth.”

A call has been taken to have a unified action strategy that addresses all axes — prevention, control and treatment.

The under-secretaries of the Ministries of Interior in the GCC countries have recommended, during their preparatory meeting held from November 1-3, to support the proposal of the Assistant Secretariat

for Security Affairs to create a unified Gulf strategy to combat drugs, while praising the multiple national campaigns undertaken in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, in addition to the efforts made by security personnel in combating drugs in the GCC countries, highlighting their important role in protecting their homelands from the danger that targets the youth and the societies.

Lt Gen Shaikh Saif bin Zayed al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior of the United Arab Emirates, said, in light of the escalating events witnessed in the Arab region and the accompanying international repercussions, “This meeting is manifested in enhancing effective cooperation and positive integration between the countries of the GCC to confront various challenges and see opportunities for the security and development of our countries.”

He added, as everyone knows, the scourge of drugs and the harm they cause to societies, and this requires us to intensify coordination efforts between the agencies specialised in combating drugs. To reveal the organised plans pursued by drug gangs to target our countries and societies, dry up their sources, and eliminate their smugglers.

Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Nayef al Saud, Minister of Interior of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, said in his speech that the risks and challenges that the region and the world are going through have led to increasing waves of terrorism, insecurity, and the spread of cross-border organised crime.

“It is imperative for us to adhere to the unity of the Council, enhance teamwork, and

raise the level of cooperation and security coordination between us. While achieving the wise directions of the leaders of the GCC countries, establishing security and stability, and enhancing opportunities for growth and prosperity for our countries,” he noted.

Lt Gen Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah al Khalifa, Minister of the Interior of the Kingdom of Bahrain, spoke of supporting and strengthening sustainable peace efforts to find a solution to the Palestinian issue.

He added the importance of focusing on coordinating mutual support for protection purposes between the GCC countries.

During the meeting, Talal Khalid Al Ahmad al Sabah, Kuwait’s First Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior, said, “In light of extremely dangerous circumstances due to the ongoing persecution against the brotherly Palestinian people, I cannot fail to emphasise in this regard the firm position in the State of Kuwait, support for the Palestinian people, and support in order to obtain the rights of the project, the most important of which is the right to establish an independent state according to International resolutions issued by this people.”

He added that the repercussions of these events are not far from the security reality in the entire region, which calls us for vigilance and continuous coordination to unify.

During the meeting, Sayyid Hamoud expressed his appreciation to Jassim Mohammed al Budawi, Secretary-General, and Brig Gen Hamad Ajlan Misfer al Amimi, Assistant Secretary for Security Affairs, for their efforts, and to all employees of the General Secretariat for their coordination and preparation for this meeting.

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Internal Tender Committee in Ministry of Information announces its Tender for the following work:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Class & Grade	Last Date For Collection	Submission Date	Purchase Fees (R.O.)
4/2023 2023/257 13 - ر / ع	CONSTRUCTION OF RADIO AND TV STATION IN DABBA (MUSANDAM GOVERNORATE)	Third	19/11/2023	21/12/2023	25/-

1. All specialized companies in the field of the tender shown above and are registered with the Tender Board to the degree indicated above, may obtain tender documents, against non-refundable fees, from the website through the following link: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

2. Companies and institutions are exempted from providing a temporary insurance of 1% when submitting their bid, provided that they sign a document committing themselves to the submitted bid for a period determined when the bidding strategy is approved in accordance with the document attached to the Isnad platform. As for international companies that do not have a headquarters in the Sultanate of Oman, they are required to provide temporary insurance of 1%.

(For more information, please see the original circular issued by the Tender Board on the Isnaad platform.)

Note that the last date for accepting bids as mentioned above is before 10:00 am. Any bid received after the time and date mentioned in the submission date will be rejected automatically.

You are requested to provide 2 hard copies for your offer after the submission in Projects Department at Ministry of Information.

3. The Ministry has the right to:

1) Add or Cancel some works in the tender if necessary.

2) Cancellation of the tender without giving reasons.

For clarifications you may contact via:

Telephone : 24943785, 24943177, Email: (Moi.Tenders@omaninfo.om)



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‘Oman shares calls to stop inhuman war in Gaza’

PARIS: The Sultanate of Oman participated in the plenary sessions of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), which was held at the organisation’s headquarters in the French capital, Paris.

The event saw the participation of UNESCO member states and representatives of international organisations and civil society institutions.

Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education and Chairperson of Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, noted in her speech during the sessions that Oman shares the calls of world countries to stop the illegal and inhuman war waged by the Israeli occupation against civilians and defenceless innocents in the Gaza Strip. This war, added the

minister, caused the destruction of infrastructure, archaeological sites, museums, mosques and churches.

Dr Madeeha urged the UNESCO to fulfil its moral duty and humanitarian obligation to call for an immediate ceasefire, protect civilians, and enable the entry of urgent humanitarian aid into Gaza. She also called on the free world to protect schools, universities and places of worship, as well as historical and cultural sites of the Palestinian people.

She said that an urgent plan should be devised so that UNESCO can play a role in helping the Palestinian people, empowering them in sustainable development programmes, combating poverty, and restoring and maintaining heritage, cultural and historical monuments.

She explained that this dangerous escalation requires prioritising reason and wisdom,



Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education

giving priority to the humanitarian dimension and promoting a culture of peace and dialogue. It also requires rejecting violence, extremism and hate speech, in addition to spreading general understanding about international humanitarian law and the legal obligations that countries bear during wars and armed conflicts, affirmed Dr Madeeha.

She underlined the Sultanate of Oman’s keenness to give priority to the policy of tolerance and dialogue, as well as rejecting violence and addressing the causes of the conflict. She also highlighted Oman’s efforts to convey its cultural experience in tolerance, coexistence and understanding, through the ‘Message of Peace from the Sultanate of Oman’ exhibition,

which had more than 600 stations around the world, the latest of which was held at the UNESCO’s headquarters last July.

At the conclusion of her speech, Dr Madeeha laid emphasis on Oman’s commitment to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially the fourth goal on education.

The opening programme of the session, which lasts until 22 November 2023, includes a speech by the UNESCO Director-General, a speech by the President of the Executive Council, approving the session’s agenda, electing the President of the General Conference, the Vice-Presidents, the Chairmen of the Committees, the Vice-Chairmen, and the Rapporteurs. It also includes a discussion of the Director-General’s report on the activities of the organisation during (2018-2021), as well as a report on the

activities and programmes of the organisation’s Executive Council.

The Sultanate of Oman’s delegation taking part in the event comprises Hamad bin Saif al Hammami, Oman’s Permanent Representative to the UNESCO, Dr Jokha bint Abdullah al Shukailiyah, CEO of Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Educational Quality Assurance, and Amna bint Salim al Balushiyyah, Secretary of Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science.

It also includes representatives from the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the Environment Authority and Sultan Qaboos University. — ONA

WINNERS OF SQU AWARD FOR CULTURE, LITERATURE ANNOUNCED

MUSCAT: The Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science on Wednesday announced the names of winners of the 10th edition of Sultan Qaboos Award for Culture, Arts and Literature.

This year, the award was generally allocated to Arabs, notably in the fields of media and communication studies, the role of film director and novel writers.

Dr Abdullah bin Khamis al Kindi won the award set for media and communication studies (Culture branch), while Algerian novelist Waciny Laredj won the award set for literature. The award was withheld in the field of film directing (Arts branch).



Habib Mohammed al Riyami

Habib bin Mohammed al Riyami, Head of the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science, said during a press conference that 171 people contested the award, among



them 30 candidates presented their entries in the field of media and communication studies, 25 candidates in the field of film directing and 116 candidates in the field of novels. — ONA



Oman Post launches new commemorative postal collection

MUSCAT: Oman Post, an affiliate of Asyad Group, announced the launch of a commemorative postal collection titled ‘1/4 Anna in the Reign of Sultans of Oman’.

The collection sheds light on the history of coin minting in the Sultanate of Oman and reflects Oman Post’s efforts to document the history of the country through commemorative stamps and unique postal products. The distinctive collection will be available for public purchase at Oman Post’s Stamps and Collectibles shop at the Opera Galleria, along with numerous other collectibles.

Oman Post has announced two editions of this collection. The first edition is a regular release that includes an envelope and a souvenir sheet, along with a sheet of stamps featuring a circular stamp in copper colour, replicating the design of the 1/4 Anna coin.

The second edition is a special release designed exclusively for historical memorabilia



The collection sheds light on the history of coin minting in the Sultanate of Oman.— ONA

enthusiasts, containing an exclusive cover that includes the original 1/4 Anna coin. Additionally, it consists of an informative card detailing the history of coin minting during the reign of the Sultans, a souvenir sheet and a sheet of stamps.

Shaikh Ibrahim bin Sultan al Hosni, Acting CEO of Oman Post and Asyad Express, stated: “This stamp symbolising the 1/4 Anna coin sheds light on the history of coin minting in Oman and signifies an important part of the

political and economic history of the Sultanate of Oman during the reign of the Sultans.”

The 1/4 Anna coin held immense significance in Oman’s political and financial history. The history of this coin dates to the year 1315 AH; more than 130 years ago. It was minted in Muscat, in the reign of Sultan Faisal bin Turki, Sultan of Muscat and Oman. Known as the ‘Baisa’ by Omanis then, the coin continued to be used throughout the reigns of Sultan Taimur bin Faisal and Sultan Said bin Taimur.

The ‘1/4 Anna in the Reign of the Sultans of Oman’ stamp collection is one of the significant documentary postal works consistently released by Oman Post.

These initiatives aim to showcase the glorious history of Oman, activate the postal service’s role in promoting national culture, and offer a diverse range of postal products that attract new enthusiasts to stamps collecting.

— ONA

Award recognises women leaders

BALQEES AL ORAIMI

MUSCAT, NOV 8

The Women’s Magazine Annual Conference and Awards, in its twelfth session titled ‘Empowering Women to Lead the Future,’ kicked off on Wednesday at the Sheraton Hotel.

The event served as a platform to delve into the efforts aimed at empowering Omani women and boosting their capabilities across various sectors.

The conference’s overarching mission is to assess the strides made in enabling women to play more substantial roles in diverse domains, ultimately fostering principles of partnership and equal opportunities.

Prominent female figures from various sectors participated in the conference, sharing their insights and experiences in the pursuit of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Discussions centred around the role of partnerships in shaping a brighter future for women.

Distinguished leaders in this dialogue included Abla al Harthiyah, Head of the Customer Service Operations Unit at the National Finance Company; Mayan al Asfour, Regional Director of Beehive and founder of Golden Wheat Company; Zayana bint Ahmed al Badiyah, Media and Communications



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The conference’s overarching mission is to assess the strides made in enabling women to play more substantial roles in diverse domains

Officer at Daleel Petroleum; Haifa al Lawatiyyah, Director of the Human Resources Department at Bank Nizwa; Maha al Habsiyah, Chairperson of the Oman Blockchain and Free and Open Source Software Club, and Al Anoud al Rashidiyyah from United Media Services.

On the sidelines of the conference, Sarah Khaled Lashku, CEO of Legal Affairs and Secretary of Ominvest, delivered a speech emphasising the importance of women’s empowerment. Lina al

Abdel Salam, head of Marketing and Corporate Communications at Alizz Islamic Bank, presented a presentation titled ‘Real leaders create leaders.’ Furthermore, Maryam al Amriyyah, a member of the Board of Directors of the Oman Human Resources Society, shared insights in her speech about the transformative influence of women in decision-making within institutions.

The conference marked the launch of the fourth edition of the book “The Elite,” which featured profiles of successful Omani women, offering a valuable resource to understand their experiences and accomplishments.

As part of the event, several women leaders and institutions were honoured, celebrating their remarkable contributions to the cause of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

GROWTH THROUGH TOURISM

Expression of Interest (EoI)

Provision of comprehensive training and development services and solutions for OMRAN Group

OMRAN Group announces that it is now open to receiving Expression of Interest (EoI) applications for participation in Tender No. 42/2023, for Provision of comprehensive training and development services and solutions.

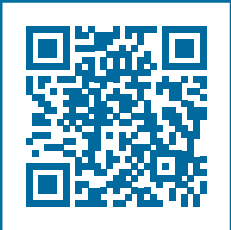
Tender Submission Closing Date	29.11.2023
Tender Process Details	Please visit: www.omran.om/tenders/



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info@omran.om
@omrangroupom





SHRIMP

SEASON PROMISES A BOUNTIFUL HARVEST



TEXT & PHOTOS
BY YAHYA AL SALMANI

Oman’s coastal waters are packed with shrimp, lobster, and sea snails. During the annual shrimp season, these delicacies become a staple in local markets and commercial centres.

Starting in October and running until November, fishermen in the governorates of Muscat, Al Sharqiyah South, Al Wusta, and Dhofar harvest this valuable marine resource, bringing it to market to the delight of seafood enthusiasts.

Shrimp fishing holds a significant place in Omani tradition. Shrimp is among the most prized marine species due to its high economic and nutritional value.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources report that the Sultanate of Oman’s waters boasts 12 shrimp species. Still, commercial fishing primarily focuses on the Indian white shrimp and the tiger shrimp, both known for their abundance and large size.

These two species thrive in depths ranging from two to 100 metres, with tiger shrimp constituting around 75 per cent of the Sultanate of Oman’s shrimp stock.

Artisanal fishing boats, typically made of

fibreglass, are the primary vessels employed for shrimp harvesting. Local fishermen utilise traditional nets known as ‘Al Ghale’ or ‘Al Taraha’ conical nets with a hole in the bottom crafted from cotton. These nets are hand-thrown into deep waters, effectively capturing the desired shrimp.

Shrimp fishing commences early morning, between 4 am and 10 am, focusing on shallow depths ranging from five to seven metres. Each boat can collect approximately 6 kilogrammes of shrimp per net, contributing to the substantial shrimp yield.

As the demand for shrimp steadily increases due to its nutritional benefits, the competent authorities have implemented awareness programmes for fishermen across Oman’s coastal states. These programmes aim to educate fishermen about the shrimp season, familiarise them with fishing laws and regulations, and instil practices that promote the preservation of this natural resource.

In 2022, the total shrimp production from artisanal and farmed catch amounted to an impressive 2,799 tonnes, valued at over RO 7 million. This remarkable figure highlights the importance of shrimp fishing to Oman’s economy and the dedication of

its fishermen. Muttrah Souq in Muscat Governorate is a testament to the popularity of shrimp and other local seafood products.

The market attracts a steady stream of customers eager to secure their share of fresh shrimp and sharkha before supplies dwindle.

One Omani seller in Muttrah Market shared, “Since October, I have been receiving special requests for shrimp from loyal customers. Omanis often reserve quantities to prepare seafood meals at home, while restaurant owners place daily orders to meet their customers’ demands.

This year’s season has been particularly bountiful, and we are grateful for the competent authorities’ efforts in managing this sector effectively.” With prices ranging from RO 2 to RO 4 per kilogram, shrimp remains an affordable and accessible delicacy, offering a compelling alternative to other fresh seafood options in regional and international markets.

Oman’s shrimp fishing season is a vibrant celebration of the country’s rich maritime heritage and the dedication of its fishermen. As the season draws to a close, Omanis and visitors savour the succulent flavours of shrimp, a true gem of the Omani seas.



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THURSDAY | NOVEMBER 9 | 2023

5

FINANCE MINISTRY ISSUES CIRCULAR ON DRAFTING CLOSING ACCOUNT 2023

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Finance on Wednesday issued Circular No 1/2023 on the preparation of closing account of the State's Fiscal Year 2023. The circular requires all units of the State's Administrative Apparatus, public authorities and public establishments to present their final accounts for fiscal year 2023 by February 22, 2024 at the latest. The ministry calls upon all units to enclose major results and goals achieved when implementing the endorsed

budgets during Fiscal Year 2023. This includes statements comparing revenues and actual spending of funds as compared to endorsed revenues and spending, in addition to the distribution of the same in line with terms of collection or expenditure. The fiscal position of ministries and government units has to include a breakup of credits/ balances of ministries and government units as indicated in their respective bank accounts and permanent and temporary



The Ministry of Finance has prepared the closing account of 2023 fiscal

advances/borrowings and financial rights that other parties owe the government. This is in addition to the preparation of statements of non-fiscal assets of real estate and land, as well as assets of government stores and movables and libraries affiliated with the units. The statements should include copies of reports drafted by internal audit units on performance during the last quarter of fiscal year 2023. — ONA

Economy ministry receives IMF article IV mission



The IMF delegation holds talks with Economy Ministry officials.

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Economy received here on Wednesday the mission of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Article IV consultation which is hosted by the Sultanate of Oman till November 15. The meeting discussed several topics, including the progress made in the national programme for economic diversification "Tanweea", the labour market, recruitment and initiatives to enhance the work environment. It also touched on programmes related to boosting the role of small and medium enterprises in the economy. Moreover, the meeting was attended by Dr Nasser Rashid Al Maawali, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Economy. — ONA

Youth working team discuss strategic ties



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, on Wednesday hosted the 7th meeting of the joint working team between the GCC countries and the Moroccan Kingdom in the field of youth. The meeting was held under the chairmanship of Bassil Ahmed Al Rawas, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth. The meeting discussed a set of topics, including the strategic partnership between the two sides and the implementation of the joint action plan in various areas. — ONA

Public Prosecution agents take oath

MUSCAT: Twenty-nine second-class public prosecutors on Wednesday took the oath of office before Sayyid Mohammed bin Sultan al Busaidy, Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council. The ceremony, held at the Supreme Judicial Council, was attended by Attorney General Nasr bin Khamis al Sawa'ee. Sayyid Mohammed congratulated the prosecutors on their selection as members of the judiciary and urged them to exert efforts and devote time to serving the process of justice. In particular, he exhorted the



public prosecution agents to fully adhere to judicial instructions regulating the workflow at the public prosecution department and to reflect that dedication to the mission through their professional and personal conduct. He also advised them to take up lawsuits in a manner that

preserves the dignity of litigants and saves their time, while at the same time harnessing modern technology in their regular tasks. It is worth noting that the recently appointed second-class public prosecutors obtained the Postgraduate Diploma in Judicial Sciences after a two-year course at the Supreme Judicial Council. They also completed practical training at public prosecution branches in different geographical areas and at specialised jurisdiction offices. — ONA



The recently appointed second-class public prosecutors obtained the Postgraduate Diploma in Judicial Sciences after a two-year course. — ONA

Oman, Saudi Arabia explore cooperation in drug control



During the meeting, the two sides agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Ministry of Health and SFDA. — ONA

MUSCAT: Dr Hilal Ali Al Sabti, Minister of Health and Dr Hisham Saad Aljadhey, CEO of Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) reviewed, the meeting was attended over a telephone call, areas of joint cooperation. During the meeting, the two sides agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Ministry of Health and SFDA in the field of assuring the safety, reliability and efficiency of the performance of medical devices and supplies. The meeting was attended by Dr Said Harib Al Lamki, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs and Dr Mohammed Hamdan Al Rubaiee, Director General of Pharmaceutical Affairs and drug control. — ONA

Positive Vision Association unveils mission to tackle HIV/Aids and drug use

MUSCAT: The Positive Vision Association (PVA) has officially launched its foundation and convened its inaugural strategic meeting, marking a historic moment as Oman's first NGO established under the Ministry of Social Development's patronage, with a mission to focus on raising awareness, preventing the spread of HIV/Aids, and addressing drug use issues. The association is also dedicated to establishing

connections with those most affected and extending support to their families. Positive Vision is a coalition of individuals from various sectors, encompassing both the private and public domain. It includes individuals with experience in HIV/Aids and drug rehabilitation who are committed to driving positive change within the community. These members are impassioned, skilled professionals, and advocates, all



Nashia Nasib, President, PVA

deeply committed to fostering awareness, prevention, and support to nurture a healthier and more resilient nation. Nashia Nasib, President, PVA, says, "Our mission is rooted in compassion, and we are here to embrace those who are most affected. We have an exceptional team of dedicated board members ready to make a difference. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Founding Members for being part of our journey."

She added, "Our focus is clear: to provide assistance and support, combat the stigma surrounding People Living With HIV/Aids and People Who Inject Drugs, and extend our support to their families and the broader community, encompassing physical, social, and psychological dimensions." The inaugural strategic meeting primarily focused on shaping the association's vision, mission, objectives, and workplan

for 2023-2024. The meeting involved in-depth discussions on key strategies and explored avenues for collaboration with stakeholders and partners from both the private and public sectors. Positive Vision is committed to working with individuals and families affected by HIV/Aids and drugs, aiming to create a supportive and empathetic network while reducing the associated stigma and discrimination.



Thousands flee as Israel

BELGIUM WANTS SANCTIONS AGAINST ISRAEL – DEPUTY PM



Petra De Sutter

BRUSSELS: Belgium's deputy prime minister called on the Belgian government on Wednesday to adopt sanctions against Israel and investigate the bombings of hospitals and refugee camps in Gaza.

"It is time for sanctions against Israel. The rain of bombs is inhumane," deputy prime minister Petra De Sutter told Nieuwsblad newspaper. "It is clear that Israel does not care about the international demands for a ceasefire," she said.

Israel struck at Gaza in response to a raid on October 7 in which Palestinian gunmen entered southern Israel, according to Israeli tallies. The war has descended into the bloodiest episode in the generations-long Israel-Palestinian conflict.

De Sutter said the European Union should immediately suspend its association agreement with Israel, which aims at better economic and political cooperation.

She also said an import ban on products from occupied Palestinian territories should be implemented and violent settlers, politicians, soldiers responsible for war crimes should be banned from entering the EU.

At the same time, she said, Belgium should increase funding for the International Criminal Court in The Hague to investigate the bombings.

With the war now entering its second month, UN officials and G7 nations stepped up appeals for a humanitarian pause in the hostilities to help alleviate the suffering in Gaza, where buildings have been flattened and basic supplies are running out. Palestinian officials say more than 10,500 people have been killed, 40 per cent of them children.

— Reuters

GAZA: Thousands of Palestinians were fleeing on foot on Wednesday in a surge away from the fighting and intense bombardment in Gaza as Israel said it was tightening the "stranglehold" around the city.

People walked south from Gaza, many with nothing but the clothes they wore, while combat raged over a month of sparking the deadliest ever war in Gaza.

According to the health ministry in the besieged territory, the Israeli military campaign has killed more than 10,500 people, almost half of them children.

The pace of Palestinian civilians fleeing south from northern Gaza has accelerated as Israel's air and ground campaign has intensified, according to UN observers.

About 15,000 people fled on Tuesday, compared to 5,000 on Monday and 2,000 on Sunday, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said, as another surge was underway on Wednesday.

"It was so scary," Ola al Ghul, among the masses of Gaza civilians displaced in the month-old war, said on Tuesday.

"We held our hands up and we kept walking. There were so many of us, we were holding white flags," she added.

Israel claimed its ground forces were advancing in pursuit of the fighters who have a deep network of tunnels and underground bases.

"Israeli troops are tightening the stranglehold around the city of Gaza," Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said late on Tuesday.

Military analysts warned of weeks of gruelling house-to-house fighting ahead in Gaza, with around 30 Israeli soldiers already killed in the offensive.

The operation is hugely complicated for Israel because of the hostages who are believed to be held inside a vast tunnel network.

In densely packed Gaza, where more than 1.5 million people have fled their homes in a desperate

THE PACE OF PALESTINIAN CIVILIANS FLEEING SOUTH FROM NORTHERN GAZA HAS ACCELERATED AS ISRAEL'S AIR AND GROUND CAMPAIGN HAS INTENSIFIED

search for safety, the suffering is immense.

The World Health Organization said an average of 160 children are killed every day in Gaza by the war.

"The level of death and suffering is hard to fathom," WHO spokesman Christian Lindmeier said.

Palestinian media office said on Telegram that several cemeteries in Gaza had "no more space for burials", while the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said most of the territory's sewage pumping stations were shut.

OCHA says Israel has ordered all 13 hospitals still operational in northern Gaza to evacuate patients.

"All over Gaza, helpless people are losing their family members, homes and their own lives, while world leaders fail to take meaningful action," medical charity Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said.

In its statement, MSF detailed how a staff member was killed on Monday along with his family in Gaza's Shati refugee camp when the area was bombed.

Israel has hammered Gaza with more than 12,000 air and artillery strikes and sent in ground forces that have effectively cut it in half. — AFP



A fireball erupts in the Gaza Strip during Israeli bombardment, near a position across the border in southern Israel. — AFP



Palestinians fleeing Gaza City towards the southern areas walk on a road amid the ongoing battles. — AFP



Official delegates attend an outreach session during the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting at the Ikura Guest House, in Tokyo. — Reuters

G7 CALLS FOR HUMANITARIAN PAUSES AS FORCE

TOKYO: G7 foreign ministers on Wednesday called for humanitarian pauses in the Mideast war to allow in aid and help the release of hostages, and sought a return to a broader peace process.

Ending a two-day meeting in Tokyo as Israeli forces continued to pound the Gaza Strip, the Group of Seven wealthy nations said in a joint statement that they underscored the need to protect civilians and to comply with international humanitarian law.

G7 members are committed to preparing long-term solutions for Gaza and a return to a broader peace process in the Israel-Palestinian conflict "in line with the internationally agreed parameters,"

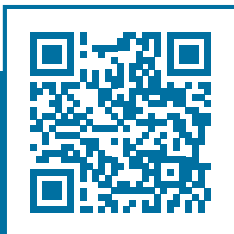
the statement said.

The ministers shared the view that "a two-state solution... remains the only path to a just, lasting, and secure peace".

The Israeli bombardment of Gaza has killed more than 10,500 Palestinians, around 40 per cent of them children, according to counts by health officials in the territory.

"I believe it's important that the G7 was able to put out its first unified message as a statement regarding a humanitarian pause... in terms of the responsibility the G7 has towards the international community," Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa told reporters.





Israel tightens 'stranglehold'



A Palestinian civil defence member searches for survivors and the bodies of victims, in Khan Younis. – AFP



People gather by the rubble of a building that collapsed after Israeli bombardment while searching for survivors and the bodies of victims, in Khan Younis. – AFP



Demonstrators march during a rally in support of Palestinians in New York City. – AFP

ISRAEL POUNDS THE STRIP

I believe it's important that the G7 was able to put out its first unified message as a statement regarding a humanitarian pause

YOKO KAMIKAWA
Japanese Foreign Minister

Asked whether all G7 members were calling for humanitarian pauses or whether some favoured a full ceasefire, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the statement accurately reflected what was discussed and that there was "real unity" among the bloc.

Israel has been vague about its long-term plans for Gaza. In some of the first direct comments on the subject, Netanyahu said this week that Israel would seek to have security responsibility for Gaza "for an indefinite period".

But Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen told the Wall Street Journal that Israel wanted the territory to be under an international coalition, including

the US and European Union or administered by Gaza political leaders.

Following the G7 meetings, Blinken said: "Now, the reality is that there may be a need for some transition period at the end of the conflict... We don't see a reoccupation and what I've heard from Israeli leaders is that they have no intent to reoccupy Gaza," Blinken said.

Blinken also said sustained peace must involve a unified Gaza and West Bank governed by the Palestinian Authority and that there must be no forced displacement of Palestinians from Gaza and no reduction in the enclave's territory.

— Reuters

DESTRUCTION OF HOUSING IS A WAR CRIME: UN EXPERT



This picture shows a view of buildings destroyed in the north of Gaza. – AFP

GENEVA: Israel's widespread and systematic bombardment of housing and civilian infrastructure in Gaza is a war crime, an independent UN expert said on Wednesday.

A month of Israeli strikes on targets within the Gaza Strip have destroyed or damaged 45 per cent of all housing units in the Palestinian territory, Balakrishnan Rajagopal said, warning the destruction comes at a "tremendous cost to human life".

The UN special rapporteur on the right to adequate housing stressed that systematic or widespread bombardment of housing, civilian objects and infrastructure are strictly prohibited under international law. – AFP



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres speaks at the ReutersNEXT Newsmaker event in New York City. – Reuters

UN CHIEF SAYS GAZA DEATHS SHOW SOMETHING 'WRONG' WITH ISRAEL OPERATION

NEW YORK: United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Wednesday that the number of civilians killed in the Gaza Strip shows that there is something "clearly wrong" with Israel's military operations against Palestinians.

"There are violations by Palestinian fighters when they have human shields. But when one looks at the number of civilians that were killed with the military operations, there is something that is clearly wrong," Guterres said.

Palestinian officials said more 10,500 people have now been killed, 40 per cent of them children.

"It is also important to make Israel understand that it is against the interests of Israel to see every day the terrible image of the dramatic humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people," Guterres said. "That doesn't help Israel in relation to the

global public opinion."

Guterres compared the number of children being killed in Gaza with the toll in conflicts around the world that he reports on annually.

"Every year, the highest number of killings of children by any of the actors in all the conflicts that we witness is the maximum in the hundreds," Guterres said.

"We have in a few days in Gaza thousands and thousands of children killed, which means there is also something clearly wrong in the way military operations are being done," he said.

The U.N. report on children and armed conflict includes a list intended to shame parties to conflicts in the hope of pushing them to implement measures to protect children. It has long been controversial, with diplomats saying Israel exerted pressure in recent years in a bid to stay off the list. – Reuters

ROCKETS BREAK THE QUIET TOWNS ALONG LEBANESE BORDER

KIRYAT SHMONA: As the sun sets on the hills of northern Israel, four rockets fired from Lebanon trace arcs through the sky before being intercepted with a bang by air defences. Exchanges of fire have become common while Israel has been at war in the Gaza Strip for the past month.

The resisting movement in Lebanon has exchanged fire with Israel's army repeatedly in the weeks since October 7.

With Israel facing the threat of a two-front war, it has evacuated areas along its border with Lebanon – including far-northern Dan near the occupied Golan Heights. Some 600 of Dan's 850 inhabitants were relocated to a hotel in the coastal city of Haifa, Hermoni said.

"About 30 stayed here, including me," said Hermoni, who works as a tour guide in normal times but has now been left in charge of the security of the kibbutz.

Across Israel – both near Gaza and Lebanon – around 224,000 people have been made to leave their homes because of the conflict, according to officials.

Israel's withering aerial bombardment and ground attacks in Gaza since have seen over 10,500 people killed, also mostly civilians, according to the health ministry in the territory. – AFP



Rockets fired from southern Lebanon are intercepted above a position across the border near Kibbutz Dan. – AFP

Tips for staying healthy in changing seasons



Dr Nisma Haris

The writer is a general physician, content creator

The weather has been swerving for the past days with rains and thundershowers across the country leading to dwindling temperatures along with the winter ready to set in. So, staying vigilant in this regard is better than bearing the brunt and paying off with your health later.

Without further ado, here is a quick rundown of your dos and don'ts during this weather switching:

As a consequence of flash floods and water stagnation in residential areas, hot spots for mosquitoes and fleas breeding are promptly ready, which eventually becomes a precursor to various diseases.

Check for any stagnating water around your homes in pots or containers as well as in the vicinity; if possible, drain it off or spray a thin oil spray to discourage insect growth.

Even so, the rains have plummeted; avoid leisurely sitting in the grassy and open spaces

to avoid getting bitten by mosquitoes, bugs, or worms.

When it comes to food, wash your fruits and veggies thoroughly, and steam cooking your veggies before consuming is always better.

Rainy weather triggers the disease spreading microscopic organisms to take shelter in the vegetables.

Moreover, the temperature variations combined with rain showers weakens the immune system and thus invites the respiratory bacteria and flu-causing viruses to attack leading to an array of symptoms like fever, cough, congestion, nasal allergies sneezing, etc.

It is preferable to sip ginger, turmeric, and basil teas as they are evidently known for their antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties.

And yes, it's a wise pick to increase your intake of vitamin C through natural food sources like lemon, oranges, or grapefruit; or popping your pill, whatever suits you.

WITH WINTER READY TO SET IN, IT'S CRUCIAL TO REMAIN VIGILANT FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR HEALTH. THE WRITER OUTLINES ESSENTIAL DOS AND DON'TS TO HELP YOU STAY HEALTHY DURING THESE CHANGING SEASONS

Vitamin C provides an extra shield to your immunity levels.

Then on, coming to your gut; it also needs a little extra care; so be easy on it by avoiding spicy and deep-fried foodstuffs.

Eat light and grilled with good portions of fruits and veggies (cucumbers, mint, green coriander, tomatoes, lettuce, apples, colored bell peppers) along with a decent mix of seeds and nuts.

Following this, however tempting it might feel getting drenched in these rains or in the flowing waters is not a cool hangout.

Even so, if it gets unavoidable, do take a shower; as flowing waters harbour various forms of ticks, mites, and other dangerous disease carriers.

And the last scoop, do not forget to keep your homes ventilated and dehumidified to discourage mold growth.

You won't regret keeping them disinfected and fragrant with the Dhofar staple frankincense!

Telecoms outage cuts off millions of Australians

STEVEN TRASK

More than 10 million Australians were cut off from internet and phone services on Wednesday after unexplained outages struck one of the country's largest communications companies.

The mystery glitch crashed electronic payment systems, disrupted phone lines used by ambulances and police, and briefly halted rush-hour trains in the southern city of Melbourne.

Optus, a subsidiary of Singapore telecommunications company Singtel, said it had restored services on Wednesday evening — but it was unable to pinpoint what had caused the fault.

A “technical network outage” detected at about 4:05 am Sydney time had cut off customers, Optus chief executive Kelly Bayer Rosmarin told national broadcaster ABC.

“We are very sorry that this occurred and I am happy to say that services are now restored again,” she said. “Until we have done a full, thorough root cause analysis we really can't provide more information,” she said, describing the outage as a “very rare occurrence.”

The Optus boss said there was “no indication” the issues were the result of hacking.

Just over a year ago, more than nine million Optus customers had their personal data stolen in a cyber attack.

A host of organisations and businesses confirmed their connections had been restored, including the federal department of education, the Royal Melbourne Hospital, and Australia's Commonwealth Bank.

Optus, Australia's second-largest telecoms firm with more than 10 million customers, had struggled through the day to bring its systems back up.

Dozens of hospitals were unable to receive phone calls during the outage and landline phones on the Optus network could not ring emergency services.

The poisons hotline in New South Wales state also said it was impacted. And there was morning rush-hour chaos in Melbourne after what officials described as a “communications outage” disrupted train services.

Australian Communications Minister Michelle Rowland said the Optus outage had been caused by a “deep fault” in a “fundamental” part of the company's network.

“What we do know is that this is a deep fault. It has occurred deep within the network,” she told reporters. — AFP



Andrew E Kramer

The writer is New York Times bureau chief in Kyiv



Maria Varenikova

The writer is a Kyiv-based freelance journalist, producer for NYT

EFFORTS ARE UNDERWAY TO DRAW MORE UKRAINIAN WOMEN INTO THE ARMY. VOLUNTEER GROUPS OFFERING ALL-FEMALE TRAINING, LIKE THE ONE NEAR KYIV, ARE SUPPORTING THE EFFORT

‘If not me, who?’: As Ukraine seeks troops, women prepare for the call

Halyna Vynokur, a clerk in a hardware store in Kyiv, was shouldering a firearm for the first time. Iryna Sychova, a purchasing manager at a department store, disassembled and reassembled the jumble of rods and springs in a Kalashnikov rifle.

They were among two dozen women who turned out in a forest near Kyiv one recent weekend for a course in firearms and urban combat, training that included shooting rifles, finding booby traps and throwing hand grenades. They were spurred by a sense of duty, they said, realising they might some day end up on the front lines.

“Nobody wants to fight in the trenches,” said Olha Bakhmatova, 46, a psychologist who attended the training. “It's unnatural to want it.” But she felt it was “inevitable” that more women would wind up fighting, and she wanted to be prepared.

“Now, I understand: If not me, who?” she said.

After 20 months of full-scale war, the fighting in Ukraine has bogged down in vicious battles of attrition along a zigzag front line in the southeast. A steady supply of weapons and personnel are crucial, and while Ukraine has the benefit of Western-donated armaments, it relies on only its own population as a pool for replenishing forces — and Russia's is about three times as large.

With so much hinging on refilling the ranks, efforts are underway to draw more Ukrainian women into the army. Volunteer groups offering all-female training, like the one near Kyiv, are supporting the effort.

About 43,000 women now serve in the Ukrainian military, according to the Ministry of Defence, an increase of about 40 per cent since 2021, the year before Russia's full-scale attack. The proportional increase is less than the male fighting force, which has more than tripled over the same period.

Ukrainian women are fighting in combat in southeastern Ukraine now. In several steps since the attack, the military abolished restrictions that kept women from roles such as machine-gunner, tank commander and sniper, and lifted rules prohibiting women



Tetiana Dovbii, left, and Anya Rudak participating in a course in firearms and urban combat in a forest near Ukraine's capital of Kyiv.

from driving trucks. It raised the age limit for female recruits, previously 40, to 60, the same as for men.

Earlier in the full-scale war, women had taken combat roles in paramilitary groups or by skirting rules. And they have been wounded, captured and killed, though the military does not release casualty figures for either men or women.

The Ukrainian army's outreach to women is a step toward equality, to be sure, but one that also reflects the tremendous toll the war has exacted.

The hundreds of thousands of men who wanted to volunteer at the start of the war, many lining up on Day 1, have already joined; many are dead or wounded. Ukraine now needs to mobilise and train many more soldiers to sustain its resistance to the Russian attack, even as men are increasingly dodging the draft.

The all-female training sessions are aimed at providing a learning environment where the women would not feel less knowledgeable than men, and where their efforts would not continually be compared with male physical strength.

“Women are able to fight on an equal footing with men and at the same time remain feminine,” said Darya Trebukh, the founder of the nongovernmental group, Ukrainian Valkiriya, that is leading the training sessions. “The gender of a warrior makes no difference.”

Vynokur, 26, the hardware store clerk, turned out for the training with a friend after seeing an advertisement on

Instagram. “What attracted me is this is only for women,” she said. “It's more comfortable, especially for the first time” handling a weapon. “As women, we are all on the same level,” she said.

Of serving in the military, she said: “Everybody understands the war won't be over in a month. I don't want to, I never wanted to, but I understand I should be ready to.”

Ukraine's military has focused primarily on ways to improve conditions for women already in the military, such as providing gender-specific clothing and body armour, and not on mobilisation. It does not draft women, though recently it has required women with medical training to register for the draft. Women who want to serve must enlist.

At the recent session near Kyiv, beginners learned to adjust the sling on a Kalashnikov rifle: Too loose and it bounces, too tight and it cannot quickly swing into position to fire.

The male instructor, an active-duty paratrooper, demonstrated reloading a magazine, clearing a jammed cartridge and firing from a prone position.

Women have been drawn in particular into piloting drones flown for surveillance or to drop explosives on the enemy.

“Women who can fly drones are people who could tomorrow, if needed, get a drone to target artillery fire,” said Valeriy Borovyk, a drone unit commander and founder of a group dedicated to training female pilots called Pilotesy.

— The New York Times

Preventing AI nuclear armageddon

It is no longer science fiction: the race to apply artificial intelligence to nuclear-weapons systems is under way — a development that could make nuclear war more likely. With governments worldwide acting to ensure the safe development and application of AI, there is an opportunity to mitigate this danger. But if world leaders are to seize it, they must first recognise just how serious the threat is.

In recent weeks, the G7 agreed on the Hiroshima Process International Code of Conduct for Organisations Developing Advanced AI Systems, in order “to promote safe, secure and trustworthy AI worldwide,” and US President Joe Biden issued an executive order establishing new standards for AI “safety and security.” The United Kingdom also hosted the first global AI Safety Summit, with the goal of ensuring that the technology is developed in a “safe and responsible” manner.

But none of these initiatives adequately addresses the risks posed by the application of AI to nuclear weapons. Both the G7 code of conduct and Biden’s executive order refer only in passing to the need to protect populations from AI-generated chemical, biological and nuclear threats. And UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak did not mention the acute threat posed by nuclear-weapons-related AI applications at all, even as he declared that a shared understanding of the risks posed by AI had been reached at the AI Safety Summit.

No one doubts the existential risks posed by the use of nuclear weapons, which would wreak untold devastation on humanity and the planet. Even a regional nuclear war would kill hundreds of thousands of people directly, while leading to significant indirect suffering and death. The resulting climatic changes alone would threaten billions with starvation.

Nuclear history is rife with near-misses. All too often, Armageddon was averted by a human who chose to trust their own judgment, rather than blindly follow the information provided by machines. In 1983, the Soviet officer Stanislav Petrov received an alarm from the early-warning satellite system he was monitoring: American nuclear



Melissa Parke, a former Australian minister for international development, is Executive Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, which received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017

APPLYING AI TO NUCLEAR WEAPONS INCREASES THE CHANCES THAT, NEXT TIME, NOBODY WILL STOP THE LAUNCH

missiles had been detected heading towards the Soviet Union. But rather than immediately alert his superiors, surely triggering nuclear “retaliation,” Petrov rightly determined that it was a false alarm. Would Petrov have made the same call — or even had the opportunity to do so — if AI had been involved? In fact, applying machine learning to nuclear weapons will reduce human control over decisions to deploy them.

Of course, a growing number of command, control and communications tasks have been automated since nuclear weapons were invented. But, as machine learning advances, the process whereby advanced machines make decisions is becoming increasingly opaque — what is known as AI’s “black box problem.” This makes it difficult for humans to monitor a machine’s functioning, let alone determine whether it has been compromised, is malfunctioning, or has been programmed in such a way that could lead to illegal or unintentional outcomes.

Simply ensuring that a human makes the final launch decision would not be enough to mitigate these risks. As psychologist John Hawley concluded in a 2017 study, “Humans are very poor at meeting the monitoring and intervention demands imposed by supervisory control.”

Moreover, as Princeton University’s Programme on Science and Global Security showed in 2020, leaders’ decision-making processes in a nuclear crisis are already very rushed. Even if AI is merely used in sensors and targeting, rather than to make launch decisions — it will shorten the already tight timescale for deciding whether to strike. The added pressure on leaders will increase the risk of miscalculation or irrational choices.

Yet another risk arises from the use of AI in satellite and other intelligence-detection systems: this will make it more difficult to hide nuclear weapons, such as ballistic-missile submarines, that have historically been concealed. This could spur nuclear-armed countries to deploy all their nuclear weapons earlier in a conflict — before their adversaries get a chance to immobilise known nuclear systems. © Project Syndicate, 2023

HEADING HOME!



Afghan boys sit on a truck as they along with their family head back to Afghanistan from Pakistan, at the Friendship Gate of Chaman Border Crossing along the Pakistan-Afghanistan Border in Balochistan Province, in Chaman, Pakistan, on Wednesday. – Reuters

UK’s Sunak makes pre-election pitch in first King’s Speech since 1951

Charles III delivered the first King’s Speech in 72 years on Tuesday, formally opening the UK parliament with a run-down of his government’s legislative plans as an election looms.

From a golden throne in the House of Lords, the 74-year-old monarch outlined Conservative Prime Minister Rishi Sunak’s wish list of new laws that reinforced dividing lines with the main opposition Labour Party.

Charles addressed lawmakers in the diamond-studded Imperial State Crown, a long crimson robe and Royal Navy uniform. The 10-minute speech came as the Tories, in power since 2010, trail Labour by double-digits in most opinion polls before a general election widely expected next year.

The ceremonial address was Charles’s first as head of state, although he had a dry run deputising for his mother Queen Elizabeth II in May last year.

It was also Sunak’s first since succeeding Liz Truss, who took over from Boris Johnson as prime minister just two days before the queen’s death and lasted only 49 days in office.

“It is mindful of the legacy of service and devotion to this country set by my beloved mother, the late Queen, that I deliver this, the first



Peter Hutchison is UK news and politics reporter at AFP

SUNAK MADE LAW AND ORDER A KEY ELECTION BATTLEGROUND BY PROPOSING TOUGHER SENTENCING GUIDELINES AROUND LIFE TERMS

King’s Speech in over 70 years,” said Charles, beginning the address.

In it, Sunak made law and order a key election battleground by proposing tougher sentencing guidelines around life terms and an end to early release for some violent offenders.

He also underlined differences that he is drawing with Keir Starmer’s centre-left Labour over the environment and energy. The speech proposed a law granting new licences for oil and gas projects in the North Sea annually that Sunak says will reduce Britain’s reliance on foreign energy and create jobs.

Charles, who has devoted his life to environmental causes, delivered the announcement expressionless in keeping with the convention that the monarch is above politics.

Sunak had already announced a rollback of green energy policies in September, positioning himself as a champion of motorists in a bid to turn around his party’s fortunes.

Labour has said it will not award any new oil and gas exploration licences and has pledged instead to boost investment in green energy.

Sunak also included a phased smoking ban, which he announced at last month’s Tory conference, and reforms to home ownership laws.

The King’s Speech signifies the start of a new parliamentary year and was last delivered by a male monarch in 1951 — although not in person as Charles’s grandfather, King George VI, was unwell.

It indicates the types of laws the government hopes to get through parliament in the next 12 months.



Britain’s King Charles III delivers a speech during the State Opening of Parliament in the House of Lords Chamber, in London, Britain, on Tuesday. – Reuters

Although a Tory defeat at the next election is far from a foregone conclusion, owing to their sizeable parliamentary majority, a loss would mean much of the legislation never seeing the light of day.

“What we have before us is a plan for more of the same, more sticking plasters, more division, more party first, country second gimmicks,” said Starmer as days of debate on the speech began.

Tuesday’s state opening saw the sovereign travelling to the Houses of Parliament by carriage

from Buckingham Palace. Some 1,400 members of the armed forces, 124 horses and marching bands took part in the proceedings, which included a 41-gun salute.

Princess Anne, Charles’s sister, rode in the procession, performing the ceremonial role of the King’s “protector”, formally known as Gold Stick in Waiting.

As is tradition, an MP was ceremonially held “hostage” to ensure the king’s safe return.

Royal bodyguards ritually searched the basement of the Palace of Westminster for explosives — a legacy of the failed attempt by Catholics to blow up parliament in 1605.

A parliamentary official known as Black Rod had the door of the lower chamber House of Commons slammed in her face, a tradition that symbolises parliament’s independence from the monarchy.

The monarch led a procession through the House of Lords, parliament’s unelected upper chamber, before giving the speech there to assembled lords and ladies in red robes, plus invited members of the elected Commons.

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MAN CITY, LEIPZIG INTO CL LAST 16

SHAKHTAR STUN BARCA; HAALAND HITS BRACE AGAIN



Shakhtar Donetsk's players celebrate the opening goal by Ukrainian forward #14 Danylo Sikan (2R) during the Uefa Champions League Group H match against FC Barcelona in Hamburg, northern Germany. – AFP

PARIS: Holders Manchester City and RB Leipzig became the first teams to reach the last 16 of this season's Champions League on Tuesday while Danylo Sikan's goal allowed Shakhtar Donetsk to claim a stunning win over Barcelona.

Pep Guardiola's reigning champions have eased into the knockout phase with a perfect record, a 3-0 win over Young Boys making it four wins out of four in Group G.

Erling Haaland followed his brace in Bern two weeks ago with another two goals against the Swiss side, with the Norwegian striker opening the scoring from the penalty spot midway through the first half.

Phil Foden got their second in first-half stoppage time and Haaland struck again soon after the interval for his 15th goal of the campaign.

Young Boys were then reduced to 10 men as Sandro Lauper was sent off, and City saw out a 10th successive home victory in the

competition. "People say 'yeah, the group stage, it is easy', but you have to do it. In life, you have to do it when people expect you to do it," Guardiola told TNT Sports.

Leipzig joined City in securing progress from Group G thanks to their 2-1 victory at Red Star Belgrade.

Xavi Simons gave the German side an early lead with a lovely finish into the far corner, and Lois Openda made it 2-0 in the rain in Belgrade with his 10th goal this season.

Former European Cup winners Red Star pulled one back through a Benjamin Henrichs own goal but they are now left to fight it out with Young Boys for a place in the Europa League knockout phase.

Barcelona could have booked their last-16 ticket with a win over Shakhtar but instead the Ukrainian club kept their own hopes alive with a famous 1-0 victory in Hamburg.

Sikan, the 22-year-old forward, headed in the only goal of the Group

H game late in the first half and Shakhtar held on.

"It feels very sweet," smiled coach Marino Pusic, whose Shakhtar team are playing European home games this season in Germany amid the ongoing war in Ukraine.

"I am tremendously proud of my players and all the people in the club, working very hard to support me in this, what we achieved tonight."

PEPE BECOMES OLDEST-EVER SCORER

Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez admitted his team were "in a bit of a footballing rut", and they were joined at the top of the section on nine points by Porto, who beat Royal Antwerp 2-0 in Portugal.

Brazilian forward Evanilson opened the scoring with a first-half penalty and Antwerp had Jurgen Ekkelenkamp sent off early in the second half. Porto wrapped up the win in stoppage time when veteran defender Pepe headed in to become,

at the age of 40 years and 254 days old, the oldest player ever to score a Champions League goal.

The record had previously been held by Francesco Totti, who last scored in the competition for Roma aged 38.

PSG, NEWCASTLE BEATEN

Paris Saint-Germain and Newcastle United's hopes of qualifying from Group F remain in the balance after both lost on the road.

PSG went down 2-1 away to AC Milan despite Milan Skriniar giving the French side an early lead at San Siro. It took Milan just three minutes to draw level when Rafael Leao finished in acrobatic fashion, and Olivier Giroud headed in the winner five minutes after half-time.

Borussia Dortmund are top of the group after beating Newcastle 2-0 in Germany, with Niclas Füllkrug and Julian Brandt scoring the goals, one in each half.

"When you concede four goals in this stadium three days ago,

it feels good to hold a very good English team to nil — and the two goals will do us good," Brandt told Amazon Prime as Dortmund bounced back from Saturday's 4-0 thrashing by Bayern Munich in the Bundesliga.

ATLETICO HIT SIX

Atletico Madrid top Group E after crushing 10-man Celtic 6-0 in Spain to record their biggest win in the modern Champions League.

Antoine Griezmann grabbed an early opener and Celtic then had Daizen Maeda sent off midway through the first half.

Alvaro Morata made it 2-0 in first-half stoppage time and Griezmann made it three on the hour mark.

Samuel Lino got the fourth with a stunning strike, Morata lashed in the fifth for his second, and Saul Niguez completed the scoring.

Lazio beat Feyenoord 1-0 in the same section thanks to Ciro Immobile's 200th goal for the club.

— AFP

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE RESULTS ON TUESDAY:

GROUP E In Madrid Atletico Madrid (ESP) 6 (Griezmann 6, 60, Morata 45+2, 76, Lino 66, Niguez 84)) Celtic (SCO) 0 In Rome Lazio (ITA) 1 (Immobile 45+1) Feyenoord (NED) 0	GROUP G In Belgrade Red Star Belgrade (SRB) 1 (Henrichs 81-og) RB Leipzig (GER) 2 (Simons 8, Openda 77) In Manchester, England Manchester City (ENG) 3 (Haaland 23-pen, 51, Foden 45+1) Young Boys (SUI) 0
GROUP F In Milan, Italy AC Milan (ITA) 2 (Leao 12, Giroud 50) Paris Saint-Germain (FRA) 1 (Skriniar 9) In Dortmund, Germany Borussia Dortmund (GER) 2 (Füllkrug 26, Brandt 79) Newcastle (ENG) 0	GROUP H In Porto, Portugal Porto (POR) 2 (Evanilson 32-pen, Pepe 90+1) Royal Antwerp (BEL) 0 In Hamburg, Germany Shakhtar Donetsk (UKR) 1 (Sikan 40) Barcelona (ESP) 0

Leaderboards take shape at Round 6

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, NOV 8

The fight for the medals began to shape up after the sixth round of the 2023 World Amateur Chess Championship, organised by the Oman Chess Committee in cooperation with Fide, from November 2 to 11.

The top of the standings has been clarified to some extent, but with three challenging rounds remaining, nothing has been decided yet.

The ceremonial first move of Round 6 was made by Ahmed bin Mohammed al Hamidi, Mayor of Muscat, at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

The highlights of the sixth round's results are as follows:

Kazakhstan's Abilmansur Abdilkhair still leads the under-2300 category thanks to a sixth consecutive win, this time against India's Indrajeet Mahindrakar, in a game that lasted over three hours. Abdilkhair enjoys a perfect 6 out of 6 score, while Victor Arce Benito from Spain is in second place with one point less.

In the under-2000 category, Mongolia's Dashtogtokh Amarsaikhan succeeded in beating R Sham from India in a closely contested fight and is the sole leader with 6 points, one point ahead of the closest pursuer, Indora Punit (India).

Aleksandr Martynov is the sole and flawless leader of the under-1700 category, after defeating his main rival for the top spot, Hamed Imani Lasaki (Sweden), in an intense fight. This win maintained Martynov's 100 per cent score (6 points) and



Ahmed bin Mohammed al Hamidi, Mayor of Muscat, makes the ceremonial first move of Round 6.

kept him ahead of the pack, which is led by the Mongolia's Ganbat Danzanjunai with 5.5 points.

Finally, in the women's under-1700 category, Mongolian Bat-Amgalan Anujin won a remarkable tactical clash against Binoj Shybi, thus earning her sixth win and entrenching herself in first place in the standings, one point ahead of her teammate Baldanjantsan Khuslenzaya.

Chief guest Ahmed al Hamidi expressed his great satisfaction with the level of organisation and hosting of the world chess tournament.

He emphasised the importance

of this tournament and its positive impact on promoting the Sultanate of Oman and boosting the players' confidence. He also expressed the municipality's continuous support for chess and the addition of new facilities in the city.

Al Hamidi praised the efforts of the organising team and emphasised that hosting a world-class tournament at this level enhances Oman's reputation and attracts players from around the world. He also highlighted the significance of the municipality's support for sports events.

He also commended the tourist

programme prepared by the organising committee for players and participants, stating that it plays an essential role in introducing Oman, its history, culture, and important natural and tourist sites. Sports serve as a significant gateway for tourism promotion, and hosting tournaments of this magnitude contributes to enhancing this aspect.

He concluded by expressing their desire to host more chess events and promote the game in Oman, emphasising the important role of sports in promoting tourism and introducing the country's history and culture.

100 students take part in badminton selection festival

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 8

As many as 100 boys and girls students took part in the two days selection festivals of badminton.

The first day was organised specifically for the female students on October 30 at Al Amal club in Muscat. While the male students selection took place on November 5 at AMM Arena in Ghala.

The selection festival was organised by Oman Racket Sports Committee (ORSC) in order to discover the most talented junior badminton players to create the national teams. The ORSC board directors set a top strategy by focusing on the junior players to make a strong foundation for establishing the national teams in the near future.

The two days festival featured several activities where the students competed with passion and enthusiasm, trying to demonstrate their distinctive skills and abilities in this sport that requires speed and precision. The committee appointed many coaches and trainers to supervise the performance of the participants in the events.

During the selection festivals, the participated players went under clear training sessions to evaluate

their skills in addition to that a mini tournament was organised in a systematic and effective manner to enrich the students' experience and increase the level of competitiveness among them.

Ammar al Hammadi, organising member at the Badminton Players Selection Festival, stated that the event was an ideal opportunity to discover young talented players. "The festival constituted an ideal occasion to enhance the spirit of competition and interaction among the students. With this event, ORSC reinforces the importance of supporting young talents and encouraging them to practice badminton," he said

Al Hammadi wished the selection festival would be held in more than one governorate.

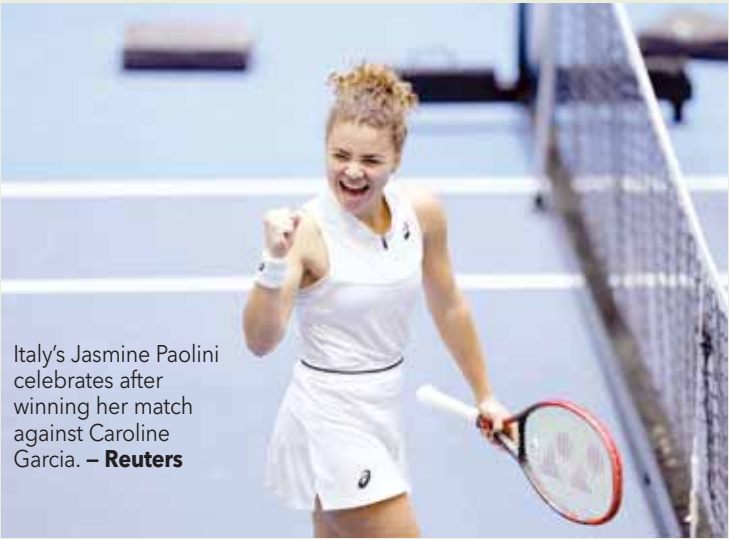
Ruqaya bint Nasser al Omairiyah, Board member of ORSC, said that the committee pays great attention to developing junior students and build up their technical skills and abilities.

"This is an initial step to establish a strong national team in the future. We will provide a proper environment for our future players to grow professionally. We are focused in the beginning at Al Seeb and Bausher schools and group of students have been selected."



The students after the selection trials for badminton tournament.

Italy see off Garcia's France in solid BJK Cup start



Italy's Jasmine Paolini celebrates after winning her match against Caroline Garcia. — Reuters

SEVILLE, Spain: Italy scored an impressive win over France in their Billie Jean King Cup finals opener on Wednesday, winning both singles rubbers for an unassailable 2-0 lead.

Jasmine Paolini beat France's Caroline Garcia 7-6 (8/6), 5-7, 6-4 in a thrilling battle after Martina Trevisan beat Alize Cornet 2-6, 6-2, 6-2, earning Italy the tie before the closing doubles.

Four-time winners Italy have now beaten France in five of their last seven meetings, edging this battle between two of the four ever-present countries at the tournament, along with Australia and Great Britain.

Trevisan came back forcefully from a set down to triumph in the first singles rubber. "I'm very happy to bring the point to my team, when I play for Italy, for my country, it's always special," she said. "I tried to manage the tension and go ball by ball."

Cornet said she was unwell

in the second set.

"I was feeling pretty good before and during the first set," she explained.

"Then my form dropped. I started to feel a bit dizzy, and I think she changed her strategy and she played much smarter from the second set."

Paolini and world number 20 Garcia played out a consistent first set with just one break point, which the Italian saved, eventually triumphing in the tie-break.

In the second set Garcia blew two set points at 5-4 up but immediately recovered Paolini's break and made no mistake at the third time of asking, forcing a decider.

However it was Paolini who emerged victorious in a tense finale, winning the final four games to clinch victory.

Later on Wednesday Spain face Canada in the opening tie of Group C, with Paula Badosa potentially making a reappearance from injury for the hosts. — AFP

Red Warriors begin warm-up sessions ahead of WC qualifiers

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 8

The Oman national football team players commenced their training sessions in the domestic camp on Tuesday to mark their preparations for the opening match against Chinese Taipei on November 16 in Muscat before meeting Kyrgyzstan in Bishkek city on November 21 in the Preliminary Joint Qualification Round 2 for FIFA World Cup 2026 and AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027 besides 2024 AFC Asian Cup in Qatar campaign.

The practice sessions took place at the Sultan Qaboos Sports

Complex in presence of all the players except Al Nahda players who joined the training on the second day of the camp following their match against Syria's Al Futuwa club in AFC Cup which ended in favour of the Oman's representative to keep their top spot in the group.

Al Nasr player Mahmood Mabrook trained individually in the first training session as per the instructions from the coaching staff. He was suffering from some light injury that required some special physical training. Salah al Yahayei's injury status will be determined by the medical team

and it will decide his selection in the squad.

The opening warm-up session began with a message from coach Branko Ivankovic who affirmed focusing on the coming assignment and to gain the desired technical outcomes from this gathering to shape their readiness for the forthcoming matches. Later, the players performed some physical training under supervision of the fitness coach before moving to the technical and tactical training sessions under the direct supervision of Branko. The session concluded with a

match in the centre of the green field as players were distributed into two groups.

Oman's striker Zaher al Aghbari affirmed that this domestic camp is very crucial as the team will prepare for the first match against Chinese Taipei on November 16 in Muscat. "Our focus is now on the first match to collect the three points and think about the next match. We are very glad that the number of Asian teams are increased for the FIFA World Cup but again we have to take match by match until reaching our goal," he told Oman Observer during the training session.



Ton-up Stokes stars as England stop rot against Dutch

PUNE: Ben Stokes' maiden World Cup hundred set-up a 160-run win for England over the Netherlands in Pune on Wednesday as the struggling champions climbed off the bottom of the table.

Victory ended a five-game losing streak, with England having long since ceased to be in semifinal contention.

But just their second win of the 10-team tournament maintained England's hopes of a top-eight finish that would qualify them for the 2025 Champions Trophy in Pakistan.

England were in trouble at 192-6 after yet another batting collapse before Stokes' 108 and 51 from fellow all-rounder Chris Woakes took them to 339-9 in 50 overs.

The Netherlands were never in the hunt, collapsing to 179 all out inside 38 overs, Woakes and David Willey striking with the new ball before spinners Moeen Ali and Adil Rashid took three wickets each.

"I'm more pleased for us to get a victory over the line, it's been a tough World Cup," said Stokes.

England talisman Stokes, battling a longstanding knee injury, made a painstaking fifty in 58 balls and then accelerated, taking just 20 more deliveries to reach his fifth one-day international century.

He was well-supported by Woakes as England added 124 runs in the last 10 overs to finish on 339-9.

Test skipper Stokes, 32, eventually holed out in the last over for 108.



England's Ben Stokes in action at Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium. — Reuters

SCOREBOARD	
ENGLAND	NETHERLANDS
J Bairstow c van Meekeren b Dutt15	W Barresi run out37
D Malan run out87	M O'Dowd c Ali b Woakes5
J Root b van Beek28	C Ackermann c Buttler b Willey0
B Stokes c Engelbrecht b van Beek108	S Engelbrecht c Woakes b Willey33
H Brook c Ackermann b de Leede11	S Edwards c Malan b Ali38
J Buttler c Nidamanuru b van Meekeren5	B de Leede b Rashid10
M Ali c de Leede b Dutt4	T Nidamanuru not out41
C Woakes c Edwards b de Leede51	L van Beek c Malan b Rashid2
D Willey c Engelbrecht b de Leede6	R van der Merwe c Rashid b Ali0
G Atkinson not out2	A Dutt b Rashid1
A Rashid not out1	P van Meekeren st Buttler b Ali4
Extras (1nb, w20)21	Extras (lb4, w4)8
Total (9 wkts, 50 overs)339	Total (all out, 37.2 overs)179
Fall of wickets: 1-48, 2-133, 3-139, 4-164, 5-178, 6-192, 7-321, 8-327, 9-334	Fall of wickets: 1-12, 2-13, 3-68, 4-90, 5-104, 6-163, 7-166, 8-167, 9-174
Bowling: Dutt 10-0-67-2, Van Beek 10-0-88-2, Van Meekeren 10-0-57-1, De Leede 10-0-74-3; Van der Merwe 3-0-22-0; Ackermann 7-0-31-0	Bowling: Woakes 7-0-19-1, Willey 7-2-19-2, Atkinson 7-0-41-0, Moeen 8-2-0-42-3, Rashid 8-0-54-3
	Result: England won by 160 runs

Kiwis' fate in hands of Bangalore weather

New Zealand, who started the World Cup with a bang with four wins on the trot and looked to have sealed a place in the last four have ran out of steam in their last four games and might not even qualify for the semifinals if rain plays a spoil sport or if Sri Lanka beat them. Their downfall started after the loss to India and from there they have not been able to win inspite of scoring 400 against Pakistan and 370 against Australia.

New Zealand were on a roll when they first beat defending champions England in the opening game with more than 14 overs to spare and both Devon Conway and Rachin Ravindra scoring unbeaten hundreds.

They carried on their good start beating Netherlands, Afghanistan and Bangladesh but a freakish injury to Kane Williamson and lack of runs from Devon Conway stalled their progress.

They had come agonisingly close in chasing down 388 against Australia but lost by 5 runs and in the game in Pune their decision to bat second against South Africa backfired and lost by a huge margin. And in their last game against Pakistan, inspite of scoring 400 runs batting first, they came across Fakhar Zaman their nemesis who has



scored four centuries in a row against them and could not stop him again.

The equation is simple in their last game against Sri Lanka, if they win, they are almost certain to qualify as their net run rate is good and Pakistan will have to beat England by almost 130 runs which looks improbable. But there is rain forecast for Thursday's game and they will hope the rain stays away for qualifying for another semifinal in the World Cup. They have Kane Williamson back in the squad and looked very good scoring 97 against Pakistan.

Hockey Oman international women's tourney from Nov 24



Oman women's team players.



The dignitaries during the press conference. — Pics by Saleh al Sharji



ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, NOV 8

Oman Hockey Association (OHA) will organise an International Women's Hockey5s tournament from November 24 to 26 at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat.

"This will be a first tournament for the Oman women's team among many planned events ahead of the Men's and Women's Hockey5s World Cup to be held in Oman from January 24 to 31," said OHA Chairman Dr Marwan bin Juma al Juma while launching the tournament during a press conference at the Oman Olympic Committee headquarters in Al

Ghubra on Wednesday.

"We will make every effort to equip the team for a good fight in the Hockey5s World Cup," Dr Marwan added.

Oman women's hockey team made their debut in Hockey5s Asia Cup in Salalah recently. The debutants finished last in the top-class 10-team tournament with some big defeats and reasonably better performances in their group matches.

Oman men's hockey head coach Siegfried Aikman, who is also adviser to the women's technical team, said it's still early days for the women's team.

"They have just started but there is no time for them to waste. They

got a chance to make their debut in the high-profile Asia Cup and now will have to get ready for the World Cup in no time. It is a big and interesting challenge for the girls," the Dutch coach said.

Women's team head coach Mohammed Waqas said the girls have long buried their opening nerves in the big stage.

"It was a little tough for them at the Asia Cup during the opening matches. But later they found their feet and could improve their performance after each match," the Pakistan coach said.

FIRST IN GCC

The OHA plans to run the women's tournament annually

which is first of its kind in the GCC region.

Divya Narang, who was the special guest at the launch ceremony, congratulated the OHA for taking the initiative for the women's team.

The spouse of Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, wished the Omani women's team the very best for their continued rise and success.

Sadaa al Ismailiyah from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, said she hoped the tournament would stay put strongly in coming years.

"I hope the tournament gets stronger in the coming years. We should also plan for a GCC-level

tournament in the near future too," Sadaa told Oman Observer.

The first edition of Hockey Oman International Women's Hockey5s tournament will be officially opened at 6 pm on November 24, though the matches start from 2 pm to 11 pm. The matches will continue on November 25 and on November 26, the matches will be held from 2 pm to 9 pm.

The Asian Hockey Federation has approved the tournament which will feature the participation of five international teams -- three teams from India, one team from Dubai and one team from Egypt. Hosts Oman will field three teams, making it an eight-team event.

Republicans India, Don Bosco

Academy Mumbai and Hustle Hockey Club are the teams from India. Fap Oman Team, Al Nahla Team and Magzi Team are the sides from Oman along with Dubai Hockey Club and Egypt Team.

There will be a tournament for schoolgirls as part of the main tournament. This is a 5-a-side format game, with a maximum of eight players in each team with two officials.

Matches will be in a round-robin league format with the eight teams playing each other. Top four will qualify for the semifinals.

The tournament is supported by UTSC Oman, the organisers of the Gulf Fiesta hockey tournament in Oman.

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Representatives of the key stakeholders signing the Terms of Reference agreement

Oman to establish Carbon Capture, Blue Hydrogen regulatory framework

Decarbonisation: Oman
expected to abate 16.3
million tonnes of CO2
annually via CCUS by 2050

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, NOV 8

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals signed here on November 8, 2023 a Terms of Reference agreement with multiple oil and gas industry stakeholders to establish a regulatory framework for blue hydrogen and carbon capture utilisation policies in the Sultanate of Oman.

Speaking at the signing, Mohsin bin Hamed al Hadhrami, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, emphasised the importance of CCUS (Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage) in achieving Oman's Net Zero goals.

"[Based on the Net Zero 2050 report,] we expect to reduce emissions from the 2021 baseline by 6 per cent in 2030 and by 54 per cent in 2040.

"To achieve our 2050 Net-Zero target, we have no choice but to tap into a diverse portfolio of technologies.

"Today, we are taking steps to utilise CCUS as the method by which we are going to address various industries."

According to Al Hadhrami, Oman is expected to abate 16.3 million tonnes of CO2 annually via CCUS by 2050.

CCUS will play an integral part in decarbonising the country's highest emission producing industries, which includes the industrial and oil and gas sectors, which account for one-third and one-quarter of emissions respectively, and require multiple methods of decarbonisation.

This includes the adoption of electrification, and the use of low-

carbon hydrogen and renewables and CCUS for the industrial sector, as well as the adoption of electrification and CCUS and efficiency improvements for the gas and oil sector.

As a result, he explained that the power sector will need to expand to meet the decarbonising demands of these sectors.

"Regarding the power sector, responsible for one-fifth of emissions, it needs to meet the electrification needs of other sectors.

"This means the power generation sector has to expand. Without effective measures, this could result in a 4.5-fold increase

To achieve our 2050
Net-Zero target, we have
no choice but to tap into
a diverse portfolio of
technologies

in emissions from current levels," he said.

"To prevent this, we need to introduce methods for decarbonising power generation, including renewables like solar PV and onshore wind generation.

"Incorporating intermittent renewables into what was once a stable electricity production system necessitates maintaining a base load through natural gas generation, which, in turn, must undergo decarbonisation with CCUS.

"We understand that achieving Oman's 2050 Net-Zero goal without CCUS is not viable."

Al Hadhrami also stressed the importance of establishing a collaborative national CCUS framework.

"It is crucial to approach this in

a structured and effective manner, collectively as an industry, within a national framework, rather than through individual projects.

"CCUS involves multiple players who need to collaborate, and the framework is necessary to facilitate this cooperation."

He further added: "It is important to take accelerated efforts in utilising the elements of a clean economy, by employing functional solutions and collaborating with our partners in the sector to achieve the targeted results within the designated time-frame, through applying the best practices and advanced technical solutions in the field of carbon management in a systematic sustainable manner."

The terms of reference (TOR) agreement was signed between the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and a team consisting of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), Oman Shell, OQGN and Occidental Oman.

The TOR will additionally entail the formation of a "House of Expertise" consisting of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, key CCUS and blue hydrogen industry partners, public and private stakeholders, and academic institutions to develop the regulatory framework of the sector, according to Ministry officials.

In a released statement, Director-General of Renewable Energy and Hydrogen at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, Dr Firas bin Ali al Abduwani, shared that the "House of Expertise" will conduct a study to assess the current landscape of CCUS and Blue Hydrogen.

"The study, to be carried out by the House of Expertise in the field of carbon capture and production of blue hydrogen, will contribute to complementing the ongoing efforts by the public and private sectors to reduce carbon emissions.

German economy forecast to shrink by 0.4 pc in 2023

BERLIN: The German economy has been forecast to shrink by 0.4 per cent this year, lower than a March forecast, according to a report released on Wednesday from the influential German Council of Economic Experts.

Germany's economy will remain largely stagnant in 2024 as well, according to the report, which forecasts only modest growth of German gross domestic product (GDP) next year of 0.7 per cent.

A slow recovery in China and weak overall global demand are particular challenges for Germany's export-oriented

economy, the report noted.

The council, which is made up of five leading economists and sometimes referred to as "the Five Sages," evaluates the German government's economic policies and provide independent analysis of the country's economy.

The latest report compares to one released in March, when the experts forecast that the country would narrowly avoid a recession in 2023.

The experts cited the ongoing fallout from the energy price shock, a decline in domestic demand and geopolitical

conflicts as among the reasons for Germany's disappointing economic performance.

But the Council of Economic Experts indicated they are even more concerned about structural problems, such as labour shortages and too little modernisation in companies. Those structural issues could dragdown the economy for decades, the experts warned.

If the German government and companies do not act now, however, Germany will face completely different problems in the coming decades, the experts warned. — dpa

Muscat Engineering Consultancy (MEC) eyes on rapid expansion in India over the next 3 years with 6 offices and over 2,000 employees

MEC Group is looking at clocking in revenues of more than
USD 500 million over the next five years



Oman-based MEC announced today the official opening of their office in Mumbai. MEC aspires to become a fast-growing global engineering solution provider by expanding its engineering offerings to various sectors. The aim is to expand their Indian operations over the next 3 years by hiring highly skilled & experienced talent pool of over 2,000 employees, to cater to the needs of domestic market and offer the best of our engineering expertise right from project inception to execution.

MEC recently diversified its offerings in the Advanced Engineering domain by acquiring Proton Synergy Pvt. Ltd. (PSPL). Merger of PSPL will further augment MEC's domain of Specialized Consultancy offerings and will enable them to diversify their solutions to all their existing clients as well as build new clientele base in other Industry Sectors like Oil & Gas - Offshore, Defense, Information Technology, Pharmaceuticals apart from Oil & Gas - Onshore and Power.

On this momentous occasion, Mr. Salim Al Kindi - CEO, MEC, said "The merger between Muscat Engineering Consultancy LLC and Proton Synergy Pvt. Ltd. signifies a remarkable milestone for both organizations. Together, we are poised to redefine the landscape of Advanced Engineering Solutions, offering comprehensive services to our clients. This strategic step opens doors to new opportunities and reinforces our commitment to delivering excellence."

Embarking on this exciting journey, Mr. Vinod Shah - MD, MEC, said "This is a testament to our vision of creating an entity that stands at the forefront of Advanced Engineering Solutions. We are diversifying our business, and consolidating

our strengths, experience, and expertise to deliver innovative solutions that address the evolving needs of our clients. Together, we look forward to building a sustainable future."

MEC is committed to service excellence in delivering reliable, sustainable, innovative and cost-effective solutions that will make them the preferred partner of choice in India in the years to come, especially with their newly developed state-of-art digital platform to monitor project performance.

The company has grown multifold to a major engineering solution provider, by upholding their core values that are comprehensive to how they collaborate with their clients.

About MEC

MEC, formerly known as Tebodin & Partner LLC is a leading Engineering Design & Project Management Consultancy firm, offering quality-driven technical expertise & customized services to global clients in Oil & Gas, Chemicals and specialty Chemicals, Power, Water, Infrastructure, Pharmaceuticals & Defense, sectors covering Concept Development, Basic Engineering, FEED, Detail Design, Project Management Consultancy, Procurement & Construction Management and Commissioning assistance. With Corporate Head Office in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman & High Value Engineering Design Centers in India (Mumbai & Chennai), MEC has successfully executed mega greenfield projects as well as complex brownfield projects balancing all project constraints of cost, schedule, quality and risk. Over the past two decades, MEC has built many trustworthy enduring relationships and constituted a network of primary clients.

Redefining reliability with the first and only 15-month warranty

MUSCAT: Reem Batteries and Power Appliances Co. SAOC, one of the largest automotive battery manufacturers in the GCC region and the only one in Oman offering over 1.5 million units, presents the widest range of Dry & Wet charged automotive batteries.

They are setting a new industry standard with the launch of their brand-new product, “Grand Star Gold” – the very first automotive battery in Oman to provide a groundbreaking 15-Month Warranty.

The grand unveiling took place at a splendid Gala Event held at Novotel Hotel on November 6th, 2023. During this event, Reem Batteries had the honour of hosting their distributors and numerous retailers, marking the celebration of this monumental achievement as a great success.

Grand Star Gold is a sealed, 100 per cent maintenance-free battery, ensuring that you have power when you need it most, without the hassle of periodic maintenance. Engineered to be a “desert-proof” product and designed to endure the rigorous GCC climate, it features a precious and corrosion-resistant



Reem Batteries and Power Appliances Co. SAOC

lead alloy.

This uniqueness in the industry sets the highest standard, guaranteeing that your car starts without a hitch every time, making it the perfect choice for extremely harsh desert conditions.

When the going gets tough, Grand Star Gold keeps going.

Sanjeev Khapre, Acting CEO of RBPA, extended a warm welcome to the esteemed guests, emphasising that Grand Star stands as a symbol of excellence.

He stated, “Innovation is the key to success. In an age where quality and dependability are

paramount, Grand Star Gold shines as a beacon of perfection.

Proudly manufactured with precision in the Sultanate of Oman at RBPA, these batteries represent the epitome of cutting-edge technology, setting them apart with their exceptional 15-Month Warranty, in contrast to the traditional warranties provided by competitors, meeting the demands of modern-day automobiles.

Reem Batteries, established in 1991 and headquartered in Oman, is a 100 per cent Omani-owned company, established in technical collaboration with the



Sanjeev Khapre, Acting CEO of RBPA

world’s most renowned battery manufacturer, Johnson Controls, USA.

Reem Batteries is the first battery manufacturer in West Asia and is accredited with ISO 9001:2015 certification, reflecting their Quality Management system emphasising product quality and customer focus.

RBPA is one of the few manufacturing companies with international accreditation for ISO 14001:2015 and ISO 45001:2018 certifications, demonstrating their commitment to environmental and occupational health and safety standards.

Toyota GAZOO racing clinches podium finish at central European rally

MUSCAT: Toyota GAZOO Racing (TGR) World Rally Team’s (WRT) Kalle Rovanperä and co-driver Jonne Halttunen have secured their second consecutive FIA World Rally Championship (WRC) titles after finishing second in the No. 69 GR YARIS Rally1 Hybrid Electric vehicle in the penultimate round of the 2023 season, the Central European Rally.

After being crowned the youngest-ever World Rally Champion in 2022 while driving the No.69 GR YARIS Rally1 Hybrid Electric vehicle, 23-year-old Rovanperä has now become the sixth driver to achieve consecutive titles in the history of the WRC.

It’s the fifth year in a row that a TGR crew has won the drivers’ and co-drivers’ championship, and also completed a third straight hat-trick of titles after Toyota clinched the manufacturers’ championship during the previous Rally Chile.

Akio Toyoda, TGR-WRT Chairman, commented, “Kalle, Jonne, congratulations on winning your second consecutive drivers’ and co-drivers’ championship titles!”

Kalle steadily accumulated points and started to lead the drivers’ standings from the middle of the season, showing us what a strong champion is like.

I also would like to thank Elfyn Evans a lot for his aggressive driving and for not giving up until the end. His driving with the strong desire to win was impressive.

The 2023 season is not over yet. Elfyn and Scott missed something in Japan last year.

I hope they will collect it this year and let me stand on the podium next month in Japan.”

Rovanperä made a strong start of the inaugural cross-border Central European Rally, which began in Prague and continued across the Czech Republic, Austria and Lower Bavaria in Germany.

He won four out of six stages on demanding wet asphalt roads in the Czech Republic to lead by 36.4 seconds. Rovanperä’s perseverance and determination kept him firmly among the top contenders in the rally, despite the numerous challenges posed by the routes in Austria.

A calculated approach throughout the last stretch of the rally allowed him to achieve his seventh podium of the season, one in which he has already secured three victories and, crucially, finished in the top four in all but one of the 12 rounds held.

The 2023 season will conclude on home roads for TGR at Rally Japan on November 16-19.



Toyota GAZOO Racing

Asyad Group drives decarbonisation in logistics sector

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 8

To accommodate the future demand for green fuels in the Middle East, Asyad Group - Oman’s global integrated logistics provider - has been leading the way by building key partnerships and launching high-value projects that aim to develop the right clean-energy infrastructure in Oman’s main ports.

Currently, the group’s freezones are hosting several international joint ventures to produce green hydrogen ammonia, such as Salalah2 that



Asyad Group participated in World Ports Conference 2023 held in Abu Dhabi recently

target total production capacities of 430,000 tons per annum.

Taking the lead in scaling sustainability and moving toward clean logistics, Asyad Group is on

a quest to transform Oman’s ports into global hydrogen hubs that power shipping operations and meet the future needs of energy off-takers across the globe.

Asyad Group participated in the recent World Ports Conference 2023, organised by the International Association of Ports and Harbors (IAPH) and held in Abu Dhabi, UAE, bringing together major actors in the global maritime and shipping industry. During the conference, Asyad Group promoted the competitive advantages of the Omani main ports of Salalah, Sohar, and Duqm, as well as medium and small ports, and

Oman’s prominent capabilities in connecting shipping lines with global markets.

Asyad Group, represented by SOHAR Port and Freezone, showcased its expertise in maintaining seamless maritime operations amid digital transformation and strong cybersecurity measures through the “Cyber Threats to Ports” panel discussion. Bader al Ghaithi, Sohar Port IT Manager, shed light on best practices and approaches to deal with cyber security threats and the importance of establishing an agile operational model to ensure business continuity.

National Finance’s support for SMEs, a testament to its unwavering trust

MUSCAT: In recognition of its remarkable support and contribution to the success of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the country, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman’s leading finance company, was conferred with the title of ‘SME Financier of the Year’ at the esteemed Muntada Al Mar’a Summit & Awards.

The award was graciously presented by Chief Guest Her Highness Sayyidah Hujaija al Said, and accepted by Her Highness Sayyidah Wisam bint Jaifar al Said on behalf of National Finance.

Hosted by ‘Al Mar’a’, the premier woman’s magazine in the nation, the event, now in its 12th edition, convened a gathering of distinguished industry leaders, innovators and achievers to celebrate the accomplishments of women across different sectors.

Themed ‘Empowered Women leading towards a brighter future’, the summit saw a convergence of luminaries who shed light on the pivotal role women play in the progress of society.



Her Highness Sayyidah Hujaija al Said, and accepted by Her Highness Sayyidah Wisam bint Jaifar al Said on behalf of National Finance.

A key highlight of the event, National Finance’s employee Abba al Harthy, Unit Head Customer Service Operation, participated in a thought-provoking panel discussion titled ‘Building Relationships and Partnerships for the Future of Women.’

The session was an insightful exploration of strategies and partnerships geared towards advancing women’s professional growth.

MUSCAT: As Diwali Day approaches, Indians around the world are in the final stages of their festive shopping.

In anticipation of the Festival of Lights, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with over 335 showrooms across 11 countries, has enhanced its festive season offerings at all of its showrooms worldwide.

From November 9th to November 11th, 2023, customers will be eligible for free gold coins with the purchase of gold jewellery worth RO 300.

This offer is valid at all Malabar Gold & Diamonds outlets in the GCC, Far East, the USA, and the UK.

As part of the ongoing promotion at Malabar Gold & Diamonds showrooms, customers were already eligible for free gold coins with the purchase of diamond and precious gem jewellery worth RO 300 and above.

As the auspicious occasion of Dhanteras approaches, the



Customers will receive assured gold coins on purchases of gold jewellery worth RO 300. Assured gold coins are also available on diamond and precious gem jewellery purchases.

addition of the assured gold coin offer for gold jewellery purchases is sure to be great news for jewellery buyers.

“We’ve been receiving excellent feedback about our Festive Jewellery collection from our customers. Considering the

preferences of our multicultural audience, we took special care to ensure that our jewellery collection incorporates designs to suit the cultural nuances of every celebration.

We have a strong customer base who choose to buy jewellery

on Dhanteras day as part of safeguarding their beliefs, and with Dhanteras just around the corner, we hope to add more value and joy to their celebrations by introducing the free gold coin offer for gold jewellery purchases as well,” said Shamlal Ahamed, MD-International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

On Dhanteras Day (Friday, November 10th), all the outlets of Malabar Gold & Diamonds in Oman will be open from 8:00 am to accommodate the expected high customer footfall at the showrooms.

The festive jewellery collection in gold, diamonds, and precious gems that the brand has unveiled during the festive season has been a tremendous hit among customers, eliciting a warm reception.

In light of fluctuating gold rates, jewellery buyers have taken advantage of Malabar Gold & Diamonds’ Gold Rate Protection offer to lock in the gold rate until Diwali, ensuring the lowest gold rate at the time of purchase.



Oman's sustainable energy vision: Aufi

NASRULAH AL AJMI
SUR, NOV 8

Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, emphasised the importance of energy storage solutions to help complement the country's broader push to achieve Net Zero by 2050.

Speaking at the inauguration of a solar photovoltaic (PV) farm in Sur earlier this week, Al Aufi highlighted the critical role of energy storage in supporting Oman's sustainability goals.

He noted, "In contrast to regions like Europe or the Far East, which have access to natural hydropower sources, our area lacks this advantage.

"Therefore, we must focus on energy storage for the power we generate during the day.

"While some energy can still be generated in the evening, particularly if it's from wind sources, this dependence on factors like wind or sunlight isn't a sustainable approach.

"Ideally, we prefer to maintain control over our power generation and use solar and wind energy to charge our storage systems."

Developed through a collaboration between Veolia and TotalEnergies, the 17-megawatt peak (MWp) solar system inaugurated earlier this week



Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, at the recent inauguration of the Sur Solar PV farm

is designed to supply clean energy to power the Sharqiyah Desalination Plant.

Al Aufi emphasised the substantial impact of this project on reducing carbon emissions. The solar farm is projected to cut approximately 27,200 tonnes of CO2 emissions annually, marking a significant step towards achieving Oman's environmental goals.

Construction work on the solar PV farm commenced in August 2022. Rigorous testing was conducted between March 30, 2023 and April 15, 2023, and commercial operation began on April 16, 2023.

The lease agreement for the solar farm's operation extends until March 31, 2036.

Dollar rebound extends for third day before Fed's Powell speech

LONDON: The dollar's rebound extended for a third day on Wednesday after some Federal Reserve policymakers left the door open to further rate hikes.

Traders are now eagerly awaiting a speech from Chair Jerome Powell to gain insights into the central bank's future policy path.

The greenback, which hit a seven-week low at the start of the week following the Fed's decision to maintain its policy rate and data indicating a cooling US labour market, has found support.

Markets remain uncertain about whether US interest rates have peaked and when the Fed might begin easing monetary conditions. Futures suggest a roughly 16 per cent chance of another rate hike by January, while there's a 21-per cent chance



Four thousand US dollars are counted out by a banker at a bank in Westminster

that rate cuts could come as early as March, according to the CME FedWatch tool.

The US dollar index, which recorded its sharpest weekly fall in about four months last week, rose 0.2 per cent to 105.73 and was on track for a weekly gain.

—Reuters

OMRAN Group inks two pacts at London World Travel Market

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 8

OMRAN Group, the leading tourism development company in the Sultanate of Oman, participated at the World Travel Market (WTM) 2023 in London, United Kingdom, as part of Oman's delegation represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

On the sidelines of the event, OMRAN Group signed two Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs), one with Barceló Hotel Group to establish a real estate fund, and another with Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) to enhance joint promotional efforts for tourist destinations.

The first agreement with Barceló Hotel Group, a renowned Spanish hotel management company, aims to establish a collaborative framework for a real estate development fund that will attract foreign direct investments to finance tourism and hospitality projects in Oman.

The agreement was signed by Dr Hashil bin Obaid al Mahrouqi, CEO of OMRAN Group, and Raúl González, CEO of Barceló Hotel Group, in the presence of Azzan bin Qassim al Busaidi, Chairman of OMRAN Group and Under-Secretary for Tourism at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

Furthermore, OMRAN Group signed an MoU with Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) to enhance strategic cooperation in promoting and jointly marketing tourist destinations.



OMRAN Group signed two Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs), one with Barceló Hotel Group to establish a real estate fund, and another with Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority

This partnership aims to boost promotional efforts for the Governorate of Musandam in Oman and the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah in the United Arab Emirates, highlighting them as premier tourist destinations that attract visitors from around the world.

The agreement was signed by Raki Phillips, CEO of RAKTDA, and Dr Hashil bin Obaid al Mahrouqi, CEO of OMRAN Group. Commenting on these strategic partnerships, Dr Al Mahrouqi said, "We are pleased to embark on these partnerships that align with OMRAN Group's goals to become the partner of choice in the tourism sector by collaborating with investors, partners and industry leaders.

"This direction reflects our commitment to intensifying efforts to develop the tourism sector in the Sultanate of Oman by establishing and operating

leading tourist destinations in line with Oman Vision 2040 and the National Tourism Strategy."

Raúl González, CEO of the Barceló Hotel Group, remarked, "Our strategic partnership with OMRAN Group mirrors Barceló's desire to contribute to enhancing the tourism and hospitality industry in Oman.

There is no doubt that our joint efforts will enhance direct foreign investment and promote the country's growth as a prime destination for international travellers."

In the same context, Raki Phillips, CEO of the Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority, stated, "This significant agreement between the Authority and OMRAN Group amplifies our joint efforts and cooperation in promoting and marketing tourist destinations in both Ras Al Khaimah and the Governorate of Musandam.

"Through this collaboration, we aim to jointly promote the abundant touristic destinations on both sides, highlighting the unique touristic features and diverse experiences they are renowned for, positively impacting the tourism sector."

In a recent development, OMRAN Group's prestigious Alila Hinu Bay Resort in Mirbat, Salalah, proudly announced its partnership with the esteemed Extra Divers, a global leader in water and beach activity management, at WTM London 2023.

This strategic alliance is set to enhance the resort's aquatic facilities, introducing an array of new programmes and activities including diving, dolphin and whale watching, and a variety of other water sports.

The collaboration promises to enrich guest experience, offering unparalleled engagement with the marine splendour of the region.

Oman to establish Carbon Capture, Blue Hydrogen

FROM PAGE 13

This will involve conducting a comprehensive techno-economic and legislative assessment with the aim of shaping the future legal framework and establishing appropriate regulations to facilitate investments in this field, consistent with Oman's ambition to achieve Net zero."

According to his presentation, the project is expected to develop an integrated CCUS policy and regulatory framework, conduct a techno-economic assessment of CCUS and Blue Hydrogen in

Oman, create transparent licensing processes throughout the value chain, assess financial mechanisms required to facilitate private sector investments, identify regulatory challenges to CCUS and Blue Hydrogen projects and explore regional and global opportunities.

Furthermore, he added that the project will aim to explore carbon dioxide as a resource rather than waste, in efforts of establishing a circular economy. The event also witnessed the signing of an MoU between Occidental Oman and OQ Gas Networks, for a joint study

on carbon capture, utilisation and sequestration (CCUS) projects in Oman.

According to OQGN Managing Director Mansoor al Abdali, the MoU is expected to address the entirety of the CCUS value chain.

He shared that CO2 will be captured at specific sites, and then transported through OQGN to Oxy operated sites, where it will be injected below the surface to enhance oil and gas recovery.

According to Al Abdali some of the CO2 will be stored

permanently underground.

President and General Manager of Oxy Oman, Steven Lauver, added, "We believe CCUS has the potential to unlock further development of the hydrocarbon industry while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

"We are also excited to be part of the CCUS and Blue Hydrogen Policy & Regulatory Framework Terms of Reference where CO2 extraction technologies such as Direct Air Capture (DAC) can be studied in conjunction with initiatives of other stakeholders."

Global fossil fuel production plans far exceed climate targets

LONDON: Global fossil fuel production in 2030 is set to be more than double the levels that are deemed consistent with meeting climate goals set under the 2015 Paris climate agreement, the United Nations and researchers said on Wednesday.

The United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) report, assessing the gap in fossil fuel production cuts and what's needed to meet climate goals, comes ahead of the global COP 28 climate meeting which starts on November 30 in the oil-rich United Arab Emirates (UAE).

"Fossil fuel phase out is one of the pivotal issues that will be negotiated

at COP 28," Ploy Achakulwisut, Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) scientist and a lead author of the report, said in a press briefing.

"We need countries to commit to a phase-out of all fossil fuels to keep the 1.5C goal alive," she said.

Under the Paris pact, nations have committed to a long-term goal of limiting average temperature rises to less than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to attempt to limit them even further to 1.5C. While scientists say fossil fuel use must be reduced to meet the goal, countries have failed to reach any international agreement on set phase-out dates for unabated coal, gas or oil use.

The report analysed the 20 major fossil fuel producers and found they plan to produce, in total, around 110 per cent more fossil fuels in 2030 than would be consistent with limiting the degree of warming to 1.5C, and 69 per cent more than is consistent with 2C.

None of the 20 countries have committed to reduce coal, oil and gas production in line with limiting warming to 1.5°C, the report said.

It said 17 of the countries have pledged to reach net zero emissions but most continue to promote, subsidise, support and plan the expansion of fossil fuel production.

—Reuters



A view of the newly-commissioned Dangote Petroleum refinery in Ibeju-Lekki, Lagos, Nigeria. — Reuters

Strengthening the national plan for integrity



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

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

There are several implications and conclusions of the official visit made by HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, to the State Financial and Administrative Control Authority recently.

The agency is keen to strengthen its responsibilities to uncover matters that leads to a slowdown the process of economic development in the country by following up on abuses and violations that occur in public governmental and private institutions and companies.

These violations lie in complaints and reports received from time to time to the agency, which are related to negligence, manipulation, violation of laws and regulations.

Today, new issues are added that the agency that need to be followed up, represented by the current generation’s suffering in obtaining appropriate jobs in various state and private sector institutions, in addition to suffering of some national workers from being laid off from work by the commercial institutions.

The agency must also follow up the matter of increasing financial transfers abroad, whether from citizens or foreigners, in coordination with the financial and banking institutions that follow and supervise the work of these institutions.

It seems that some expatriates have been very active in money transfers during the past years and to control the joints of the Omani economy through large commercial institutions, which

requires identifying these issues to correct the wrong paths.

This visit, as emphasised in the official statement, comes as an affirmation of the government’s keenness on the importance of integration and institutional work, and to achieve effectiveness in implementing competencies and raising performance efficiency.

It reflects the government’s keenness to empower the Administrative and Financial Oversight Authority, strengthen its role in the regulatory system in the process of sustainable development, and enhance its role in integration and partnership with government and private institutions in eliminating the sources of corruption in different ways.

The visit will have a major impact in strengthening the partnership between the various

units of the state’s administrative apparatus in protecting public funds and enhancing integrity, besides giving a greater role to the oversight body in adopting best practices in the areas of oversight work, and creating an effective partnership between the agency and the Omani society.

Every official and citizen in the state has begun to emphasise the importance of the role of this agency in promoting comprehensive and sustainable development through the financial and administrative oversight operations it carries out and the preservation of national capabilities.

To enhance its role, the agency has adopted and developed a national plan to enhance integrity and combat corruption in all state institutions to serve as a reference tool in administrative and financial work for all.

It has adopted international best practices in addition to its commitment to the requirements contained in the United Nations Convention against Corruption where the Sultanate of Oman joint in 2013 to enhance its efficiency in the use of available resources in the country.

The duration of the implementation of the national plan to enhance integrity and combat corruption has been set for the period from 2022 to 2030 to include several axes related to creating a comprehensive legislative system, working with efficient institutional performance, creating an honest private sector, and working with full transparency and active community participation, in addition to the necessity of creating cooperation and effective partnership locally and internationally.

Now is the time for carbon markets



BADAR CHAUDHRY

The author is Head of Energy Sector, Mashreq

Kickstarting the creation of a carbon market is a must-have to enable the UAE and others across the Middle East and North Africa to reach Net-Zero by 2050. Our collective management of the world’s carbon budget is wildly off course. How to tackle this major and complex task will be under the spotlight at COP28, the world’s biggest annual climate gathering in Dubai this November.

That our daily news headlines are filled with climate disasters reflects the severity of the global environmental crisis and reaffirms that carbon trading is a cornerstone of supporting the three Ps: people, planet and profit.

The good news is that rising prices in the carbon market reflect stakeholders’ growing confidence in such mechanisms and ultimately make it far more environmentally effective.

This year, the price of carbon permits on the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), the world’s oldest such cap-and-trade market, reached a record high of \$106.57 per ton – making it more expensive than ever to pollute.

Plus, 4,200 companies worldwide have science-based targets, marking an astonishing 36x growth rate from 2007-2022, according to Refinitiv. The need to meet these targets again helps underpin the necessity of carbon markets in the Middle East and beyond.

Yet, despite these clear drivers, overall progress is not fast enough. This year, 73 carbon pricing initiatives worldwide cover 11.66 GtCO₂e – representing 23 per cent of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, reported the World Bank. This data means 77 per cent of GHG emissions are uncovered. For example, there is only one such initiative in the Middle East; a carbon tax in Israel, which is under consideration. We need to all work together to start plugging these gaps on the world map as fast as possible.

STEPPING IN

The Middle East is ready to ask and hopefully answer some of the tough questions surrounding carbon markets.

The UAE and Saudi Arabia are



Smoke billows from the chimneys of Belchatow Power Station, Europe’s biggest coal-fired power plant. – Reuters

largely driving the conversation on the ins and outs, with pressing questions coming to the fore.

What does it involve and who participates? What price level is both viable and effective? How will this progress interlace with other countries’ developments, notably our partners and competitors? How does carbon pricing weave into our existing and bold climate targets and multi-billion dollar green projects?

The questions go on, for creating a national carbon market is not a quick journey.

The market itself is always maturing, so stakeholders across the Middle East need to both keep abreast of their own plans and consider how they slot into the global picture.

BLUEPRINTS TO REALITY

In response to our fast changing world, a new coalition of UAE companies has been established to develop and grow a

carbon market across the nation.

The UAE Carbon Alliance will help support the transition of companies to a green economy in support of the country’s goal to reach Net-Zero by 2050 – the first country in the region to commit to this ambitious target.

Plus, The Abu Dhabi Global Market, the UAE capital’s financial free zone, announced plans last year to team up with AirCarbon Exchange (ACX) to create the “world’s first fully regulated” carbon trading exchange and clearing house in the emirate.

The UAE, OPEC’s third largest producer, has also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Zambia to develop forestry-based carbon removal projects to generate carbon credits.

In another illustration of global cooperation, the UAE recently became the 26th country worldwide to agree to a bilateral carbon trading framework with

Japan under the Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM).

To the west, Saudi Arabia’s Public Investment Fund (PIF) announced the establishment of the Regional Voluntary Carbon Market Company (RVCMC) last October, with Saudi Tadawul Group Holding Company. Shortly after, PIF auctioned off 1.4mn tons of carbon credits, followed by 2.2mn tons of carbon credits in June this year – the largest ever voluntary carbon credit auction, RVCMC said. Plus, the Dammam-based investment fund APICORP issued a \$75mn funding facility for voluntary carbon offset projects last November.

Avoiding analysis paralysis It has never been easier to participate in carbon markets, no matter the sector nor size of a business.

The option of Emissions Trading Schemes (ETS), carbon taxes, carbon fees, voluntary carbon markets (VCM), shades of

internal carbon pricing (ICP) and others are all on the table.

Amid this vast potential, some stakeholders are still getting used to how the concept of carbon markets differs from other, more established market.

A barrel of oil is a globally understood visual representation of the oil market, for example. In carbon markets, we cannot see what is being traded and there are many routes to market and variations of what a carbon credit means to an individual or a company.

This nuanced situation means there is no single blueprint for companies looking to enter and operate in a carbon market in the Middle East.

But it also means that companies can finetune their needs to embrace carbon trading in a way which best suits them. Such choice should serve as a positive rallying cry to achieve real action up to COP28 and beyond.

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Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
m.alrahd86@yahoo.com

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

Saada al Rashdi
95919344

94501166
24649593
24649595

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99841230
m.alrahd86@yahoo.com

Ali Al Maashari
99639264
wadialmeeh@yahoo.com

Salalah Office

Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

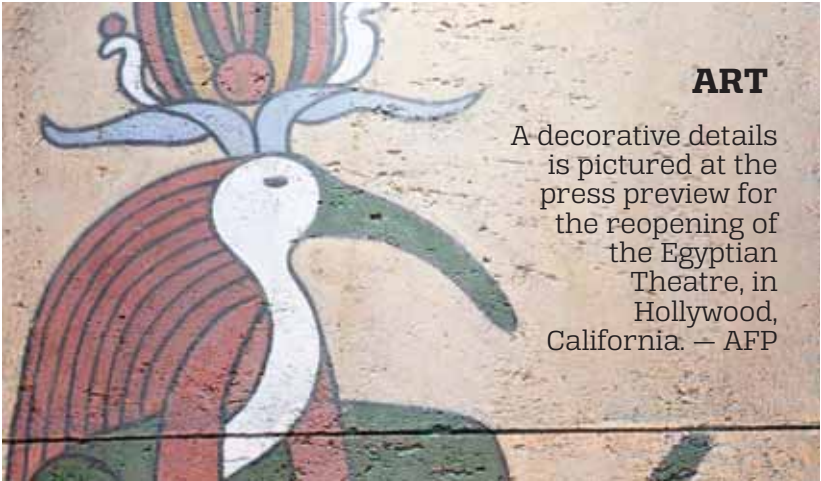
Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri
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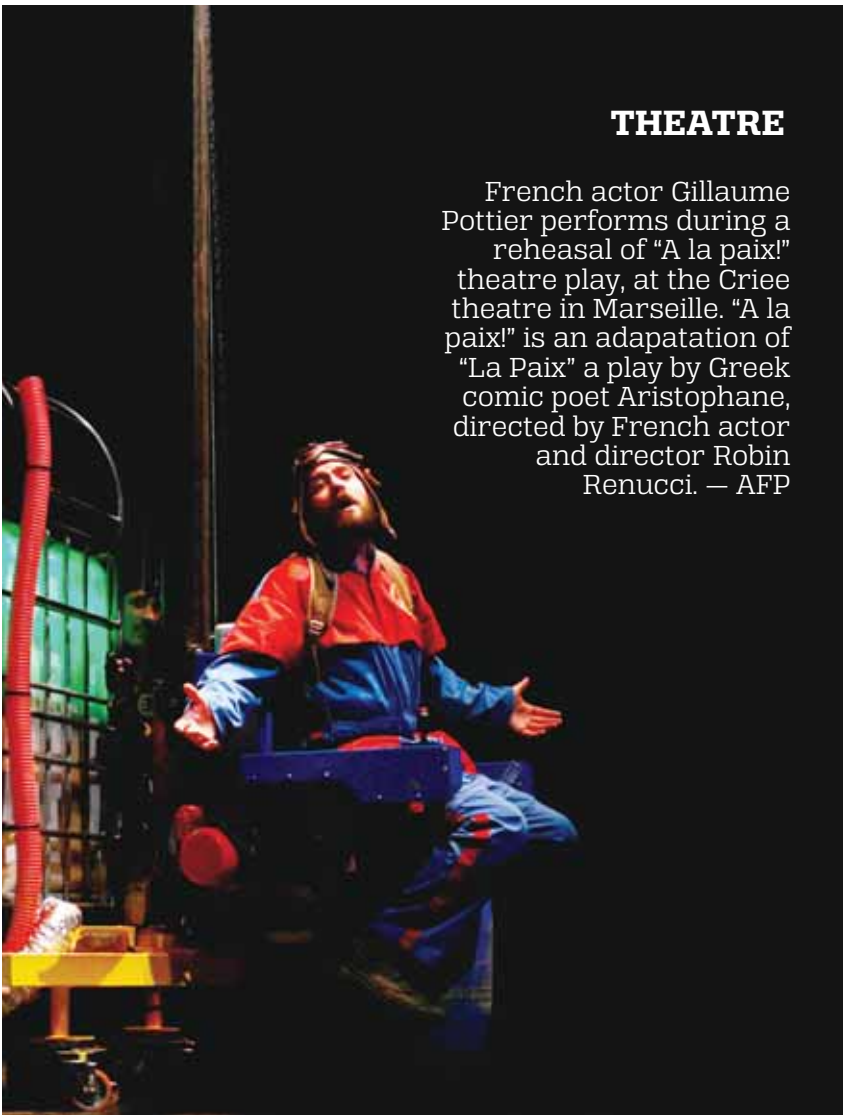
Musalam Al Saidi
99429192
sohardaily@outlook.com

@omanobserver
www.omanobserver.om



ART

A decorative details is pictured at the press preview for the reopening of the Egyptian Theatre, in Hollywood, California. — AFP



THEATRE

French actor Gillaume Pottier performs during a rehearsal of "A la paix!" theatre play, at the Crie theatre in Marseille. "A la paix!" is an adaptation of "La Paix" a play by Greek comic poet Aristophane, directed by French actor and director Robin Renucci. — AFP



ART

Koyo Kouoh, a Cameroonian-born curator who has been serving as Executive Director and Chief Curator of the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA) since 2019. Since she took over the reins of the MOCAA, the Cape Town museum has been making waves in the contemporary art world by putting Africa front and centre. — AFP

art & life

THURSDAY | NOVEMBER 9, 2023 | RABEE AL THANI 25, 1445 AH | OMAN OBSERVER www.omanobserver.om features@omanobserver.om

Bidiyah is all set for winter adventures

Winter is ideal for desert adventures due to milder temperatures, comfortable climate, active wildlife and clear skies. As the winter season slowly comes in, Bidiyah also started to attract young Omanis with its exhilarating dune bashing, glamping resorts, hot air balloon rides, desert safaris, and traditional Arabian entertainment...**P20**



THE CHANGING WORLD



Shaddad al Musalmy

Realistically speaking, I have started believing that with the help of Google, anyone can treat himself with manageable illnesses at home, and anyone can be a writer, a chef, or even a mechanic.

'I don't need Google because my wife knows it all'

LAST WEEK, AS my wife and I were moving around one of the largest furnishing stores, I laughed a whole lot when I passed by an elderly man probably in his 80s who was wearing a black t-shirt boldly reading, 'I don't need Google because my wife knows it all.'

Honestly, this cracked me up, and I just could not help myself. Where do people get such items? The combination of his age, his innocent old looks, and his t-shirt were enough to be living proof of marital life. My wife looked at me, appalled. She was lost and wondering, at the same time, what was making me laugh hard yet silently. However, the old man was gone already. I did not tell her, wishing that she would see it on her own. Luckily, at the cash counter, we saw the man again, and she was amazed, though she too laughed about it. Fast forwarding to days later, as we were having lunch, my 7-year-old son told me that with Google, everything is made easy and that is exactly how he knows everything. Realistically speaking, I have started believing that with the help of Google, anyone can treat himself or herself with manageable illness-

es at home. Anyone can be a writer, a chef, or even a mechanic if he or she is literate. Just like that day when my car suddenly stopped in the middle of the road. My wife told me that the fuel pump was spoiled, which was true after professional mechanics checked it. Later on, I learned that whichever problem she faces, she always runs to Google. This is not limited to the sumptuous meals she prepares for us but also to other issues. Nowadays, with the help of Google, you can go to the garage to fix your car after knowing the possible problems and their solutions; likewise, you can enter a doctor's room while knowing what possible health issues you may be having and their treatment. Furthermore, before starting a business, you can literally know the pros and cons prior to making the final decision. The list is endless, but

the powerful truth is that 'Google is everything'. However, after writing all this, I still contradict the old man's t-shirt. It was funny, but not the reality because Google is a powerful search engine that helps you with a vast amount of information. Till next time, adieu.

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

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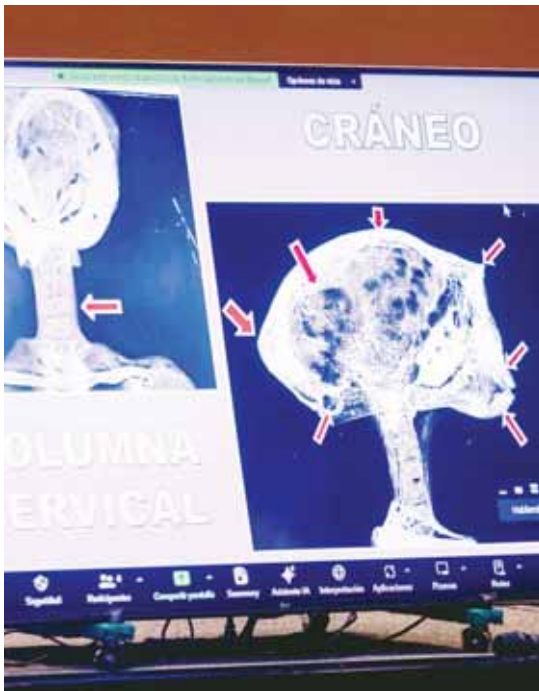
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AROUND THE WORLD

SCIENCES



Mexican Congress holds second UFO session featuring Peruvian mummies

MEXICO'S CONGRESS heard from researchers on Tuesday who declared authentic a set of three-fingered Peruvian mummies recently presented as potential evidence of non-human life forms, while declining to certify that the remains were extraterrestrial.

Lawmakers first heard from Mexican journalist and UFO enthusiast Jaime Maussan on Sept. 13 when he presented two specimens in a first-of-its-kind congressional event on UFOs, or FANIs in Spanish. Maussan said the bodies, believed to have been found near Peru's ancient Nazca lines, were not related to any life on Earth.

At Tuesday's session, Maussan was more focused on proving the bodies, which were not on display this time, were not fake, ushering in a string of doctors who all said the bodies were those of real, once-living organisms.

Still, he left room for questions about their origin. "None of the scientists say [the study results] prove that they are extraterrestrials, but I go further," he said, suggesting that they could be evidence of non-Earthly life forms.

Anthropologist Roger Zuniga of San Luis Gonzaga National University in Ica Peru said researchers had studied five similar specimens over four years.

"They're real," Zuniga said on the sidelines of the session.

"There was absolutely no human intervention in the physical and biological formation of these beings," he added, saying he didn't know the origin of the beings.

Zuniga presented a letter signed by 11 researchers from the university declaring the same. The letter made clear, however, they were not implying the bodies were "extraterrestrial".

Maussan's first presentation was criticised by many experts who dismissed it as a stunt long debunked by the scientific community, pointing to studies on similar remains that concluded the specimens were modified using animal and human bones.

When asked about those studies, Zuniga said the specimens were probably fake. The bodies that he and the other university researchers looked at, however, were real, he said.

Congressman Sergio Gutierrez, from President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's ruling Morena party, called for a reform to Mexico's law to make all information about UFOs public.

Tuesday's session, at times, dipped into a more extreme explanation. Argentine surgeon Celestino Adolfo Piotto said he believed, after reviewing test results and images of the bodies, they were an evolved version of today's human beings, calling them "our descendants".

In a more colorful moment, Mexican rapper Claudio Yarto, said he had personally seen UFOs before ending his speech with a rhyme, sparking applause from the crowd. — **Reuters**

ART



Cape Town art museum on mission to reclaim African identity

SINCE KOYO KOUOH took over the reins of the Zeitz MOCAA, the Cape Town museum has been making waves in the contemporary art world by putting Africa front and centre.

Under the ambitious Cameroonian-born curator, the museum in the city's port district has built its identity around Pan-Africanism, showcasing the work of artists from the continent and its diaspora.

"Africa is for me an idea that goes beyond borders. It's a history that goes beyond borders," Kouoh said, cutting an elegant figure in a white dress topped by long green braids.

"Americans don't like to hear this but I always tell them that America is another African country."

A country is an aggregation of cultural expressions and influences, she said, adding that using these parameters Brazil, Cuba and Haiti could also be considered part of the African continent.

"That's how I look at them," she said, with a serious smile.

More than 40 million people in the United States, or about 12 per cent of the population, are African American, while more than half of Brazil's about 200 million people are of African descent.

"The African diasporic influence in the US is undeniable. That's why I like to

talk about black geographies, more than African diasporas. Where black culture, black bodies, black people have influenced society," she said.

Energetic and with bright, lively eyes, 56-year-old Kouoh grew up between Douala in her native Cameroon and Zurich in Switzerland.

After setting up a cutting-edge art centre in Dakar, Senegal, she took over the MOCAA — housed in an old grain silo that has been renovated with square windows evoking a beehive of glass and concrete — four years ago.

Having inherited a "broken" and "dysfunctional" institution, she set out to give it new meaning.

- 'OWN THE SPACE' -

Focusing on Pan-Africanism was a "no brainer" and "necessary" since, even decades after the end of colonialism, the narrative around the continent was largely still "defined by others", Kouoh said.

"SEEKERS, SEERS, SOOTHSAYERS," an exhibition currently on show explores the spiritual and supernatural through photo and video projections on the walls as well as textile installations.

"There is a strong need to bring other stories to the table and not as a means of correcting," she said.

"I have no interest in cor-

recting, I don't own and don't internalise the wrong story. But own the space."

MOCAA is now recognised worldwide for its approach and is sought after for collaborations by major New York and European institutions.

Its recent exhibition "When We See Us", which presents a century of African figurative painting, is soon due to leave Cape Town to be shown in the Swiss city of Basel.

Kouoh said she initially focused on group exhibitions, displaying the works of several artists on a specific subject but has since moved towards single artist shows.

"When you conceptualise a group show, you hope that you create a symphony but most of the time you create a cacophony because there are too many voices," she said, speaking from the building's panoramic elevator which offers a bird's-eye view of the imposing entrance hall.

"With the solo show, you have a real symphony. Of experience and of universe."

Going forward, Kouoh said she wants to pursue three priorities: showcasing emerging talents, underrated practices and female artists.

"I am not an activist about it. I am just decidedly and very forcefully promoting African women artists," she said. —**AFP**

ACTOR



Patrick Dempsey 'shocked' as People magazine picks him for title

"Grey's Anatomy" actor Patrick Dempsey was named People magazine's "sexiest man alive" for 2023 on Tuesday, taking over the title from 2022 honoree and Marvel star Chris Evans.

Dempsey, 57, said he was "completely shocked" when he heard the news and thought it was a joke, noting "I've always been the bridesmaid."

"It's nice to have the recognition, and certainly my ego takes a little bump, but it gives me the platform to use it for something positive," Dempsey told People for the cover story.

Dempsey has grown in popularity over the years, starring in nearly 250 episodes of ABC's "Grey's Anatomy" as heartthrob neurosurgeon Derek "McDreamy" Shepherd to being a modern day prince charming in the 2007 musical film "Enchanted".

Dempsey, married to makeup artist and beauty line founder Jillian, is most interested in how his children, Talula, 21, and 16-year-old twins Sullivan and Darby, will react to his new status.

"They're just going to make fun of me and pick on me and figure out every reason why I shouldn't be," he said. "Which is good, they keep me young."

In December, Dempsey will be seen in the biopic "Ferrari", directed by Michael Mann, portraying Italian Formula One driver Piero Taruffi opposite Adam Driver and Penelope Cruz.

When Dempsey found out the movie was being made, he took a risk and called Mann to ask for a part.

"I'd been following the movie for years, so I called Michael," he recalled. "That taught me if you really want something, you have to do it yourself."

Another passion project of Dempsey's includes the Dempsey Center, which he founded in honour of his late mum to support cancer patients and their loved ones. — **Reuters**



Bidiyah is all set for winter adventures



By Yeru Ebuen

Over the weekend, Bidiyah has seen a rise in visitors, particularly young Omanis, who see the area as an ideal destination for dunes bashing thanks to its giant walls of sand that provide exhilarating driving adventures.

Over the last couple of weeks, the dunes have always been drenched with rainwater and paired with cooler temperatures. They were some of the many indications that winter is near and that Oman's dunes will be filled again with adventure seekers.

Fresh from our trip, here are the things we suggest you definitely have to try if you're headed towards Bidiyah.

GLAMPING BY THE DUNES

Oman deserts are known for their stunning landscapes, including vast sand dunes, rock formations, and breathtaking sunrises and sunsets. For those who are unable to camp in the wild, glamping has become more accessible in 2023 as a plethora of desert resorts are now providing unique accommodations like safari tents and dome houses designed to blend in with the natural surroundings, providing an

glamping resorts are Desert Nights Camp, Thousand Nights Camp, and Arabian Oryx Camp. If you're looking for private camps that are customised for corporate events or small groups, the eco-friendly luxury camp offered by Magic Camps is definitely worth checking out.

AERIAL VIEW FROM A HOT AIR BALLOON

When the Royal Balloon introduced the hot air balloon ride to Oman last year, it definitely captured



of the best ways to see the desert landscape from the sky.

Hot-air balloon rides evoke a sense of adventure and wonder. Drifting silently over the vast desert expanse as the sun rises, you'll feel a sense of freedom and excitement. It's a thrilling experience that allows you to step out of your comfort zone and embrace the thrill of floating high above the ground.

DESERT SAFARI

Desert safaris are not exclusively offered in Oman. In fact, different countries in the Middle East have their own unique offerings. But despite the popularity of this concept, Oman's dunes definitely rank high when it comes to having the best landscape for a guided desert safari tour that includes dune bashing, camel riding, sandboarding, and the opportunity to witness a mesmerising desert sunset.

Many desert safari packages include visits to traditional Bedouin camps, where you can learn about the local culture, enjoy traditional music and dance performances, and indulge in authentic cuisine. It's an opportunity to learn about the lifestyle of desert communities.

Remember, while enjoying a desert safari, it's essential to respect the

entertainment in the desert offers a unique and enriching experience for several reasons. First, it allows guests, especially non-Arabs, to immerse themselves in the culture. Desert entertainment usually provides an opportunity to learn about the customs, rituals, and history of the Arabian people.

Traditional Arabian entertainment in the desert includes a variety of activities that are not commonly found elsewhere. These activities often have deep cultural and historical significance, making them intriguing and memorable for travellers. Some examples of traditional Oman desert entertainment include camel racing, Saluki dog racing, traditional music and dances, and Bedouin-style hospitality.

Places like Arabian Nights Resort contract local musicians to play the oud and provide nightly entertainment including a small band using traditional instruments.

AND STARGAZING

With minimal light pollution, Bidiyah offers excellent opportunities for stargazing. Camping and stargazing provide an excellent opportunity to connect with nature, reduce stress, improve physical and mental well-being, and gain a deeper appreciation for the natural world. Whether you're a nature enthusiast or someone looking to escape the demands of everyday life,



these activities can offer a fulfilling and enriching experience.

While camping in the desert can be challenging, this can be mitigated by making sure that you pack the essentials for a memorable camping trip. Joining group adventures has been the trend lately, and not only does it diminish the cost and expenses, but it also creates a fun vibe as people from different backgrounds come together and share memorable stories in front of a campfire. Some desert camps in Bidiyah offer stargazing packages where they not only contract local stargazing experts but also allow guests to learn more about the importance of the night sky to the Omanis.



authentic experience while offering modern comforts.

Glamping sites in Bidiyah come with luxurious amenities such as comfortable beds, private bathrooms, air conditioning, and sometimes even private pools. You can enjoy the tranquillity of the desert without sacrificing comfort.

Top-rated amongst Bidiyah

the attention of desert goers. Something that has dominated the skyline of Türkiye in places like Cappadocia is now finally making its way to the Sultanate of Oman. After a few month's hiatus and in time for the winter season, they are back offering morning flights that usually start at 5:30 in the morning, with the ride lasting almost 2 hours—one



environment and local communities to ensure the sustainability of this unique experience for future generations.

TRADITIONAL ARABIAN ENTERTAINMENT

Trying traditional Arabian

Participating in these activities allows travellers to appreciate the rich traditions and natural beauty of the Arabian desert, making it a worthwhile and unforgettable experience.

DESERT CAMPING

