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AL NASR EDGE
IBRI, DHOFAR
BEAT BAHLA



P15

ECONOMY TO
EXPAND MODERATELY
IN 2023: REPORT



P20

DOES VITAMIN C
ACTUALLY HELP
YOUR SKIN?



MUSCAT

FIRST WORLD-CLASS SCHOOL BUS MODEL

Karwa Motors Company, the leading Omani company in the bus manufacturing sector, launched its modern model of school buses designed in accordance with the highest safety standards to ensure the safety of students while on the move. Dr Ibrahim bin Ali al Balushi, CEO of Karwa Motors, said that Karwa school bus was equipped with the latest safety devices and systems that are compatible with the system of ‘Darb Assalama’ (safe journey) that was approved by the Ministry of Education.

2 HELD FOR MURDER OF CITIZEN IN CAIRO

Egyptian authorities have apprehended two individuals in connection with the murder of a former Omani diplomat, Hood bin Saif al Alawi. According to Egyptian police, a cleaning lady and a driver, both of whom had previously been employed by Hood al Alawi, have been arrested for their involvement in the murder. The suspects are reported to have confessed to the Public Prosecution that they fatally stabbed him. FULL REPORT ON P2

OPINION

P8



Hyesha Barrett

Dealing with naysayers in a positive way

P16



Dr Ali al Bimani

How technology can supercharge quality

15 investment opportunities offered for agriculture projects

IBRA: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning on Tuesday offered 15 investment opportunities on Tatweer platform for agricultural projects under the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources with a total area of 2.5 million square metres in the wilayats of Al Mudhaibi and Bidiya.

In the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi, the ministry offered four investment opportunities

spanning a number of agricultural projects. These include two opportunities in calves fattening and seasonal fodder production projects in the Al Zahira village with an estimated area of 420,000 square metres. The project involves establishing an integrated farm for calves fattening for producing red meat and the production of seasonal fodder such as corn, barley, millet, cowpea and sorghum.



Plots offered for agriculture projects.

Also offered by the ministry in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi is an investment opportunity for

camel breeding and reproduction project and production of seasonal fodder. The project is an integrated farm for the breeding and reproduction of camels located in Al Sabsoub village with an estimated area of 420,000 square metres. The project aims to boost the production of red meat and seasonal fodder.

Also offered by the ministry is an investment opportunity for the breeding and reproduction of goats and producing seasonal

fodder at an estimated area of 420,000 square metres in Al Zahira village in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi.

In the Wilayat of Bidiya, the ministry has offered 11 investment opportunities 9 of which have been allocated to the cultivation of palm trees and one opportunity for each of the seasonal fodder cultivation projects and vegetable cultivation in greenhouses and open fields.

— ONA



AID DELIVERED TO LIBYA RED CRESCENT

On Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Oman Charitable Organisation (OCO) delivered more than 80 tonnes of Omani relief and medical aid to the Red Crescent in Libya. The Royal gesture comes within the context of fraternal relations between the Sultanate of Oman and Libya and as an expression of Oman's keenness to extend a helping hand to those facing natural disasters.

Marine heatwaves last longer in deep water

PARIS: Marine heatwaves may last longer and be more intense in deeper water, potentially threatening sensitive species as climate change makes the extreme events more frequent, researchers said. Oceans have absorbed 90 per cent of the excess heat produced by the carbon pollution from human activity since the dawn of the industrial age.

Marine heatwaves — episodes of abnormally high water temperatures — have become more frequent and intense.

These can have a particularly severe impact on species that cannot migrate to escape intolerably warm waters, like corals in the Great Barrier Reef and kelp forests off southern Australia and the northeastern Pacific. In a new study published



Marine heatwaves have become more frequent and intense.

in the journal Nature Climate Change, researchers looked at impacts of temperature spikes in deeper waters, which lead author Eliza Fragkopoulou said was “the first attempt to look into marine heatwaves below the surface”.

“Marine heatwaves and their effects have been studied mostly at the ocean surface and we did not know much about their characteristics in the deep ocean,” she said. Using on-site observations and modelling,

researchers examined global marine heatwaves from 1993 to 2019, including data up to 2,000 metres (6,562 feet) below the surface.

They found the intensity was highest at 50 to 200 metres below the surface, occasionally up to 19 per cent stronger than the surface heatwave. The duration also increased with depth, with warming persisting up to two years after temperatures returned to normal on the surface, the study said. The scientists looked at a proxy measure of thermal stress known as cumulative intensity and mapped that against distribution of biodiversity at the edge of their maximum heat limits to see areas where marine creatures are potentially more vulnerable to changes. — AFP

DELEGATED BY HIS MAJESTY, SAYYID BADR ATTENDS UN SUMMIT

Oman on track of realising UN sustainable goals

NEW YORK: Assigned by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy headed the Sultanate of Oman's delegation at the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit, which kicked off on Tuesday at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York.

At the opening of the summit, Sayyid Badr delivered Oman's speech during which he conveyed His Majesty the Sultan's greetings to the conferees, as well as His Majesty's appreciation for the efforts made to organise this major summit.

Sayyid Badr pointed out that the event takes place at prime time for joint efforts to improve all aspects of life, notably towards the realisation of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) in all sectors.

“Oman is exerting tangible efforts to achieve the goals of sustainable development, and, accordingly made technology, science and digital transition an essential part of its national strategies and legislation,” said Sayyid Badr. He said, “Oman will submit its second voluntary national report in 2024, which will highlight the country's strong commitment to achieving the target objectives and maintaining comprehensive progress in various social, economic, scientific, environmental and renewable energy fields.”

Sayyid Badr stressed that Oman's march to achieve sustainable development

OMAN AT UNGA

The Sultanate of Oman took part in the opening of the 78th session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, held in New York. Oman's delegation was headed by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister. The general assembly was attended by António Guterres, Secretary-General of the UN and Dennis Francis, Chairman of the 78th session, as well as several leaders and ministers who represented member states in the UN. The 78th session of the UN General Assembly is themed “Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity: Accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals towards peace, prosperity, progress and the sustainability for all”.

goals, as stipulated in Oman Vision 2040, reflects the country's strong commitment to science, technology and innovation. Oman's action also consolidates international efforts and cooperation to transfer knowledge and technology and facilitate investment and employment opportunities to ensure a safe and prosperous future for all, said Sayyid Badr.

In this context, he expressed the conviction that integration and cooperation among various sectors constitute a necessity and require good understanding of challenges and opportunities, as well as the development of innovative solutions. — ONA



Oman chairs GCC-British ministerial meeting in New York

NEW YORK: The Sultanate of Oman on Tuesday chaired a joint ministerial meeting between the GCC foreign ministers and James Cleverly, British Foreign Secretary. The meeting was held within the context of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

At the meeting, Oman was represented by Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Chairman of the current session of the Gulf Ministerial Council. The meeting was attended by the GCC Secretary-General.

The meeting reviewed relations between GCC countries and the United Kingdom and explored ways of expanding areas of bilateral cooperation. It laid emphasis on consolidating ties in the sectors of trade, investment, renewable energy,



A joint ministerial meeting between the GCC foreign ministers and James Cleverly, British Foreign Secretary under way. — ONA

education and the transfer of sciences and knowledge.

The ministers commended the progress made in advancing relations and underscored the need to expand

and diversify common areas of action to realise their shared interests.

The two sides also exchanged views on a number of current international and regional issues. They underlined

the significance of promoting dialogue and respecting the sovereignty of the international law and the UN Charter in a manner that consolidates world peace and stability. — ONA

Oman participates in Arab ministerial consultative meeting



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy

NEW YORK: The Sultanate of Oman on Tuesday took part in the Arab ministerial consultative meeting of foreign ministers, who convened within the context of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly held in New York. Oman's delegation was headed by Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy. The meeting, which was chaired by Sameh Shoukry, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Arab Republic of Egypt, dealt with means of coordinating Arab stance about issues on the General Assembly's agenda for the 78th session and priorities for joint Arab action, most notably the Palestinian cause. — ONA

753,952 voters registered for Majlis Ash'shura elections

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

As many as 753,952 voters will elect their candidates for the tenth term of Majlis Ash'shura on October 29, according to the Ministry of Interior.

There are 362,924 women voters for this term's election. The number of new registered voters who will cast votes for the first time has reached 139,963.

With 153,809 total registered voters, Al Batinah North Governorate has a maximum number of voters among the governorates. Al Batinah North Governorate also has the largest number of 28,843 newly registered voters.

The number of new women voters rose to 76,059, while those in the 21-30 age group constitute the highest at 71,901.

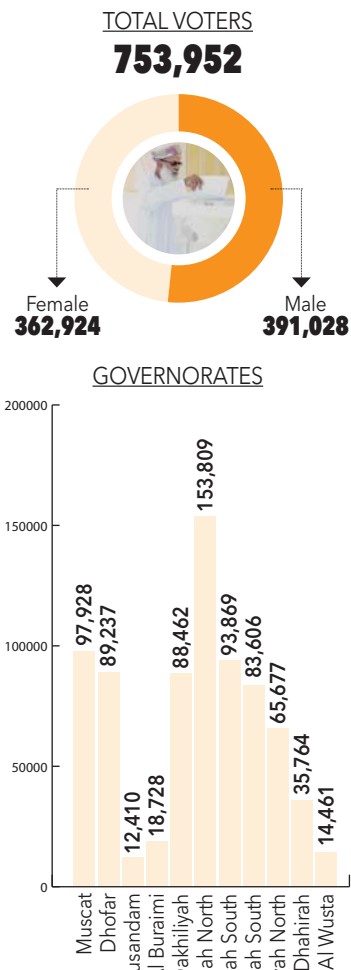
The Ministry of the Interior announced the statistics pertaining to the upcoming elections as part of the law governing the election procedures through the

The Ministry of the Interior announced the statistics pertaining to the upcoming elections as part of the law governing the election procedures through the "Intekhab" application

"Intekhab" application and the elections website (elections.om).

GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL
The Ministry of Interior explained that any aggrieved party may file a grievance against the names included in the preliminary lists of voters with a request through the election website within five days from the date of announcement of the lists, indicating the reasons for the objection, accompanied by supporting documents.

EXECUTIVE REGULATIONS
Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidi, Minister of the Interior,



issued a decision ratifying the executive regulations for the law on electing members of the Majlis Ash'shura.

The regulations stated that the main election committee comprises a maximum number of 12 members in coordination with the relevant authorities. The complaints committee should comprise five members, and the voting committee six members, nominated by the chairman of the main election committee in coordination with the relevant authorities according to the requirements of the electoral process.

SUBCOMMITTEES
The executive regulations included the formation of subcommittees, which include the Voting Committee, which is made up of no more than 150 members; the Technical Audit Committee, which is made up of no more than 11 members; and the Sorting Committee, which is made up of no more than 11 members.



Salim Mohammed al Mahrouqi receiving Dr Bandar Fahd Al Fahid. — ONA

Tourism minister receives ATO president

MUSCAT: Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, received on Tuesday Dr Bandar Fahd Al Fahid, President of the Arab Tourism Organisation (ATO). The meeting reviewed the current procedures for registering the city of Sur as the Arab Tourism Capital for next year, according to the nomination file that was submitted to the secretariat of the Council of Arab Tourism Ministers and the Arab Tourism Organisation. The two sides underlined the

importance of highlighting the Arab world's position in global tourism and means of utilising it, in addition to discussing the training plan presented by the ATO and the proposal of investment programme in cooperation with banking institutions. On his turn, the minister reviewed the comprehensive tourism development plan in Oman and future plans for the tourism sector that come in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. The meeting was attended by a number of officials from both sides. — ONA



Oman hosts GCC ministerial committees meeting for labour

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Labour, on Tuesday chaired the 9th meeting of GCC Ministers of Civil Service and Labour. The meeting saw the participation of the GCC secretariat-general and the Executive Office of GCC Labour Ministers.

The meeting discussed the recommendations that were submitted by the ministerial committees to the under-secretaries of the respective ministries — with a view to the decisions of the GCC Supreme Council.

The meeting also looked into the coordination of topics to be presented at international meetings. Khalid bin Ali al Sunaidi, Assistant Secretary for Economic and Development Affairs at the GCC Secretariat-General, delivered a speech in which he extended his thanks and gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Chairman of the current session of the GCC Supreme Council, for enhancing the joint GCC march and upgrading it in all fields, including civil service and labour sectors. — ONA

2 HELD FOR MURDER OF CITIZEN IN CAIRO

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

Egyptian authorities have apprehended two individuals in connection with the murder of a former Omani diplomat, Hood bin Saif al Alawi. According to Egyptian police, a cleaning lady and a driver, both of whom had previously been

employed by Hood al Alawi, have been arrested for their involvement in the murder. The suspects are reported to have confessed to the Public Prosecution that they fatally stabbed him, with the primary motive being theft. They allegedly intended to steal money, mobile phones, and watches from him. The identity of the perpetrators

was revealed in a statement issued by the Egyptian Ministry of Interior on its website on Tuesday. During the investigation, authorities successfully recovered the stolen valuables and seized the money that had been in the possession of the victim. Appropriate legal measures have been taken against the accused individuals. The Embassy

of the Sultanate of Oman in the Arab Republic of Egypt on Tuesday thanked the Egyptian security authorities for their quick action in apprehending the culprits. The embassy extended condolences and sympathy to the family of the deceased. Hood al Alawi was found murdered at his apartment in Cairo on Sunday.

OMAN, SWITZERLAND MARK 50 YEARS OF ESTABLISHING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS



MUSCAT: The Foreign Ministry on Tuesday held a ceremony celebrating the 50th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Swiss Confederation. Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, underscored that the two countries' leaderships accord attention to bilateral relations and means of advancing them. He also said that both sides are working on boosting relations in various economic, business and investment fields. Al Harthy valued the Swiss Confederation's role in the global forefront, being a country that hosts many international organisations, as well as its role as a mediator internationally. The two countries, he affirmed, share common interests, including their role internationally in bringing conflicting parties to tables of dialogue in a bid to enhance security and stability. — ONA



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Study on for investment proposal for Al Safalah Castle in Wadi Al Maawil

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

A study is being conducted to explore the possibility of making Al Safalah Castle, which serves as the symbol of the Wilayat of Wadi Al Maawil, available for investment.

Saud bin Saeed al Maawali, Deputy Chairman of the Municipal Council in the Al Batinah South Governorate and the representative of the Wilayat of Wadi Al Maawil, has indicated that there is ongoing coordination with relevant authorities to secure the necessary approvals for offering the castle as an investment opportunity.

The objective is to transform these historical landmarks into a central hub for local investments, creating a dynamic sector that attracts a variety

of activities, events, and tourists from both within and outside the Sultanate of Oman.

RESTORATION

Al Safalah Castle has previously undergone restoration by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

Al Maawali also mentioned that the Wilayat of Wadi Al Maawil is home to numerous historical sites, with the most notable ones being Al Safalah Castle, Haret Hujrat Al Shaikh, Bait Al Khandaq, Haret Hujrat Musalamat, Bait Al Khelaiw in Habra, the Grand House, and several towers and castles in Al Lajal.

Additionally, there are archaeological sites in the villages of Wadi Mastal, which are under the jurisdiction of the Wilayat of Wadi Al Maawil.



Al Safalah Castle which serves as the symbol of the Wilayat of Wadi Al Maawil.

Nama to probe coloured water

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Nama Water Services has responded to the reports on tap water quality in the Wilayat of Suhar. The company said that it will verify the cases and carry out the necessary tests to confirm the quality of water, noting that the company continues to examine water samples from various points in the production plants and networks on a daily basis, ensuring their suitability for consumption.

“The problem of change in tap water colour has been around for a while and requests were submitted to test the water in



Photo for illustrative purpose only

several areas, and we found it to be yellow coloured water. The problem is with the ground pipes, which are made of iron and have been in existence for more than 20 years,” according to a Municipal Council member in Suhar.

“This water has become unfit for drinking. We are forced to buy bottled water, which increases our expenses every month,” said a local resident. Iron in water supply is the most likely cause of yellow or orange discoloured water. Iron

can get into your tap water for a number of reasons, including water utility maintenance, rusty piping, or issues affecting your well.

Nama Water Services said it will replace any pipe networks and connections that require replacement. It called on its subscribers to report any comments that may be received within the water service by contacting the call centre on 1442 or via the Nama Water Services application. The company confirms its keenness to provide subscribers with water according to the specifications and standards approved in the Sultanate of Oman.

Many governorates receive rains

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Astronomically, the end of summer is on September 23. However, the maximum temperatures in some governorates remained at 43 degrees Celsius with no sign of the end of summer. At the same time, summer rains continued across the Al Hajar Mountains on Tuesday.

The Oman Met Office issued a thunder shower alert from 12 pm to 9 pm on Tuesday in various governorates of Oman. Izki was one of the first places to receive rain accompanied by hailstones.

Rain was expected across the mountainous areas of Al Dakhiliyah, Al Dhahirah, Al Buraimi, Al Sharqiyah North, Al Sharqiyah South, Al Batinah South and

Al Batinah North. The Met Office also noted that rain might extend to the desert of Al Dakhiliyah and Al Dhahirah.

The rainfall was expected to range between 10 to 30 mm, and downdraft is expected to be between 20 to 40 knots.

The formation of clouds over various parts of Al Hajar Mountains was observed by midday. The weather experts noted, “There were chances of their expansion and extension, with scattered rain, sometimes thundery, accompanied by active winds and hailstones falling over the coming time.” Clouds had been forming over parts of the Dhofar Mountains, with scattered rain chances later in the day.

Oman Met Office issued an alert to pay attention and caution during the rain and hail storms.

Areas likely to be affected by active downward winds ranging between 40-75 km/h during thunderstorms were concentrated on the mountainous areas of Al Dakhiliyah, Al Sharqiyah North, Al Dhahirah and Al Buraimi governorates, extending to the deserts of Al Dakhiliyah and Al Dhahirah. The Met Office has cautioned on poor horizontal visibility due to dust rising and not to cross wadis as flash floods are expected.

Clear to partly cloudy with advection of high clouds is expected over most of the governorates on Wednesday, and there is a chance of dust rising over the desert areas. Chances of low clouds or fog patches at late night to early morning are expected along parts of the Arabian Sea and the Sea of Oman coastal areas.

Tender



The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Mada'ayn) announces the following Tender:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of Buying	Date of Submission	Type of Work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
11/2023/ PEIE/ HQ-11	Consultancy Services for Detailed Design and Construction Supervision for industrial units (Plug and play) in Rusayl Industrial City	03-10-2023	29-10-2023	Consulting Offices	First	75

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. Tenders should be submitted on line on given website.

1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.

2. eTendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om and +968 24402200.

Note: Bid Submission will be online only.

Mada'ayn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers have no right to claim for any compensations.

madayn.om



@madaynoman
in f y o o

Saudi delegation visits National Autism Centre

MUSCAT: A delegation from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) headed by Ahmad bin Sulaiman al Rajhi, Saudi Minister of Human Resources and Social Development on Tuesday visited the National Autism Centre of the Ministry of Social Development in the Wilayat of Al Seeb.

The delegation was briefed on the centre's roles and its various halls which are equipped with necessary equipment to accommodate different types of therapies.

Shaikh Rashid bin Ahmed bin Rashid al Shamsi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development greeted the delegation. —ONA



Ahmad bin Sulaiman al Rajhi and his delegation at National Autism Centre. — ONA



Tender Announcement

Sembcorp Salalah Company hereby invites qualified participants for in the following Tender:

Tender No: SSC-13/2023

Tender Ref.	Description	Class	Last date for Collection of Document	Submission Date
SSC-13/2023	Catering Service for Sembcorp Salalah	Qualified and Specialized	05 th Oct 2023	12 nd Oct 2023

Scope of work

- Professional Catering Service

Tender can be collected via:

- E-mail by sending a request to any of the below e-mail to said.maashani@sembcorp.com
- From SSC procurement department via:
Mr. Said Ahmed Mahad Al Maashani
Procurement Assistant Manager
Sembcorp Salalah O&M Services Company
Phone No. : +968 23238457



OMAN JOINS OTHER GULF COUNTRIES IN ANNUAL

CELEBRATION OF GULF DAY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING

MAI AL ABRI
MUSCAT, SEPT 19



quality and contribute
to the overall well-being of
communities.

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN is joining hands with the other Gulf countries in the annual celebration of Gulf Day for Environmental Well-being on September 19. This year, the overarching theme is encapsulated in the powerful slogan, 'A Tree in Your Home, A Healthy You.' In recognition of the pressing issue of climate change, the Ministry of Health has taken the initiative to shed light on its substantial and far-reaching impacts on our physical and mental health. With its increasingly severe weather patterns, rising temperatures, and other environmental transformations, climate change poses a considerable threat to our well-being. The ministry is dedicated to educating the public about the health implications of climate change and, more importantly, providing practical guidance on how individuals can mitigate these effects.

One of the key recommendations from the Ministry of Health is the promotion of tree planting in and around residential areas.

Trees serve as a natural defence against some of the adverse effects of climate change, such as air pollution and rising temperatures.

They provide shade, improve air

Furthermore, the ministry encourages people to reduce their reliance on harmful chemicals and plastics. By minimising the use of these substances, individuals can contribute to a healthier environment and, subsequently, their own health. Additionally, the promotion of waste recycling is advocated to reduce the environmental burden and preserve resources.

Another significant aspect of the ministry's guidance is the promotion of sustainable transportation options. They suggest that people consider using bicycles or walking as alternatives to cars for their daily commute. This not only reduces carbon emissions, but also lessens air pollution, which has a direct impact on respiratory health.

The Gulf Day for Environmental Well-being serves as a timely reminder of our shared responsibility to safeguard our planet's health and, by extension, our own. "A Tree in Your Home, A Healthy You" encapsulates the ethos of this year's celebration, urging us all to take concrete steps towards preserving our environment while reaping the numerous health benefits that such actions entail.

'A TREE IN YOUR HOME, A HEALTHY YOU'



ROYAL HOSPITAL CONDUCTS COMPLEX COLON SURGERY

MUSCAT: A specialised medical team from Royal Hospital's Surgery Department succeeded in performing a complex operation to remove the adrenal glands and colon of a patient who was suffering severe high blood pressure due to a tumour in the suprarenal glands and acute inflammation of the colon. The surgery took about five hours.

Dr Amr Redha, Head of the Department of General Surgery at the Royal hospital, consultant endocrine surgeon, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that such operations are considered rare and complex. The dual surgery was conducted simultaneously, he said.

Dr Amr pointed out that the gland removed in the right part of the body weighed 100 grams, while the one on the left weighed 3 kg — highly disproportionate to the normal size of about 40 grams.

Dr Amr explained that such cases require



Dr Amr Redha said such operations are considered rare and complex.

special care, since they involve controlling blood pressure while maintaining the body's hydration and protecting it from dehydration.

This surgery also required keeping the pressure on the colon under control

by removing the distension through endoscopy, he observed. "In addition, such surgeries involve taking other precautions before the patient undergoes surgery, if the patient's clinical condition so disposes," Dr Amr said. — ONA

Sohar University ranks second in research in Oman

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, SEPT 19

Sohar University was ranked second among higher education institutions in Oman for its research output in 2023, according to the global website research.com. This recognition reflects the university's strong commitment to scientific research and its impressive progress in this field. Sohar University is dedicated to creating an environment that encourages innovation among both its teachers and students in various subjects.

One notable achievement contributing to Sohar University's high research ranking is Professor Hussein Kazem. He secured the top spot in engineering research by publishing an impressive 138 research papers.

Dr Mustafa Qasimi from the engineering faculty also made the university proud by ranking second in engineering research with around 88 published papers.

Sohar University's research movement has played a vital role in enhancing the quality of life in the region. Through its diverse research initiatives spanning various disciplines, the university has forged strong connections to a better life for its students and the broader community.

The university's commitment to environmental sustainability is evident in its research on renewable energy sources, conservation, and climate change mitigation. These efforts have contributed to a cleaner and more sustainable environment, positively impacting the lives of local residents.

Moreover, research at Sohar University has extended to socio-economic development, fostering entrepreneurship and job creation. By collaborating with local industries and businesses, the university has helped stimulate economic growth and provided opportunities for a higher standard of living.

Oman to participate in Amman International Book Fair

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, will be taking part in Amman International Book Fair, which is held in the Kingdom of Jordan during September 21 to 30.

The participation comes within the framework of cultural exchange and cooperation between the two countries.



Book Fair to be held in the Kingdom of Jordan from September 21 to 30. — ONA

It also aims to enhance cultural communication between Omani and Jordanian publishing houses.

Oman's pavilion at the book fair sees a great turnaround of visitors annually. It contains many publications that span various categories, such as history, literature, culture, religion, medicine and astronomy, among others.

— ONA

MoE hosts training on data visualisation

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Educational Supervision, is conducting a training on "Educational Indicators Using Power Bi." The five-day programme targets 20 Heads of Department of Educational Indicators and their employees from the ministry's General Diwan and from the Educational Directorates in the governorates. The training programme is taking place at the computer hall at the Specialised Institute for Vocational Training for Teachers. The programme is presented by Ahmed al Farsi.

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender:-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-refundable)	
					Small and Medium Companies	Local Companies
321/2023	Establishing a water therapy unit at the Al-Wafa Center for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in the Wilayat of Taqah	Companies specialized in the field of building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first degree	Sunday 8-10-2023 02:00 PM	Sunday 29-10-2023 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
324/2023	Establishing a water therapy unit at Al-Wafa Center for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in the Wilayat of Al-Amerat					
323/2023	Establishing a water therapy unit at the Association for the Care of Disabled Children in the Wilayat of Dhank					
325/2023	Supply and installation of false ceilings for the building of the General Directorate of Social Development in Dhofar Governorate	Companies specialized in the field of building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board at the third degree	Wednesday 4-10-2023 02:00 PM	Thursday 19-10-2023 02:00 PM	10 R.O	25 R.O
322/2023	Supply, preparation and provision of nutritional meals for residents of the Rustaq Social Welfare Home	Companies specialized in the field of food, beverage and luxury supply services and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree.				

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On **Wednesday 20/9/2023**.

❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

" The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry"

www.mosd.gov.om

Sultanate of Oman سلطنة عُمان
وزارة التراث والسياحة
Ministry of Heritage and Tourism

Tenders Announcement

Tender No.	149/2023/MHT/HQ-35	Tender Name	PROVISION OF MULTIFUNCTIONAL NETWORK PHOTOCOPIERS
	151/2023/MHT/HQ-36		RESTORATION OF IBRI CASTLE AT WILAYAT AL DHAHRAH - AL DHAHRAH GOVERNORATE
Fees of Tender Documents For SME (149/2023/MHT/HQ-35)		10 O.R	
Fees of Tender Documents (151/2023/MHT/HQ-36)		30 O.R	
Tender Document Sales End Date		8/10/2023	
Last Date for Bid Submission		29/10/2023	
Grade	149/2023/MHT/HQ-35	First, Second, Third, Fourth SME	
	151/2023/MHT/HQ-36	First	
E-Tendering Portal		https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om	
▪ Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. ▪ The Tenderers must acknowledge commitment to the bid. ▪ The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids ▪ The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before (10:00 am, Oman time).			
Support and inquiries	For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@ita.gov.om or 24402200		
For further information	Email : sotic@mht.gov.om Phones : 22088348 - 22088085		

SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

ANNOUNCEMENT

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

Tender Ref.	Description	Last Date for Collection of Tenders Document	Bid Submission Closing Date on/ Before 09:00 am Wednesday	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
MOH/ DGKH- 37/ 3473/2023	Supply of Biomedical Spare Parts for Laparoscopy Equipment at Directorate General of Khoula Hospital	05/Oct/2023	01/Nov/2023	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	R.O 25.000

• Tenders should be submitted online on <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.

• Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.

• For any Clarification, you may contact via Telephone: 24402200, Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om



India government presents bill to reserve 3rd of parliament seats for women



View of India's new parliament building in New Delhi, India. – Reuters file

NEW DELHI: The Indian government on Tuesday moved a bill to reserve a third of seats in the lower house of parliament and state assemblies for women, reviving an old proposal expected to boost the standing of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party.

The contentious legislative proposal has been hanging for decades due to opposition from some heartland political parties and needs the approval of both houses of parliament and a majority of state legislatures to become law.

Its revival comes months before general elections are due by May 2024. Analysts say the chances of the bill getting passed in parliament have brightened as opposition to it has shrunk over the years. It is the latest in a series of moves by the government that the ruling nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has projected as "pro-women"

"We want more and more women to join the development process of the country," Modi told a special five-day parliamentary session.

Women make up almost half of India's 950 million registered voters but only 15 per cent of parliament and about 10 per cent of state legislatures, pushing the world's largest democracy to the bottom of global rankings on gender parity in legislatures.

The 33 per cent reservation for

women will not apply to the upper houses of parliament and state legislatures.

Opposition lawmakers welcomed the revival of the proposal but pointed out that implementing it could take years as it requires boundaries of constituencies to be redrawn, which in turn can only be done after a population census.

India's once in a decade census was due to be completed in 2021 but was delayed because of the pandemic. Technical and logistical hurdles have set the survey back further.

"That means till 2029 this reservation won't be implemented," Priyanka Chaturvedi, a lawmaker from the opposition Shiv Sena (UBT) party, told reporters, referring to when general elections become due after 2024.

Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said the 542-seat lower house has 82 women members at present and if the bill is approved the number will rise to at least 181.

Successive governments have sought to address this imbalance since the mid-1990s. But it has been repeatedly blocked by Hindi heartland parties, with some of their lawmakers aggressively disrupting proceedings and snatching and tearing copies of the bill before being physically escorted out of the chambers.

— Reuters

South Korea urges Russia to halt military cooperation with N Korea

SEOUL: South Korea summoned Russia's ambassador to warn Moscow against any military cooperation with North Korea on Tuesday after last week's summit between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and President Vladimir Putin raised concerns about a possible arms deal.

First Vice Foreign Minister Chang Ho-jin summoned Russia's ambassador in Seoul to urge "Russia to immediately halt any moves to expand military cooperation with North Korea and to abide by (UN) Security Council Resolutions," South Korea's foreign ministry said in a statement.

Chang said Russia should live up to its role as a member of the UN Security Council to address North Korea's nuclear threat, and added that any actions that threaten its security would seriously undermine Russia's relationship with South Korea.

South Korea "will cooperate with the international community to take strong action to ensure that there are clear consequences, and that such actions will have a very negative impact on Korea-Russia relations," Chang said, according to a statement from South Korea's foreign ministry.

Seoul's message comes after North Korean leader Kim was presented with options for military cooperation at Russia's Vostochny Cosmodrome space centre last week, at a time when Russia is pressing its invasion of Ukraine and North Korea races to advance its nuclear programmes.



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un tours Vladivostok where he visited various locations, including Far Eastern Federal University, Primorsky Aquarium, and Arnika Bio-Feed Mill, during his visit to Russia. – Reuters file photo

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol is in New York this week and is expected to give a keynote speech when he attends the United Nations General Assembly on Sept. 20.

Local news media outlets reported that Yoon will deliver a message about possible military exchanges between Pyongyang and Moscow.

Washington and Seoul officials have expressed concern that Moscow could be seeking to

acquire ammunition from the North to prop up its dwindling stocks, while Pyongyang gets technological aid over its spy satellite and missile programmes.

Experts have warned the two countries might have been looking to do a deal involving Pyongyang supplying artillery shells and anti-tank missiles in exchange for satellite technology from Moscow.

Relations between the North and South are at one of their lowest points in decades, with diplomacy

stalled and North Korean leader Kim calling for increased weapons development.

Experts say any deal between Moscow and Pyongyang could force the South to review its careful balancing act on the Ukraine war — which Seoul has condemned.

South Korea is a major weapons exporter but longstanding domestic policy prevents it from selling weapons into active conflicts.

— Agencies

Indonesia hosts first-ever ASEAN joint military drills

BATAM: Militaries from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations began their first-ever joint exercises on Tuesday in Indonesia, with a Myanmar representative present despite the bloc's ban on its junta leaders.

ASEAN countries have participated in multinational defence drills before, but these are the first featuring just the bloc, which is battling perceptions of irrelevance on major regional issues such as the turmoil in Myanmar and disputes in the South China Sea.

These are non-combat exercises, however, with member forces training in areas such as humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, rescue operations and joint maritime patrols, according to the host Indonesia.

"By uniting together, we can maintain stability in the region for the favour of the people," Indonesian military chief Margono Yudo told reporters on Batam island.

He said forces from every nation in the bloc including Myanmar are taking part in the five-day ASEAN Solidarity Exercise, but did not detail the extent of Myanmar's participation. The crisis-hit nation was represented at the exercise's opening ceremony on Batam island by a defence attache.

An Indonesian military official later told AFP on condition of anonymity that Myanmar would only attend the drills as an observer.

Myanmar has been ravaged by deadly violence since 2021, when the military deposed Aung San Suu Kyi's government and launched a bloody crackdown on dissent.



Indonesian soldiers attend the opening ceremony of a joint-military drills ASEAN Solidarity Exercise at Batu Ampar port on Batam island, Indonesia. – Reuters

The leaders of its junta have since been banned from ASEAN meetings, and the bloc's efforts to defuse the crisis have been fruitless so far.

Indonesia has also denied that the drills are aimed at countering China's growing assertiveness in the South China Sea, which Beijing claims almost in its entirety.

It has developed artificial islands in the region and outfitted some with military facilities and runways.

In response to the drills, China's foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning on Tuesday said that Beijing's position on the South China Sea remained "consistent".

Initially, organisers had planned to hold the ASEAN Solidary Exercise in the North Natuna Sea, which Indonesia says is inside its exclusive economic zone. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

DAMASCUS

Syria's Assad to travel for summit with Xi

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad will travel to China this week for a bilateral summit with his Chinese counterpart, the presidency in Damascus said in a statement.

Assad, Syrian first lady Asmaa al-Assad and a senior delegation will travel to China on Thursday for a string of meetings in Beijing and Changzhou. Presidents Assad and Xi would hold a Syrian-Chinese summit, the statement said.

Assad last visited China in



2004 to meet then-President Hu Jintao. It was the first visit by a Syrian head of state to China since the countries established diplomatic ties in 1956.

— Reuters

DUBAI

Russia's defence minister to visit Tehran

Russia's defence minister Sergei Shoigu will visit Tehran on Tuesday, Iran's Tasnim news agency reported, adding that he would meet top Iranian officials.

Tehran and Moscow have deepened their bilateral ties, notably in the military sphere.

Tasnim added that Shoigu would discuss defence cooperation and regional developments with top Iranian officials, including his Iranian counterpart.



Last month, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said Russia's military cooperation with Iran would not succumb to geopolitical pressure.

— Reuters

BAMAKO

Attack kills 5 soldiers in northern Mali

An attack on two military camps in northern Mali, claimed by armed rebel groups, killed five soldiers, while 11 others are missing, the army said.

It was the latest attack against army positions in northern Mali, which has seen a resurgence of activity by separatist armed groups in recent weeks.

The army said on social media that it had also lost a plane during the fighting in the town of Lere, in the Timbuktu Region of northern Mali.



Around 30 assailants were "neutralised" in the attack.

The Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) had already claimed responsibility for the attack. — AFP



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In brief

■ COPENHAGEN



DENMARK RESUMES DEVELOPMENT AID TO NIGER AFTER COUP

Denmark will resume some of the development aid to Niger that it suspended after the country's July 26 coup, Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen said.

"The people of Niger are on the verge of catastrophe, which could lead to a potential flow of refugees. Naturally we cannot turn a blind eye to this situation," he said.

Countries in the Global South are "the most important priority at the moment, in light of the war in Ukraine, military coups in Africa and the Danish candidacy for the (UN) Security Council," he added.

The details have yet to be finalised.

■ SYDNEY



AUSTRALIA WARNS OF FIRES AND HEAT AFTER EL NINO KICKS IN

Australia's weather bureau confirmed on Tuesday that an El Nino weather pattern is under way, bringing hot and dry conditions that risk a severe wildfire season and drought.

The announcement, which follows similar confirmations from other weather agencies, came as the country bakes in unseasonal heat. Government forecaster Karl Braganza said elevated surface temperatures in the Pacific Ocean could impact the country until early next year. "Importantly with the El Nino now settling into that pattern in the Pacific Ocean, that increases our confidence that this pattern is going to last until the end of summer," he added.

■ LONDON



BRITAIN INVITES CHINA TO GLOBAL AI SUMMIT IN NOVEMBER

Britain has invited China to its global artificial intelligence (AI) summit in November, with foreign minister James Cleverly saying the risks of the technology could not be contained if one of its leading players was absent.

"We cannot keep the UK public safe from the risks of AI if we exclude one of the leading nations in AI tech," Cleverly said. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak wants Britain to become a global leader in AI regulation and the summit on November 1-2 will bring together governments, tech companies and academics to discuss the risks posed by the powerful new technology.



US President Joe Biden addresses the 78th Session of the UN General Assembly in New York City. – Reuters

At UN Assembly, Biden asks to stand by Ukraine

NEW YORK: US President Joe Biden appealed to world leaders at the UN General Assembly on Tuesday to stand with Ukraine against Russians, hoping Republicans in Congress will also take notice.

"Russia believes that the world will grow weary and allow it to brutalise Ukraine without consequence," Biden said in his speech to UNGA. "If we allow Ukraine to be carved up, is the independence of any nation secure?"

Biden's address at the annual gathering was the centrepiece event of his three-day visit to New York, which will include meetings with the heads of five Central Asian nations, and the leaders of Israel and Brazil.

Biden, a Democrat, has made rallying US allies to support Ukraine a leading component of US foreign policy, arguing the world must send a clear signal to Russian President Vladimir Putin that he will not be able to outlast the West.

House of Representatives Speaker Kevin McCarthy, the leading Republican in Washington, has questioned whether the United States should keep sending billions of dollars in weaponry to Ukraine.

In his speech, Biden argued that Russia's February 2022 war of Ukraine and occupation of territory violated the founding UN Charter, a main principle of which is respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Biden echoed remarks of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres who in his opening speech to UNGA on Tuesday said Russia's war "has unleashed a nexus of horror."

A Biden administration official said Biden and US officials would also focus at the UN meetings on mobilising resources for infrastructure and sustainable development and fighting climate change.

Solid majorities of Americans support providing weaponry to Ukraine to defend itself against

Russia and believe that such aid demonstrates to China and other US rivals a will to protect US interests and allies.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, due to speak at UNGA on Tuesday, was expected to visit Biden at the White House on Thursday and to meet some congressional leaders as well.

The United States is preparing a new military aid package for Ukraine to coincide with Zelensky's visit, and Congress has been asked to approve billions of dollars more in security assistance for the rest of the year.

"We have confidence that there will be bipartisan support for this. I think President Zelensky does as well," White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters.

After his speech, Biden was due to sit down with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to discuss world hot spots.

— Reuters

EU lawmakers to grill new climate chief on fossil fuels

BRUSSELS: Lawmakers in the European Parliament plan to grill Wopke Hoekstra, nominated to be the EU's next climate-change chief, regarding phasing out fossil fuels and a new emissions target for 2040.

Hoekstra, a former Dutch foreign minister, has the backing of the Dutch government and European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen to become the European Union's next Climate Commissioner - taking over the running of emissions-cutting policies in the world's third-largest economy.

Some lawmakers have said Hoekstra will need to prove his readiness to lead climate policy-making because that topic was not the focus of his previous roles as a foreign minister and finance minister.

It is not uncommon, however, for EU commissioners to take on a new portfolio they have not had before, and work with the EU's civil service to get up to speed.

In any case, Hoekstra must first pass a European Parliament hearing. Negative assessments by lawmakers have prompted some commissioner candidates to withdraw in the past.

A document showed the questions EU lawmakers have put to Hoekstra ahead of his hearing, revealing the issues they plan to test him on.

"Will you defend a fossil fuel phase-out with a timeline consistent with the Paris Agreement?" the document asked, regarding Hoekstra's expected involvement at the UN COP28 climate summit in November, where countries will consider a global deal to phase out fossil fuels.

The lawmakers also asked what measures Hoekstra would take to phase out fossil fuel subsidies in the EU.

The European Commission has struggled to encourage EU



Wopke Hoekstra

A document showed the questions EU lawmakers have put to Hoekstra ahead of his hearing, revealing the issues they plan to test him on.

member states to do this. EU countries spent around 52 billion euros on fossil fuel subsidies in 2021 - an annual total that has not declined since 2015, EU Environment Agency data show.

Hoekstra must answer the lawmakers' questions in writing, before his October 2 hearing.

A key task for the new climate commissioner will be to propose the EU's first emissions-cutting target for 2040. That will involve balancing competing calls - from scientific advisers recommending an emissions cut of up to 95 per cent, and industry lobbies warning that is economically unrealistic.

EU officials say the parliament is unlikely to ultimately reject Hoekstra. Doing that would likely mean the EU does not have a new climate commissioner in place for the COP28 summit.

— Reuters

Blasts in Karabakh as Azerbaijan launches military operation

BAKU: Azerbaijan on Tuesday launched a military operation in the breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh region and demanded the total withdrawal of Armenian forces from the disputed mountainous territory as a precondition for peace.

Fears of a fresh war have been building in recent months, with Armenia accusing Azerbaijan of a troop build-up and decrying a blockade of its only land link to Nagorno-Karabakh.

Blasts could be heard in the town as Azerbaijan said it was using "high precision weapons on the front line and in depth".

"Localised anti-terrorist measures have been launched in the region," Baku's defence ministry said in a statement.

The ministry said it had opened "humanitarian corridors and reception points" to allow civilians to leave. "We reiterate that the civilian population and civilian infrastructure are not targets," the statement said.

The latest escalation comes nearly three years after a brief but



A general view of Stepanakert, called Khankendi by Azerbaijan, in the Nagorno-Karabakh region as gunfire and explosions are heard there. – Reuters

brutal war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the mountainous region. Armenia's foreign ministry condemned Azerbaijani "aggression" against Karabakh.

"On September 19, Azerbaijan unleashed another large-scale aggression against the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, aiming

to complete its policy of ethnic cleansing," the foreign ministry said. It said Russian peacekeepers stationed in the region should "take clear and unequivocal steps to stop Azerbaijan's aggression".

A separatist organisation based in Armenia said on social media that "Stepanakert and other cities

and villages are under intensive fire," accusing Azerbaijan of launching a "large-scale military offensive".

Azerbaijan justified the mission, citing "systematic" shelling by Armenian-backed forces and accusing them of carrying out "reconnaissance activities" and

fortifying defensive positions.

"There is also the strengthening of combat positions with personnel, armoured vehicles, artillery and other weapons," Azerbaijan said, accusing separatists of "a high level of combat readiness".

Regional power brokers Russia and Türkiye, which oversee a fragile peacekeeping mission in Nagorno-Karabakh, had been informed about Azerbaijan's military activities in Karabakh, Baku said.

Moscow urged the parties to the conflict to respect a peace accord and end the "bloodshed".

The fighting came just hours after Azerbaijan said four police officers and two civilians were killed in mine blasts in Nagorno-Karabakh, with authorities blaming separatists. The deaths at dawn came after Armenian separatists said they had reached an agreement with Azerbaijani authorities to resume aid deliveries to Karabakh.

Baku's security services said two civilians had died in of Khojavend and four police officers were killed in another mine explosion en route to the site.

— AFP

Why is there so much hatred?

WE live in a world where people have different values, aspirations, grievances, goals, and ambitions. Similarly, increased animosities, abuse of human rights, greed, exploitation, and inequality, along with political divides and ethnic and religious conflicts have been going on for years, permeating every aspect of our lives.

It is pathetic that even close friends and relatives, in moments of madness, become the worst of enemies, seeking the most horrible means to malign and even kill one another and inflicting the most terrible of pain on themselves in the process!

When it comes to global history, researchers may not be able to provide exact details about the periods that have been free from war. Much of recorded history has also been filled with imperial or colonial occupations, where a powerful nation used force to rule over other nations. A great philosopher of all time, J Krishnamurti, wrote, “The problems of war have existed before, but most of us have not been concerned with them as they were remote and not affecting us personally or deeply, but now war is at our door and seems to dominate the minds of most people”.

Why is there so much hatred and disgust in the world? Why cannot people live in peace and harmony and love one another? After living for so many centuries, why is it that man cannot coexist peacefully on this marvellous earth?

However, the fact is that a vast section of the population today is seeking peace. Even those who don't normally bother about peace are beginning to seek it in their lives. Unfortunately, it comes in rare interludes.

In their endeavour to find lasting solutions to this seemingly unending, malignant affliction of man, we see an increasing number of organisations, social workers, and individuals working on change. They put forward several actions, counter-actions, perspectives, and paradigms.

In this regard, the International



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyvp
The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

IT IS PATHETIC THAT EVEN CLOSE FRIENDS AND RELATIVES, IN MOMENTS OF MADNESS, BECOME THE WORST OF ENEMIES

Day of Peace is observed around the world on September 21. The UN General Assembly devoted this day to strengthening the ideals of peace through observing 24 hours of non-violence and cease-fire. According to the UN, conflict and violence are on the rise globally. It has warned that peace is more under threat around the world than it has been since World War II.

The cost of wars and conflicts is almost unfathomable. In addition to human suffering, social unrest, and damage to infrastructure, they impact the affected countries' economies. They disrupt access to basic services like food and water and force people into extreme poverty, with the poorest and most vulnerable paying the highest price.

According to the Council on Foreign Relations's Global Conflict Tracker, among those worsening are the conflict in Ukraine, the war in Afghanistan, political instability in Lebanon, bloody civil wars in Yemen and Syria, the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar, and the conflict in Ethiopia.

As we are set to celebrate the International Day of Peace tomorrow, this human disposition remains an elusive promise for many around the world. Conflicts continue to wreak destruction, while their causes have become more complex and difficult to resolve.

Real, lasting, stable peace requires trust and solidarity among people. Those things quickly unravel if old grudges are constantly resurfacing.

As Nelson Mandela declared, “peace is not just the absence of conflict; peace is the creation of an environment where all can flourish, regardless of race, colour, creed, religion, gender, class, caste, or any other social markers of difference”.

This was further expressive in the words of Maryam, a native of Nigeria's northern state of Borno, where relentless insurgency and violent extremism have plagued people for more than a decade.

Mariam, a young poet said during the UN “Peace Begins with Me” campaign to recognise the service and sacrifice of United Nations peacekeepers, “peace for me is not just the absence of conflict but also the presence of justice, equality, and respect for human dignity. Everyone deserves to have and find peace.”

SHE NEEDS ARMOUR!



The photograph shows monument of Princess Olga dressed in a mock bulletproof vest with sign ‘She needs armour’ to draw attention for needs of armours designed specifically for women in Kyiv, amid the Russia war on Ukraine. The UN's cultural organisation on September 15 placed World Heritage Sites in the Ukrainian cities of Kyiv and Lviv on its “in danger” list, saying they are at risk from the war. – AFP

EU and Italy talk tough on migration

Three years ago, when EU naval mission “Sophia” was shut down after rescuing 45,000 migrants in the central Mediterranean, Italian opposition leader Giorgia Meloni was jubilant. Now, as prime minister, she wants to bring it back. But this time she is calling for the European Union ships to focus on blocking migrant departures from North Africa rather than saving lives at sea, something experts on migration and international law say is unfeasible.

Meloni's change of tack comes after seeing her right-wing government's election promises to stop sea arrivals from North Africa undercut by landings on the island of Lampedusa.

Well over 10,000 migrants reached the Italian island - whose permanent population is about 6,000 - last week.

Lampedusa sits in the Mediterranean between Tunisia, Malta and the larger Italian island of Sicily and is a first port of call for many migrants seeking to reach the EU.

“It (the Sophia mission) is exactly the proposal I intend to bring to the next European Council when we talk about immigration”, Meloni said in a television interview on Sunday, hours after visiting Lampedusa with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

“Sophia”, like previous EU and Italian naval missions, was opposed by Meloni and other right-wing politicians because they said it encouraged migrants to sail to Europe,



ALVISE ARMELLINI
The writer is Italy's correspondent at Reuters

PUSHING BACK BOATS WOULD VIOLATE INTERNATIONAL ASYLUM RULES AND THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

often on flimsy boats, in the likelihood they would be rescued. Critics say her idea of redeploying the ships to block departures is against the law and impracticable.

“Trying to put together a naval blockade would be an illegal, unthinkable act of war... that would have devastating effects,” said Ferruccio Pastore, head of the International and European Forum for Research on Immigration (Fieri).

Pushing back boats would violate international asylum rules and the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as being operationally dangerous, Pastore said, evoking a precedent involving Italy and Albania.

In 1997, an Italian navy ship enforcing a naval blockade that Rome and Tirana had agreed on to stem migration across the Adriatic Sea collided with a migrant boat. The shipwreck killed 81 people.

Reviving “Sophia” would also raise the issue of where to send rescued migrants. In 2020, it was discontinued as other EU nations balked at Italian requests to have them redistributed around the bloc.

“European solidarity meaning ‘let's share the burden’ is not going to work at least until (May's) European (Parliament) elections and I think it won't work even afterwards,” Pastore said, referring

to increased partisanship during campaigning.

Signs of this have emerged in recent weeks, with France and Austria stepping up border controls to prevent migrants crossing over from Italy.

FIRST ARRIVE

Rome is continuing to violate the Dublin accord stemming from the 1990s intended to ensure asylum seekers do not leave the EU country they first arrive in, a senior German official said, asking not to be named.

Italy says it is so overwhelmed by new arrivals that it is unable to respect the Dublin rules.

In Lampedusa, Von der Leyen stopped short of endorsing

Meloni's naval blockade plan, saying only that she supported “exploring options to expand existing naval missions in the Mediterranean or to work on new ones.”

She presented a “10-point action plan” that mostly consisted of an offer of more help for Italy from existing EU policy tools and a pledge to speed up an EU-Tunisia deal aimed at curbing migration, which is not yet operational.

Other EU states have not commented publicly on the idea of a naval blockade, which Italy says would also need the consent of North African states. But Germany is against it, according to diplomatic sources in Brussels.

“It seems to me that there are few new ideas, a lot of rhetoric, a lot of anxiety, a lot of dramatisation,” Maurizio Ambrosini, Professor of Sociology of Migration at the University of Milan, said about the latest EU and Italian proposals.

Meloni's cabinet on Monday adopted measures to build more detention centres for migrants with no legal right to remain in Italy and lengthen the maximum time they can be held awaiting repatriation to 18 months, from three months. The measure was needed to reverse “years of immigrationist policies”, Meloni said.

But Ambrosini and Pastore pointed to data showing that when detention terms were extended in the past - only to be reversed later - this did not lead to an increase in repatriations.

They said repatriations are difficult, expensive and it is often hard for authorities to identify the countries of origin of failed asylum seekers and persuade those states to take them back.

Migration “is a huge problem for which there are no miraculous recipes, no silver bullets,” that can replace patient diplomatic and economic development efforts with African partners, Pastore said. “It is an issue that will stay with us for decades”.



Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni speaks during the Budapest Demographic Summit in Budapest. – Reuters file photo

sport

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Al Nasr edge Ibri, Dhofar beat Bahla



Dhofar players celebrate a goal against Bahla.

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

Al Nasr Club clinched their first victory in the Omantel League, triumphing over Ibri Club with a single goal in a match held at Ibri Youth Complex during the fourth round.

The match kicked off under rainy conditions, with both teams displaying a cautious approach. Al Nasr intensified their offensive maneuvers against Ibri after the initial five minutes, seeking an early goal. Ibri responded with a series of counterattacks but failed to capitalise on the opportunities. In the 15th minute, Ibri had a chance to score the opening goal, but Faisal al Aghbari missed the opportunity. Towards the end of the first half, Ibri scored a goal, only for it to be disallowed due to an offside. Consequently, the first half concluded with a goalless draw.

In the second half, Al Nasr upped the pressure on Ibri and, in the 47th minute, managed to break the deadlock with a header from Walid al Musalmi. This marked Al Nasr's first goal in the league, following three scoreless rounds.

After the goal, Ibri coach Mohsin bin Darwish al Balushi made strategic player substitutions to bolster the team's offensive efforts. Despite Ibri's attempts to seize control of the match and create dangerous attacks, they were unable to convert them into goals. In the dying moments, Al Nasr

came close to netting another goal against Ibri, but Versi Perry's shot hit the left post. The match concluded with Al Nasr defeating Ibri with a solitary goal.

With this result, Al Nasr Club reached the fourth point, while Ibri Club remained with 3 points from three matches.

DHOFAR MOVE TO FOURTH SPOT

Dhofar defeated Bahla Club by a goal to move up to the fourth position after the match that brought them together at Al Saada Sports Complex Stadium.

Through the course of the match, the two teams performed at an average level in the first half and did not witness many opportunities in front of the goal.

In the second half, the two teams continued the course of the half in the same rhythm as the previous one, with a relative advantage for the Dhofar team, which presented a better level. Dhofar succeeded in the last quarter of the match in scoring the lone goal of the match through a penalty kick by Moataz Saleh.

With this result, Dhofar's tally rose to 6 points, as they gained only 3 points from the past 3 rounds. Dhofar had recently dismissed Egyptian technical director Hamada Sedqi and Younes Aman took over the place. On the other hand, Bahla have 4 points and fell to seventh in the table after the end of the round.



Dhofar and Bahla players fight for the ball during the Omantel League match.

Four Oman Sail athletes join Oman squad for Asian Games

MUSCAT: Four Oman Sail athletes have been selected for the Oman national squad to travel to Hangzhou, China, for the 2022 Asian Games. Competing across three events in the sailing competition, the Asian Games represent a chance to push for qualification for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games and gain valuable international experience.

Waleed al Kindi and Musab al Hadi will sail in the 49er class, Abdulmajeed al Hadhrami will compete in the iQFOiL men's windsurfing event and Abdullatif al Qasmi will join the most

talented juniors from across the continent in the ILCA 4. Leading the delegation will be Hashim al Rashdi, Oman Sail's Head of Performance, and he will be assisted by Munthir al Kindi, specialist coach for the ILCA 4.

Hashim al Rashdi said: "The Asian Games is a prime opportunity to test ourselves against nations from the Asian continent and place as high as possible in all three events. Olympic qualification in Men's Windsurfing is a clear goal for Oman Sail, and a long-term objective of ours, but we



The Oman team in Hangzhou alongside an official.

A route to Olympic qualification for the Paris Games 2024 is open for Abdulmajeed al Hadhrami in the iQFOiL competition who will look to improve on his 2023 Sailing World Championships outing

are also confident of a strong performance in the 49er and ILCA 4."

He added, "we are very proud to represent the nation in

international competition and look forward to supporting our national athletes across all sports throughout the Games."

Competition takes place from September 21-27 at the Ningbo Sailing Centre. A route to Olympic qualification for the Paris Games 2024 is open for Abdulmajeed al Hadhrami in the iQFOiL competition who will be looking to improve on his performance at the 2023 Allianz Sailing World Championships.

Oman will be represented in seven sports at the 2022 Asian Games.



F1 FOUND A BREATH OF FRESH AIR IN SINGAPORE

Ferrari's Spanish driver Carlos Sainz Jr (R) leads in front of Ferrari's Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc (centre L) during the Singapore Formula One Grand Prix night race at the Marina Bay Street Circuit in Singapore. — AFP

SINGAPORE: Formula One found fresh air in the heat and humidity of Singapore on Sunday but next weekend's Japanese Grand Prix could provide a reality check for those celebrating the end of Red Bull's record run of success.

Until Singapore, Red Bull had won all 14 races this season with runaway leader Max Verstappen chasing his 11th victory in succession.

This time there was no Red Bull in the top 10 on the starting grid and a Red Bull-free podium

at the end as Ferrari's Carlos Sainz held off McLaren's Lando Norris and Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton.

Singapore is something of an outlier and Red Bull are expected to bounce back at Suzuka where they won one-two last year and can also retain their constructors' championship.

"I wouldn't get carried away too much, I think Red Bull are always the main guys to beat and I think in Japan they will be back to where they used to be," commented Ferrari's Charles Leclerc.

"I expect Red Bull to dominate in Japan," agreed Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso. "Singapore was also not good for Mercedes in the past, when they were dominating the championship, so it's a very special race weekend."

Rivals were still enjoying the moment, however.

"It's a breath of fresh air that we have a different winner, we have a podium without them. You've got to take the small positives in a year of dominance," said Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff.

Commercial rights holders Liberty Media may also be feeling some relief.

Liberty's CEO Greg Maffei recognised at a Goldman Sachs conference earlier this month that double world champion Verstappen's runaway success was not ideal from a business perspective, however remarkable in sporting terms.

"The reality is we have a very attractive competitive product, other than the fact that Max is that fast," he explained then.

"Short of breaking his leg, a la

Tonya Harding, I'm not sure what we can do about that," he joked, referencing the 1994 Winter Olympic scandal where the US skater's rival Nancy Kerrigan was attacked by a hired assailant.

The sport found its own solution in Singapore, with Red Bull struggling all weekend and Verstappen finishing only fifth even if he did extend his lead over team mate Sergio Perez to 151 points.

Removing Red Bull from the equation also offered a thrilling vision of how exciting Formula

One could be without one dominant team.

Las Vegas may prove more of an extravaganza when Formula One takes to the Strip in November but four cars and three different teams going into the final lap nose-to-tail and fighting for the win takes some beating.

Suzuka may see a return of the stranglehold. If not, the breath of fresh air could turn into something altogether more bracing.

—Reuters

Al Ahed edge Al Nahda in AFC Cup

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

Oman's Al Nahda lost to Lebanon's Al Ahed 2-1 in the first round of the first group of the AFC Cup group stage match at the Al Seeb Sports Stadium on Monday.

The game began cautiously, with both teams showing initial restraint. The play remained balanced until the 10th minute when Al Nahda nearly secured their first goal through a beautiful maneuver by Ahmed al Kaabi. However, the first half concluded without any significant attacking opportunities for either teams.

As the second half commenced, Al Nahda pressed forward in an attempt to find the first goal and take the lead. Their advantage was evident in reaching Al Ahed Club's defensive areas. In the 54th minute, Bilal bin Saha capitalised on a loose ball in the penalty area, scoring Al Nahda's first goal. However, just four minutes later, Al Ahed equalised with a goal by Lee Irwin, exploiting a defensive error.

Al Ahed was active after adjusting the score and obtained a number of balls in the back areas of Al Nahda, taking advantage of the confusion in Al Nahda's defences. However, Al Nahda almost scored the second goal but striker Essam al Subhi delayed in making the shot, failing to confront the Lebanese goalkeeper in the 66th minute. After that, Al Nahda had several opportunities that were not exploited in the desired way.

The 83rd minute witnessed the

most dangerous attacking balls by Al Nahda Club, with Essam al Subhi missing another goal. Al Ahed Club then returned to score the lead goal through Karim Darwish in the 86th minute, taking advantage of a defensive error in positioning. The match ended with the victory of the Lebanese Al Ahed Club on that score of 2-1.

DEFENSIVE ERRORS

In the press conference after the end of the match, Al Nahda club coach Hamad al Azani confirmed that the defensive errors cost the team its first loss in the Asian club tournament campaign.

"In addition to the circumstances accompanying the match, some of our top players were also missing in action due to injuries," he said.

"We realise the importance of the beginning with a win in the Asian competition, but the team is capable of a comeback. We have many matches ahead of us and we must prepare well for that," Al Azani added.

Al Azani explained that there were individual mistakes that were present in the match and may have been the cause of the loss.

Al Azani said: "I previously talked about these mistakes with the players and we tried to address and reduce them. However, the factor of stress and fatigue made the players lose some of their concentration, and the absences affected us, especially Ahmed al Matroushi in the back line, but in the end, these are individual mistakes that we can address."



Al Nahda players celebrate a goal against Al Ahed.

India's Ashwin recalled for Australia ODI series

NEW DELHI: KL Rahul will lead a second-string India team in the first two one-day internationals of a three-match series against Australia this month, with regular captain Rohit Sharma returning for the final game, the country's cricket board said on Monday.

Several of India's regulars have been rested for the first two games, including captain Rohit, Virat Kohli, Hardik Pandya and Kuldeep Yadav.

The squad for the final match is the one that will be part of India's World Cup campaign on home soil — with the addition of Ravichandran Ashwin and Washington Sundar, who will be available for all three games.

Ashwin, India's preferred spinner in Test cricket, played the last of his 113 one-day internationals in January 2022 and was left out of the provisional squad announced earlier this month.

Meanwhile, Axar Patel, who missed the Asia Cup final due to a quadriceps strain, has been named in the squad for the final ODI, but his participation is subject to fitness.

The three ODIs, which will be played between Sept. 22-27 in Mohali, Indore and Rajkot, will serve as a tune-up for the 50-over World Cup which begins on October 5.

Twice champions India, who

lost in the semifinals in 2019, begin their World Cup campaign with an October 8 contest against Australia in Chennai. — Reuters

SQUAD FOR FIRST TWO ODIs
KL Rahul (captain), Ravindra Jadeja, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Shubman Gill, Shreyas Iyer, Suryakumar Yadav, Tilak Varma, Ishan Kishan, Shardul Thakur, Washington Sundar, R Ashwin, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna

SQUAD FOR THIRD ODI
Rohit Sharma (captain), Hardik Pandya, Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, Suryakumar Yadav, KL Rahul, Ishan Kishan, Ravindra Jadeja, Shardul Thakur, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, R Ashwin, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj



India's KL Rahul plays a shot during the Asia Cup 2023 Super Four match against Bangladesh. — AFP

NEYMAR, AL HILAL SURVIVE SCARE IN ACL



DUBAI: Brazil star Neymar endured an Asian Champions League debut to forget as Al Hilal had to score deep into injury-time to salvage a 1-1 at home to Uzbekistan's Navbahor in Riyadh on Monday.

Neymar, signed last month from Paris Saint-Germain for a reported EUR90 million, was making his first start for the record Asian champions having debuted on Friday as a substitute in the Saudi Pro League victory at home to Al Riyadh.

Runners-up in last year's Champions League, Hilal were fortunate not to lose their Group B opener having gone behind on 52 minutes at King Fahd International Stadium to Toma Tabatadze's expert finish. Navbahor, the 2022 Uzbekistan Super League runners-up, were competing in the Champions League for the first time.

However, Hilal defender Ali Al Bulaihi rescued a point for the four-time champions in the 100th minute, rising unmarked in the Navbahor area to head home Michael's corner.

Neymar, who earlier this month became Brazil's all-time lead goalscorer, had largely a night to forget. The forward was subjected to some particularly robust treatment from Navbahor, and was incensed just before the hour when he was trod on after being dragged to the ground.

Moments later, Neymar was booked for pushing over an opponent and then angrily kicking the ball at the player as he lay on the pitch.

Neymar did have a chance get Hilal back into the game three minutes from time, but his close-range header was straight at Navbahor goalkeeper Utkir Yusupov. Yusupov then made a spectacular save in injury-time to deny Serbia striker Aleksandar Mitrovic,

although he could do nothing to prevent Al Bulaihi's leveller. Also in Group D, Iranian debutants Nassaji Mazandaran won 2-0 away to India's Mumbai City.

COMFORTABLE FOR AL ITTIHAD

Meanwhile, Saudi champions Al Ittihad began their quest for a third Champions League title with a comfortable 3-0 victory at home to Uzbekistan's AGMK in Jeddah.

Ittihad, back-to-back winners in 2004 and 2005, went into the Group C opener without Ballon d'Or holder Karim Benzema, who was injured, but struck twice in six minutes early in the first half.

Haroune Camara, starting in Benzema's absence, opened the scoring at the Prince Abdullah Al Faisal Stadium on 10 minutes before Romarinho soon doubled the hosts' advantage.

The Brazilian got his second of the night four minutes before half-time, as Nuno Espirito-Santo's side eased to the three points.

In the group's other fixture, Iraq's Air Force Club held 2007 runners-up Sepahan, of Iran, to a 2-2 draw in Erbil.

In Group B, two-time Asian champions Al Sadd drew 0-0 at home with UAE side Sharjah — Algeria's Baghdad Bounedjah missed a second-half penalty for the hosts — while Jordan's Al Faisaly sunk to a 1-0 defeat in injury-time to Uzbekistan's Nasaf in Amman.

The group stage, which this year returned to a home-and-away format for the first time since early 2020, runs until mid-December, with the 10 pool winners and the six best second-placed teams advancing to the knockout rounds. That begins in February. The final takes place, across two legs, in May.

— AFP

Hilal's Brazilian forward #10 Neymar vies for the ball against Navbahor's Uzbek defender Igor Golban #22 during the AFC Champions League Group D match between Al Hilal and PFC Navbahor Namangan at King Fahd International Stadium in Riyadh on Monday. — AFP



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Centre pledges to combat anti-competitive practices



MoCIIP officials conduct an inspection visit to a local shop in Oman.

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

The Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre, operating under the auspices of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), has pledged to work closely and collaboratively with the local business community to combat anti-competitive practices in the Omani marketplaces.

According to a high-level representative, the Centre will be focused on the importance of fairness and responsible business in business.

Nasra al Habsi, Assistant General Manager, acknowledged that some types of tenders, which may stipulate certain minimum criteria, say, in support of Omanisation, in-country value (ICV) creation, and so on, may shut out some companies from bidding.

While such stipulations are in the strategic national interests, other practices that are inherently anti-competitive will not be acceptable.

“There are certain practices that can have adverse effects on fair competition within the community. It’s generally understood among the local population that these dynamics exist, even if they operate on a relatively small scale. We must

take accountability for our actions, recognising that our objectives may not always align perfectly with those of the authorities,” the official said.

On Monday, the Centre unveiled a major initiative on the theme, ‘Together to Ensure Competition’ to raise awareness about the Competition Protection and Anti-Monopoly Law in Oman, which aims to promote the development of competitive markets and economic freedom.

The Competition Protection and Anti-Monopoly Law encompasses regulations crafted to thwart anti-competitive practices, curb monopolies, tackle dumping, and implement measures for compensation and prevention. The campaign’s overarching mission is to nurture competitive markets and strengthen an environment that champions economic freedom.

In August 2020, MoCIIP took over all regulatory duties outlined in the Competition Law. To enhance this role, they introduced Executive Regulations in January 2021 through Ministerial Decision 18/2021. These regulations offer more detailed criteria for identifying prohibited practices under the Competition Law and specify when arrangements must be submitted to their office for approval.

Major agriculture initiatives to strengthen Oman’s food security

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, is taking steps to encourage research and development in the agricultural sector. These initiatives are aimed at improving food security by developing new crop varieties, pest-resistant plants and sustainable farming practices.

According to ministry officials, a key initiative is the Oman Seed Bank, designed to collect and preserve seeds of local crops, which can be used to develop new varieties that are better suited to the Omani environment.

The bank also provides seeds to farmers, helping them to improve their yields. Another initiative is the Oman Plant Protection Centre, which specialises in conducting research on pests and diseases that affect crops, and develops strategies to control them.

The centre also provides training to farmers on pest management techniques. The government is also investing in research on sustainable farming practices.

For example, the Oman Agricultural Research Centre is developing new irrigation techniques that can help to conserve water. The centre is also working on developing drought-



Green crops are seen at Al Najd farms in Dhofar Governorate in Oman.

resistant crops.

These initiatives are part of the government’s efforts to ensure food security in Oman, an official source told the *Observer*. By investing in research and development, the government is helping to develop the agricultural sector and make it more resilient to challenges such as climate change.

Other specific initiatives that are being implemented:

- Establishment of small and medium enterprises in the field of manufacturing local (Omani) medicinal and aromatic plants: This initiative will help to promote the use of local medicinal and aromatic plants, which can be used to improve health and well-being.
- Introduction of modern

technologies that contribute to reducing the consumption of water and fertilisers, such as soilless cultivation and aquaponics: These technologies can help to improve the efficiency of agricultural production and reduce the environmental impact of agriculture.

- Use of renewable energy (solar energy) in the management and operation of net houses: This can help to reduce the cost of agricultural production and make it more sustainable.

At the same time, the Omani government continues to benefit from international partnerships and cooperation to enhance food security.

These partnerships are helping the country to exchange best practices, access new markets,

and develop new technologies. One of the key partnerships is with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

The FAO provides technical assistance in a number of areas, including: Developing fish marketing systems, improving the infrastructure of fish markets, developing legislation and laws for the marketing, preservation, and export of fish products, managing fish control systems, and promoting fish processing.

The FAO is also helping Oman to open new markets for its fish products.

In recent years, Oman has opened new markets in Russia, Vietnam and Brazil. The country is also working to open a market in China.

Solar project receives first green guarantee in Oman

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

A leading international bank, Standard Chartered, has made a significant announcement regarding its first-ever green guarantee in Oman. The bank issues green guarantee to China Energy Engineering Co-Shanxi Electric Power Engineering Company (CEEC-SEPEC) for a solar project in Oman.

This groundbreaking initiative highlights both Standard Chartered’s and CEEC-SEPEC’s dedication to sustainable finance and their commitment to supporting renewable energy projects globally and regionally.

CEEC-SEPEC — a China-based company mainly engaged in power engineering construction business — won the bid from Singapore Sembcorp Group for the Manah II Photovoltaic Power Generation EPC General Contracting Project in Oman.

CEEC-SEPEC assumes the



pivotal role of the primary engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contractor, responsible for establishing and managing a cutting-edge solar power facility.

The project encompasses an expansive area of 680.35 hectares in Manah and boasts a total installed capacity of 588.2 megawatts.

Additionally, it includes the

establishment of a new 400 kV booster station and transmission line. The project is scheduled to commence commercial operations on May 1, 2025.

This endeavour aligns seamlessly with Oman’s objectives for renewable energy expansion, with a focus on reducing carbon emissions. Once completed, it will play a pivotal role in advancing Oman’s renewable energy

transformation and is projected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 340,000 tonnes annually.

Hussain al Yafai, CEO Standard Chartered Oman, said, “We are proud to play a vital role in facilitating sustainable development in Oman. By issuing the first green guarantee for CEEC-SEPEC’s renewable energy project, we are not only supporting

the growth of the renewable energy sector but also aligning our efforts with Oman’s vision of a more sustainable future.

“This partnership demonstrates our unwavering commitment to driving positive change and advancing the transition to clean energy.”

The green guarantee provided by Standard Chartered represents a financial commitment that ensures the project’s successful completion and adherence to environmental standards. It serves as a form of risk mitigation for the solar project, enhancing its attractiveness to investors and lenders.

This guarantee underscores Standard Chartered’s expertise in sustainable finance and its willingness to support environmentally friendly initiatives.

Meanwhile, Wang Xinpeng, Chairman of CEEC-SEPEC, stated, “We are pleased to have Standard Chartered as our trusted

financial partner for this landmark project. This green guarantee is a testament to our shared commitment towards renewable energy development in Oman.

“With Standard Chartered’s support, we will accelerate the transition towards a low-carbon economy, contribute to Oman’s sustainable development goals and create a positive impact for the local community.”

The Sultanate of Oman has been actively investing in renewable energy sources to diversify the country’s energy mix and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

By supporting such projects, Standard Chartered plays a crucial role in facilitating the transition to cleaner and more sustainable energy systems.

Standard Chartered’s decision to issue its first green guarantee for a renewable energy project in Oman reflects the bank’s recognition of the country’s potential for renewable energy development.

OOMCO welcomes second batch of Omanis to ‘Experience Hub’ programme



Students and OOMCO officials pose for a photo in this image.

MUSCAT: Committed to supporting new graduates in navigating their future career paths, Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) recently welcomed ten young Omanis as part of the second group of its ‘Experience Hub’ Programme to gain hands-on work experience.

Launched in 2022 in close cooperation with the Oman Ministry of Labour, OOMCO’s Experience Hub Programme enables young Omanis to develop transferable skills alongside the subject-specific knowledge they acquired during their undergraduate studies.

Husam al Busaidy, Senior Manager — Human Resources & Administration at Oman Oil Marketing Company, said, “By providing this work experience opportunity, we aim to support young Omanis in learning more about the energy marketing sector.

It is curated to also support them in developing their professional network, while

gaining practical experience, and building transferable skill sets to boost their employability. We were pleased to notice the enthusiasm among those who participated in our ‘Experience Hub’ program, and we look forward to the next edition of future leaders.”

The Experience Hub Programme takes one year to complete and enables new graduates to gain experience in professions across various areas, including health, safety and environment, marketing, sales, business development, corporate affairs, as well as FMCG and the services sector.

The Experience Hub is incorporated into OOMCO’s Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy as OOMCO aims to add value to local communities through its CSR initiatives.

The company supports various charitable, educational, and environmental events and initiatives that have positively impacted society.

AmCham Oman hosts back to business networking evening

MUSCAT: The Oman American Business Council (OABC, AmCham Oman), in collaboration with Better Medical Solutions, successfully hosted its annual Back to Business Networking Evening on Tuesday, September 12, at the Sheraton Hotel Muscat.

This event provided a platform for Omani and international businesses to reconnect, network, and prioritise their well-being while promoting the utilization of the US-Oman Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

The Back to Business Networking Evening brought together 180 esteemed members of the Oman business community after the summer break. Attendees enjoyed a delightful evening of culinary delights and engaging conversations, fostering new connections and strengthening existing relationships.

Each attendee was given a gift voucher for use at BMS’ various medical centres and clinics, and was offered a 5-10 minute health consultation in areas such as skin care, allergies, weight loss and physical therapy.

As part of the event, Better Medical Solutions showcased their example of utilising the US-Oman FTA by importing high-quality US medical devices,



AmCham officials and guests smile for a photo op during the back to business networking evening event.

further highlighting the benefits of this trade agreement for Omani businesses.

“AmCham Oman takes great pride in being the primary organisation hosting networking events of this magnitude. The Back to Business Networking Evening exemplifies our commitment to fostering a vibrant business ecosystem in Oman. We are dedicated to providing platforms that enable Omani businesses to connect, collaborate, and thrive,” stated Ali Daud, President and Chairman Emeritus of OABC.

OABC was honoured to welcome the new Chargé d’affaires

at the US Embassy in Muscat, Leslie Ordeman, as the evening’s guest of honour. He highlighted the strong economic ties between the United States and Oman and the shared commitment to fostering business relations.

“The US-Oman economic partnership has never been stronger, with trade last year soaring to record high of \$4.2 billion in 2022, a 30 per cent increase from the prior year,” he said. “I’m proud the Embassy can support OABC’s efforts to build the relationships between US and Omani companies that serve as the bedrock of that partnership.”

Fouad Eid, Vice-President of OABC emphasised the importance of networking events like this in supporting the FTA. “The Back to Business Networking Evening not only provided an opportunity for businesses to connect, but also showcased the impact and untapped potential of the US-Oman FTA.

We are proud to promote companies like Better Medical Solutions, who are importing medical devices and contributing to the growth of the healthcare sector in Oman, and we hope to see many other companies following this example in the near future.”

OQGN to Organize Eight Roadshows across Governorates in Oman

• Aimed at introducing its IPO to Omanis and Investors

oqgn.om | @weareoqgn

Invitation

We are pleased to invite you to attend the introductory meeting to **OQGN's IPO** in the following cities, according to the dates shown below:

City	Date	Time	Venue	Contact
North Al Batinah	20/9/2023	11:00am to 1:00pm	Mercurie Hotel	92838302
Musandam	21/9/2023	11:00am to 1:00pm	Adana Khasab Hotel	92838302
Ad Dhahirah	24/9/2023	11:00am to 1:00pm	OCCI Ibri	92838302
Al Buraimi	25/9/2023	10:00am to 12:00pm	Al Salam Hotel	92838302
Al Dakhiliya	26/9/2023	10:00am to 12:00pm	Intercity Hotel	92838302
Dhofar	27/9/2023	10:00am to 12:00pm	Millennium Resort	92838302
Al Sharqiyah North	01/10/2023	11:00am to 1:00pm	Al Sharqiyah University	92838302
Muscat	02/10/2023	10:00am to 12:00pm	Muscat Stock Exchange	92838302

Muscat: OQGN, the Company, which holds a natural monopoly over essential gas transportation in Oman as the exclusive operator and owner of the Company’s natural gas transportation network (“NGTN”) in Oman, a part of OQ the global integrated energy group, will be organizing eight roadshows to support the announcement of its intention to launch its IPO. The roadshows will be carried out in collaboration with the Capital Market Authority (CMA), the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and offices of Governors and Walis in several governorates. The roadshows, starting on the 20th of September and ending on the 3rd of October, aim to educate investors, nationals and residents about the system of subscription in issued shares and targeted categories.

OQGN plans to float up to 49% of its shares, in an offering that will provide investors with access to the company’s growth as the exclusive owner and operator of the gas transportation network in the Sultanate.

The first roadshow will be held on the 20th of September in collaboration with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the Wilayat of Sohar in Al Batinah North Governorate. The Chamber’s branch in the Wilayat of Khasab will host the second roadshow in Musandam Governorate on the 21st of September.

Following this, another roadshow will be held in Al Dhahirah Governorate in the Chamber’s branch in the Wilayat of Ibri on the 24th of September. The fourth roadshow will be

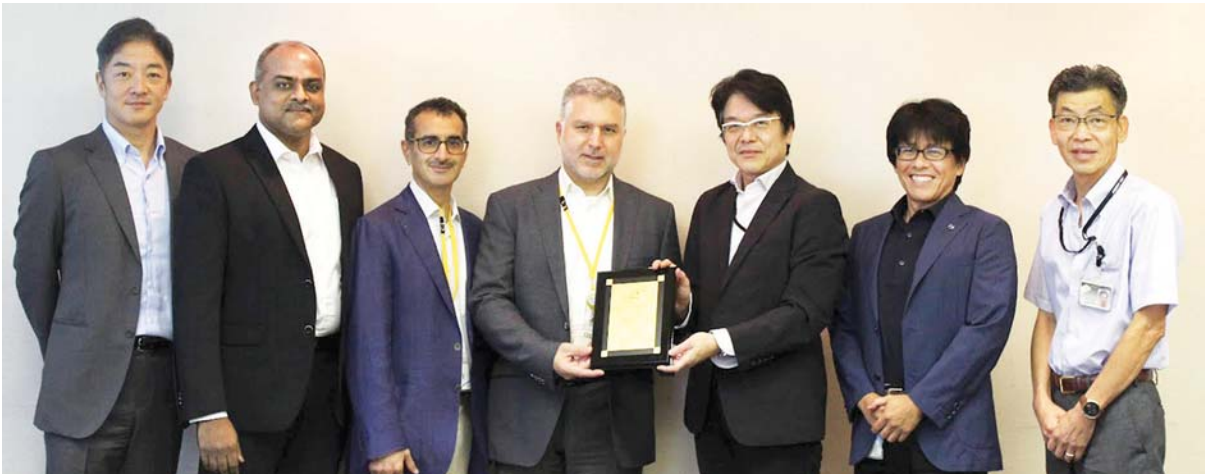
hosted in the Chamber’s branch in Al Buraimi Governorate on the 25th of the same month.

The Wilayat of Nizwa in Ad Dakhiliyah Governorate will host the fifth IPO roadshow on the 26th of September, while the sixth roadshow will be held in the Chamber’s branch in Dhofar on the 28th of September.

The last two roadshows will be held in the Wilayat of Ibra in Ash Sharqiyah North Governorate on the 2nd of October and in Muscat Governorate on the 3rd of October, respectively.

Mansoor Ali Al-Abdali, Managing Director of OQGN, said: “This IPO enhances the Government’s efforts towards economic diversification, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.” OQGN’s intention to float up to 49% of its shares through an IPO is part of the plans, announced by OIA, to enter into partnerships with the Omani and foreign private sectors with regard to its assets. These plans are designed to expand the investor base in government companies, through public offerings in line with the plans of economic diversification and attracting national and foreign investments. OQGN’s IPO reflects the efforts made by OQ to expand investment in its assets, attract foreign investors, and provide broader segments of society access to its ownership with the aim of directing their savings to new investment opportunities, in addition to increasing liquidity on the Muscat Stock Exchange.”

Mazda celebrates 50th-year partnership with TAC



Masashi Otsuka presented a distinguished plaque to the senior executives representing Towell Auto Centre.

MUSCAT: Towell Auto Centre (TAC), one of Oman’s oldest automotive distributors, recently celebrated the 50th anniversary of its robust, growth-centric and enduring partnership with renowned Japanese automaker Mazda – a milestone that also has special resonance with the brand’s countless customers here in the Sultanate of Oman.

To commemorate this momentous jubilee, Masashi Otsuka, General Manager (Global Sales & Marketing Div), Mazda Motor Corporation, presented a distinguished plaque to the senior executives representing Towell Auto Centre.

Inscribed on the plaque was the succinct but eloquent message: ‘In Gratitude for a Successful and Fruitful Partnership of Fifty Years (1973 - 2023)’.

The 50th anniversary signifies more than a mere observance of another chapter in their long-standing relationship; it symbolises a testament to Mazda’s cherished heritage, deeply rooted in visionary leadership, resilience in the face of adversity, and an

indomitable spirit.

Mazda, having endured the devastation of Hiroshima in the atomic bombing of August 1945 and emerged from the ashes Phoenix-like as a beacon of hope and inspiration for Japan’s automotive industry.

Within just four months and fuelled by founder Jujiro Matsuda’s ‘never give up’ philosophy, Mazda resumed production with an array of models that attested to its engineering prowess, innovative spirit, and passion for exceptional success.

Halfway across the world, Towell Group — one of Oman’s foremost business houses with a rich 150-year history — had opened what was then the nation’s first car showroom at Darsait — Muscat.

The launch marked the birth of Towell’s Auto business with Mazda as its flagship automotive franchise in 1973, marking the start of a relationship that has continued to blossom and thrive over the ensuing decades.

Oman’s unbreakable bond with the Mazda brand, as many

older generations of Omanis and expatriates will fondly recall, began with the Mazda 323 and Mazda 808 series of sedans in the early 1970s, followed by the Mazda 616 and Mazda 929, and Mazda Cronos models a decade or so later. The models embodied much of what still distinguishes the brand today: stylish design, high functionality, innovative spirit, and technical competence.

Another notable highpoint was the launch of the Mazda 6, pushing boundaries in performance, fuel efficiency, and design.

Indeed, the automotive landscape in Oman buzzed with excitement every year with the latest offerings from Mazda’s innovative line-up. They included everything from the fun-loving MX-5 Miata sports car to the luxurious family Crossover CX-60 and the compact Mazda 3. Over the past half a century,

Mazda has cultivated a loyal and rapidly expanding customer base, drawn by the brand’s core attributes like effortless joyful driving, artful design, and human centric engineering.



Oman-Tunisia Business Forum to strengthen economic ties

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

Trade and economic ties between the Sultanate of Oman and Tunisia are poised for significant growth following a Business Forum organised by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) earlier this week.

Chaired by Shaikh Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the Board of Directors of OCCI, the forum brought together key figures, including Samir Said, Minister of Economy and Planning of the Republic of Tunisia, and members of the Chamber's Board of Directors.

Notably, the event saw the participation of Omani and Tunisian business leaders. The primary goal of the forum was to strengthen economic ties between Oman and Tunisia, with a focus on facilitating trade and investment.

This objective aligns with the shared values of cooperation and mutual understanding that underpin the relationship between the two countries.

Al Rawas emphasised the importance of private sector cooperation, citing it as a crucial driver for sustainable economic growth.

Samir Said, the Minister of Economy and Planning of the Republic of Tunisia, commended the robust historical ties between the two nations and underscored the need for joint efforts to address current economic challenges.

He spoke of the exceptional circumstances facing Arab countries in light of rapid global

changes and technological advancements, emphasising the importance of collaboration to navigate these challenges successfully.

Minister Said also highlighted Tunisia's comprehensive reforms designed to rejuvenate economic activity, including improvements in the investment ecosystem, digital transformation, and incentives for startups. Abdellatif al Turki, President of the Oman-Tunisia Business Council, emphasised the untapped economic potential between the two nations.

He highlighted the forum's objective of exploring new investment opportunities and experiences, underlining the importance of increased interaction among business leaders from Oman and Tunisia.

The forum's presentations covered a wide range of topics, including investment prospects and incentives.

Oman presented its projects and investment opportunities through a visually engaging presentation delivered by Mahna al Sinani from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Investment Promotion.

Anas al Jumaa from the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) presented an insightful paper on the advantages of Oman's free zones and the support offered to investors.

From the Tunisian side, Hatem al Soussi from the Foreign Investment Promotion Agency shared a comprehensive paper on Tunisia's investment attractiveness and promising sectors.

OQGN foresees major roles in hydrogen, CCUS projects in Oman

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

Wholly state-owned OQ Gas Networks (OQGN) – the sole owner and operator of Oman's national gas transportation system – envisions significant roles for itself in the successful realisation of a hydrogen-centric economy, as well as a future carbon sequestration industry in the Sultanate of Oman – both linked to the nation's Net-Zero strategy.

OQGN – a subsidiary of OQ Group – is preparing to offer 49 per cent of its share capital via a mega public subscription set to open on Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) on September 26, 2023.

The company has already garnered pledges of support from three prominent Anchor Investors in a robust affirmation of its strong positioning in Oman's gas-based energy transportation industry.

“OQGN, with its extensive experience and exclusive rights in building and operating gas infrastructure, could contribute significantly to the development of the infrastructure needed to grow a hydrogen sector, and is likely going to be the partner-of-choice for any hydrogen and CO2 pipeline network.

Indeed, OQGN has already been approached by leading industry partners to support with their CCS (Carbon Capture & Storage) commitments,” the gas transporter said.

Underscoring this anticipated role for OQGN in Oman's future green hydrogen economy, the company signed an MoU with Hydrom, the nation's hydrogen industry master-planner and orchestrator, to explore the



OQ gas pipeline is seen in this illustration photo.

OQGN COULD CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDED TO GROW A HYDROGEN SECTOR, AND IS LIKELY GOING TO BE THE PARTNER-OF-CHOICE FOR ANY HYDROGEN AND CO2 PIPELINE NETWORK.

development of a pipeline network to support the transportation and storage of green hydrogen from production sites to utilisation and export hubs.

While the suitability of OQGN's massive 4,000km gas network for green hydrogen transportation is yet to be fully ascertained, the company says there's a “strong economic case” for upgrading existing gas pipelines, thereby averting decommissioning before the end of their technical lifetimes.

Another option for consideration is the blending of hydrogen into gas streams in the interim until time that large-

scale investments in dedicated hydrogen pipelines become justified.

A feasibility study commissioned by OQGN in this regard found that the introduction of hydrogen in the National Gas Transportation Network (NGTN) would have “few constraints from a pipeline integrity perspective”, but up to a blending limit of 10 per cent hydrogen.

But in light of end-user concerns about the use of blended gas in their respective operations, blending can only be considered in limited customised networks, according to the company.

Hydrogen is anticipated to replace natural gas as a primary fuel source in some industrial processes, such as steel production, says OQGN.

Blue hydrogen, on the other hand (produced using gas as a feedstock, with emissions captured and stored), has the potential to be utilised in petrochemical production, such

as ammonia/urea and methanol.

CO2 captured in the process will need to be transported by pipeline to carbon sinks – opportunities that open up potential roles for OQGN in these activities.

CO2 capture and sequestration has the potential to play a vital role in reducing the carbon footprint of the upstream operations, power and industrial sectors, according to OQGN.

With the installation of dedicated pipelines, carbon captured from gas-fired power generation and traditional industrial processes, such as cement manufacturing, can be transported to depleted gas fields, for example, for reinjection and storage.

But to implement large-scale CCS projects, new pipeline infrastructure will be required in light of the corrosive nature of CO2, and specialist stainless steel and nickel alloys would have to be used, it added.

Oman's economy expected to expand moderately in 2023: Report

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

Oman's economy is expected to expand moderately in 2023, according to the latest Economic Insight report, commissioned by ICAEW and compiled by Oxford Economics.

While non-oil activities are forecast to grow 2.9%, up from 1.6% last year, headwinds in the oil sector, driven by Opec+ policy changes, will cause GDP growth to slow to 2.5% year-on-year (y/y) compared to the 4.3% y/y growth in 2022.

Oman's economy entered this year on a positive note, expanding 4.7% y/y in Q1, outpacing the average growth rate last year and driven by non-oil output, which expanded 4.6%.

While the energy sector slowed to 3.5%, with oil output growing by just 2.8%, fishing, building, and construction sectors have rebounded following double-digit contractions last year. Services have also climbed by 4.5%, supported by retail, transport, and real estate activity.

Aligned with the Opec+ agreement, Oman is expected to reduce oil output to 1.042mn b/d



(Image for illustration only)

this year, down 2.1% from last year, with further adjustments anticipated in the coming year.

Meanwhile, gas production increased by 3.4% in 2022 and will continue to inch up as more projects come online, shifting the composition of energy trade further in favour of gas.

Despite hotel occupancy rates hovering slightly below 2019 levels, tourism is expected to be among the key sectors boosting the Sultanate's non-oil economic recovery, with indicators such as visitor numbers showing promising signs of improvement.

Oman is also capitalising on

growth and diversification plans in the region, such as the UAE's Etihad Rail, which will connect Oman, the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

Oman is also advancing renewable wind and solar energy projects, aiming to raise the share of renewable energy to 30% by 2030, up from the current 5.5%.

The government has signed agreements valued at \$20bn to develop green hydrogen and biofuels. It has also embarked on creating a sustainable finance framework, with a focus on funding initiatives supporting energy efficiency.

However, with energy sector

trends being unfavourable, a small budget deficit is anticipated both this year and next.

Fiscal data for January to July shows a positive balance due to lower spending.

Still, the decline is expected to exert pressure on the budget for the rest of the year. In 2022, Oman achieved a budget surplus of 2.7% of GDP, driven by a commodity price boom, marking a significant shift from prior budget and trade deficits into surpluses and repayment of external debt.

ICAEW estimates this lowered the public debt-to-GDP ratio to 40% last year, down from a peak of over 65% in 2020.

Hanadi Khalife, Head of Middle East, ICAEW, said: “Despite last year's growth being primarily bolstered by elevated oil prices, Oman is demonstrating its ability to sustain economic expansion by diversifying and fostering growth within its non-oil sector.

The marked expansion in renewable energy, tourism, and the pursuit of sustainable finance initiatives underscores Oman's unwavering commitment to maintaining its upward growth trajectory amid global economic challenges.”

Asyad Group wins award for energy transition



Winners receive their trophies during the EIC Awards in Dubai.

MUSCAT: Asyad Group, Oman's leading global integrated logistics provider, has been named the recipient of the Energy Industries Council's Survive & Thrive Awards 2023 in the Middle East, Africa & CIS region - Energy Transition & Sustainability category.

The Survive & Thrive Awards recognise the exceptional contributions and innovations within the global energy supply chain. Asyad Group's commitment to advancing sustainability and catalysing transformative change within the industry perfectly aligns with the core principles of the awards.

The ceremony was held at Queen Elizabeth 2 in Dubai, and the award was received by Ahmed Al Rawahi, ASYAD Group's Quality, Health, Safety, Security & Environment Manager. Ryan McPherson, EIC's Regional Director for Middle East, Africa & CIS, commended Asyad's achievements, stating, “Asyad's remarkable dedication to promoting sustainable practices

throughout the energy supply chain has rightfully earned them this prestigious recognition. Their commitment to excellence serves as a beacon of inspiration for the entire industry.

We take immense pride in presenting Asyad Group with the Survive & Thrive Award in the Energy Transition & Sustainability Category.”

Asyad Group also received nominations in the Transformation and Culture categories. The awards underwent rigorous evaluation by a panel of international judges of distinguished repute.

To celebrate excellence within the energy supply chain, EIC has expanded its annual awards programme to encompass multiple regions. This expansion complements the flagship event, the EIC National Awards Dinner, scheduled for October 19, 2023, in London. Regional offices in South America, North America, and the Middle East inaugurated their award ceremonies on September 14th.

Shrink in UK economy raises fear of recession



ANDY JALIL
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The author is our
correspondent based in the
UK

A review of figures showed the economy shrank by 0.5 per cent in July, increasing the chance of recession going into a general election year.

The increase of GDP of 0.5 per cent in the month of June was reversed by the month-on-month fall of 0.5 per cent in July which was the biggest decline since December, with retreat in production, construction and services sectors.

Government Minister, Maria Caulfield conceded that the contraction was “disappointing” but said that the pivotal services sector was affected by strikes by teachers and doctors, and by poor weather conditions in July.

After speculation that the government would backslide on boosting pensions next year

given high rates of inflation and earnings, Caulfield also insisted that the triple lock on pensions was “absolutely” safe under the Conservatives for this year and 2024.

Finance Minister (chancellor)

Jeremy Hunt said: “Only by halving inflation can we deliver the sustainable growth and pay rises that the country needs.”

He added: “But there are many reasons to be confident about the future”, following revisions to past GDP data that showed the economy came out from the pandemic in a much better state than previously expected.

GDP increased by 0.2 per cent in the three months to July, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Opposition politicians, however, were critical about the economic management of Rishi Sunak’s government with all main parties getting organised for their annual conferences.

Labour Party’s shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves, said: “This is another dismal day for growth, and the British

economy remains hostage to the Conservatives’ low growth trap that is leaving the working people worse off.”

She added: “After 13 years of instability, the Conservatives have left the British economy weaker and families having to cope with higher taxes, higher mortgages and higher food and energy bills”.

Any slowdown could, however, help the Prime Minister’s pre-election drive to curb high inflation. Some analysts said that Britain could already be in recession. Chief UK economist at Capital Economics, Paul Dales, noted the July fall was more than double than expected on the markets, and “could possibly mean that the mild recession we have been expecting has begun.”

He added: “Even so, with wage growth still uncomfortably strong, we suspect the Bank of

England will still raise interest rates one final time next week, from 5.25 per cent to 5.50 per cent.” European strategist at Raymond James Investment Services, Jeremy Barstone-Carr, said: “The GDP drop of 0.5 per cent provides further evidence that the UK economy’s resilience is starting to wane and suggests a shallow recession is increasingly likely over the remainder of the year.”

The ONS said the sector for human health and social work activities recorded a 2.1 per cent decline in July owing to industrial action by NHS senior doctors and radiographers, coupled with more strikes by junior doctors.

The education sector also recorded a 1.1 per cent fall with teachers staging two days of strikes. Torrential rain also ravaged the retail sector where

output was down 1.2 per cent as shoppers avoided the High Street.

However, this was partially offset by the sports activities and amusement and recreation activities sector, which surged 12.4 per cent in the month.

Analysts said the much hyped shared release of the Barbie and Oppenheimer films on 21 July in a week of heavy rain was a welcome boost to the economy. The UK box office took £160 million in July up 78 per cent on June and 27 per cent ahead of July 2022.

Just two weeks after release Barbie had brought in £59.6 million. Oppenheimer took £33.7 million. The Odeon cinema chain reported more than one million movie fans paid to see the two releases in just four days making it the biggest weekend since reopening after the pandemic.

How technology can supercharge quality assurance in higher education



DR ALI AL BIMANI

The writer is Vice Chancellor
of the National University of
Science and Technology in
Oman

Quality assurance in higher education is vital to Oman’s Vision to become a knowledge-based society. To achieve this goal, the National University of Science and Technology in Oman has outlined some essential steps to enhance the quality of higher education in the country.

One of the most crucial steps that we need to take is to foster broad partnerships with various stakeholders, such as public and private partnerships (PPPs), to improve talent development outcomes.

This is essential to update and align the curricula with the current and future needs of industry and society. Partnerships with different sectors can provide students with practical learning opportunities, research collaborations, and community engagement.

For instance, by working with industries and local communities, students can gain exposure to real-world problems and solutions and develop relevant and in-demand skills in the market. Such partnerships can also help academic institutions to keep up with the changing needs of society and the economy and to ensure that their programmes are responsive and adaptive.

This is especially important in the tech industry, which faces an acute ICT skills shortage. According to a recent survey, 61 per cent of global IT decision-makers cited ICT skills as the biggest challenge facing the tech sector.

To address this gap, leading ICT firms have launched various talent development initiatives to bridge the gap between academia and industry. In Oman, Huawei, the global ICT giant, has been a pioneer in this field, partnering with the Oman government, educational institutes and industry leaders to jointly contribute towards achieving Oman’s Vision 2040.

For instance, the company has established the Huawei ICT Academy across Oman, in partnership with local universities, which introduces the

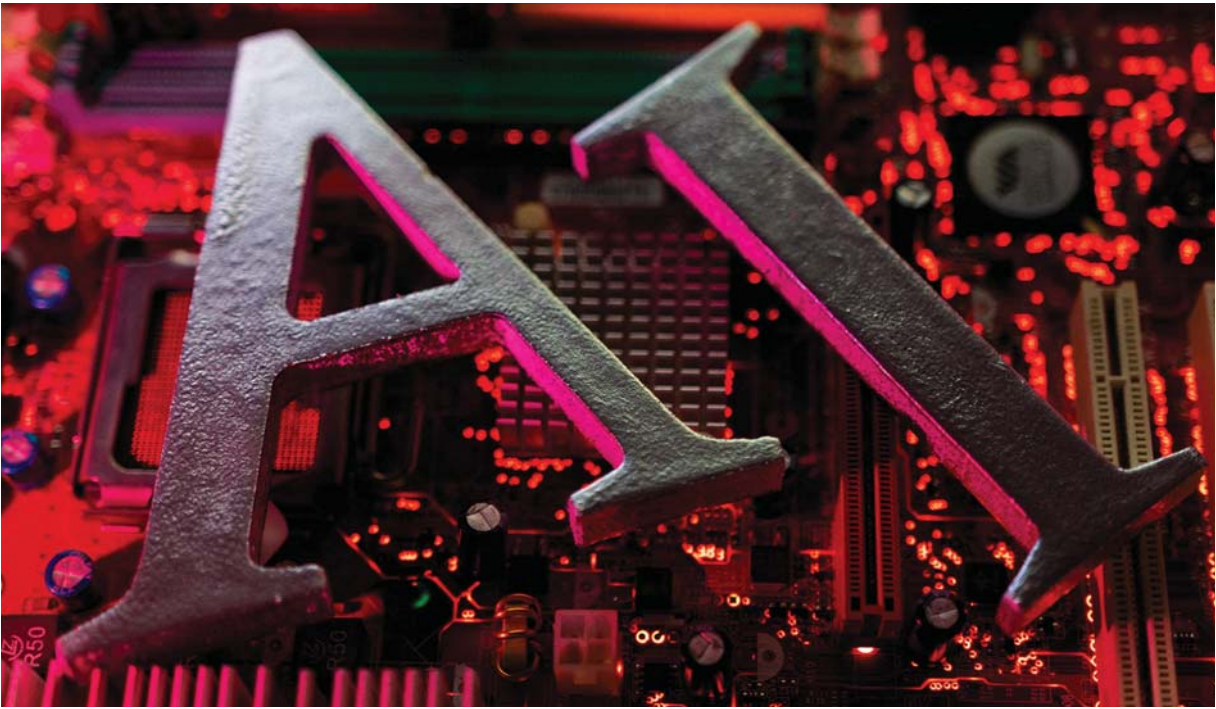
students to the latest technologies, provides them an opportunity to gain industry certification, and enhances their employability. In Oman, Huawei ICT Academies support 45,000 students annually.

The establishment of the College of Advanced Technology by the National University (NU) in 2023, represents a significant and forward-thinking initiative aimed at elevating the quality of higher education in the country through the strategic integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

This specialised institution is poised to serve as a beacon of innovation and expertise in the field of technology-driven education. By providing cutting-edge programmes, state-of-the-art infrastructure, and a curriculum attuned to the evolving demands of the digital age, NU’s College of Advanced Technology will empower students with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in the ICT sector.

Furthermore, this initiative is expected to catalyse research and development in ICT, foster industry-academia partnerships, and enhance Oman’s position as a regional hub for technological excellence, ultimately contributing to a higher standard of education and bolstering the nation’s knowledge-based economy.

Secondly, developing up-to-date, industry-aligned curricula that equip students with practical skills and knowledge



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

relevant to current and future job markets will enhance our higher education quality. This requires regular curriculum reviews, collaboration with industry experts, and integration of emerging technologies into teaching and learning. By doing so, graduates can be well-prepared for the demands of the workforce and have a competitive edge in the market.

Earlier this year, the government announced that it would support the Huawei certification programme for the next five years, which will help accelerate the development of the next generation of ICT talent.

The Ministry also announced an incentive programme for Omani students who have received the Huawei Certified ICT Associate (HCIA) or Huawei Certified ICT Expert (HCIE) certification. In addition, Omantel will provide students with \$450,000 in financial incentives for five years.

The third factor that influences the quality of higher education is the faculty. A strong and qualified faculty is essential for delivering high-quality education, conducting impactful research, and fostering a culture of innovation and intellectual curiosity.

Therefore, investing in faculty development programmes, encouraging research activities,

and providing opportunities for faculty to stay updated in their respective fields and engage in interdisciplinary research and scientific publications can contribute to elevating the overall quality of higher education institutions and creating a more vibrant academic environment.

Fourthly, the quality of higher education also depends on the delivery mode and the learning experience. In light of advanced technologies and new customers’ requirements, there is a need for a new approach to education delivery, focusing on student-centered learning and support.

Providing state-of-the-art facilities, modern technologies, and online learning/smart classroom resources can significantly enhance the learning experience. Investment in updated laboratories, libraries, and digital infrastructure supports effective teaching, research, and collaboration.

Additionally, integrating e-learning platforms and virtual classrooms can enable flexible and accessible education, especially in the face of unforeseen challenges like the Covid-19 pandemic. E-learning also allows students to access diverse and high-quality courses from anywhere globally.

One of the examples of how technology can support quality education is Huawei’s partnership with Omantel, Oman’s leading

service provider. The two entities have established a regional ICT training centre to support talent development in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Huawei Regional ICT Training Center aims to advance new technologies further and support achieving Oman’s Vision 2040, where building a knowledge-based economy is a crucial pillar. Located at the Omantel headquarters in Muscat, the Huawei Training Center houses various other tech facilities, including the Omantel 5G Exhibition hall, Huawei HQ online exhibition hall, and the Huawei ICT Academy in Oman. The Huawei ICT Training Center will also collaborate with entities such as the Centre for Research and Innovation and the Duqm 5G Exhibition Hall.

Fifthly, establishing robust quality assurance mechanisms and adhering to local and international accreditation standards are critical for maintaining and improving higher education quality. Regular evaluations, internal quality audits, and external accreditation reviews help institutions identify areas for improvement and ensure adherence to globally recognised benchmarks of excellence.

Oman has demonstrated a strong commitment to improving the quality of higher education, such as that at the

ESTABLISHING ROBUST
QUALITY ASSURANCE
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HELP INSTITUTIONS
IDENTIFY AREAS FOR
IMPROVEMENT AND
ENSURE ADHERENCE TO
GLOBALLY RECOGNISED
BENCHMARKS OF
EXCELLENCE.

National University of Science and Technology, by effectively embedding Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into its educational landscape.

Through substantial investments in ICT infrastructure, e-learning platforms, digital resources, and faculty development, Oman has successfully modernised its higher education system.

This integration has not only enhanced the accessibility and flexibility of education but has also fostered research and innovation, global collaboration, and administrative efficiency.

Oman’s dedication to leveraging ICT for educational advancement underscores its aspirations to provide a high-quality, globally competitive higher education experience that aligns with the demands of the digital era, ultimately contributing to the nation’s socio-economic growth, sustainability and development.

Quality assurance in higher education is essential for Oman’s Vision 2040 to become a knowledge-based society. By fostering broad partnerships with various sectors and updating and aligning curricula with industry needs, higher education institutions can improve talent development outcomes and contribute to Oman’s social and economic development.

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OMANI male, Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering. I live in Muscat and seek a job opportunity anywhere in Oman where I can make the best of my potential, and contribute to the organisation's growth. Contact: 96629018. E-mail: amur.alrashdi96@gmail.com

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

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HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTRATORS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for Sohar, today administered the oath of office to the newly appointed Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for Sohar, Sayed Khalifa bin

Sayed bin Khalifa bin Binali, and Chairman of the Administrative and Judicial Court, Sayed Khalifa bin

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for Sohar, today administered the oath of office to the newly appointed Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for Sohar, Sayed Khalifa bin

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for Sohar, today administered the oath of office to the newly appointed Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for Sohar, Sayed Khalifa bin

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

MUSCAT: The frequent cases of uncertainty with health personnel and the spread of the virus have led to the implementation of strict measures to prevent the spread of the virus.

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

MUSCAT: To mark the 50th anniversary of the Omani Renaissance and to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Omani Renaissance, the Ministry of Finance has issued a new 50 Omani banknote.

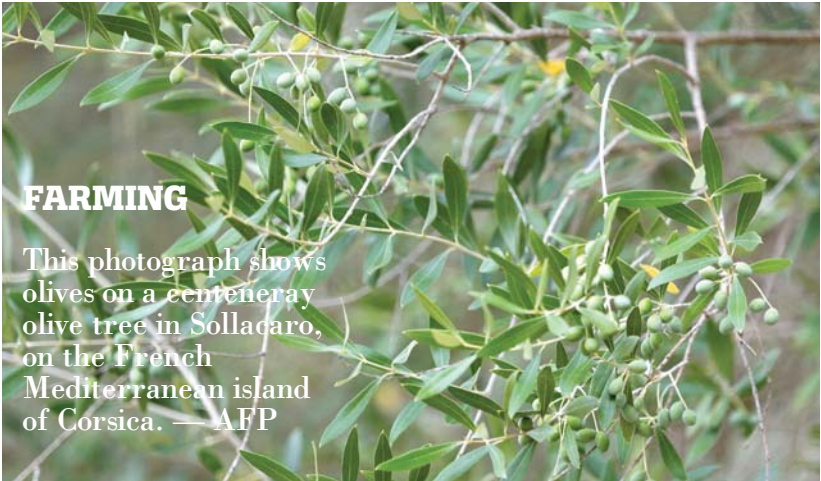
SOME PEOPLE'S NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES

MUSCAT: In some cases, it is necessary to follow the guidelines that health authorities say are necessary to keep the coronavirus from spreading, many

are not. In these critical moments of uncertainty with health personnel and the spread of the virus, we should discipline ourselves.

score away a group of people at a soccer game in Sohar. The Supreme Committee and the Ministry of Health have said it is necessary to follow the guidelines that health authorities say are necessary to keep the coronavirus from spreading, many

score away a group of people at a soccer game in Sohar. The Supreme Committee and the Ministry of Health have said it is necessary to follow the guidelines that health authorities say are necessary to keep the coronavirus from spreading, many



FARMING

This photograph shows olives on a centeneray olive tree in Solladaro, on the French Mediterranean island of Corsica. — AFP



CULTURE

A classical Thai dancer performs during an event to celebrate Si Thep historical park's nomination in the UNESCO's cultural world heritage list, at the National Museum of Siam in Bangkok. — AFP



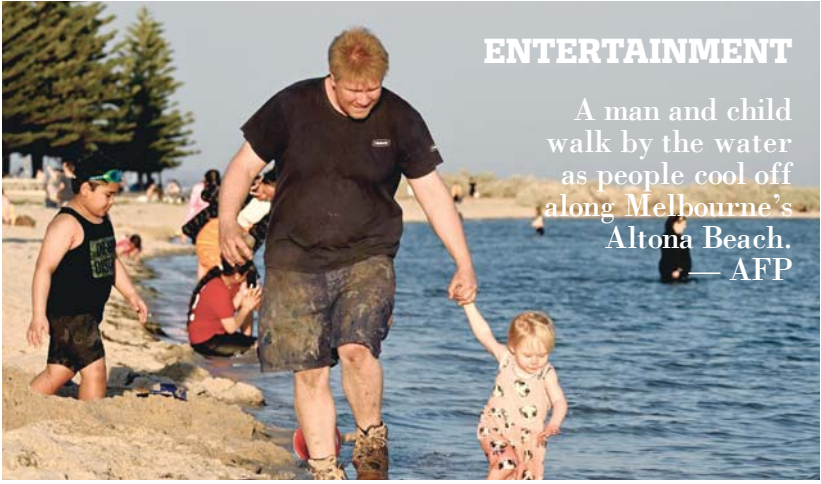
FILM

French actor Paul Kircher poses during a photocall for the film "Le Regne Animal" at the 76th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP



FOOD

A vendor waits for customers at the Da Nyin Gone vegetable wholesale market in Yangon. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

A man and child walk by the water as people cool off along Melbourne's Altona Beach. — AFP

art & life

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Al Din Theatre to host international festival

File - Zuha Qader and Abdul Hhakeem al Salhi (Options in Wartime), Al Din Theatre festival 2018.

BY Khalid Al Balushi
@khalid_albalushi94

Established in 1994, Oman's Al Din Theatre for Culture and Art has been pushing the boundaries and richness of local theatre. Having received the Royal Order of Merit for Culture, Science, Arts and Literature, second class, and crowned with the Sultan Qaboos Award for Culture, Arts, and Literature for the year 2022, the group is anticipated to bring a new era of excitement.

The group is busy these days with a series of preparations as they are planning to host a spectacular international theatre festival right here in the Sultanate of Oman.

Under the banner of "Gathering World in Oman," this international festival beckons theatre enthusiasts

from around the globe, promising an unforgettable experience for audiences of all ages and discerning tastes.

From October 22nd to the month's end, the Oman Automobile Association will transform into a hub of artistic innovation, with a dazzling lineup that spans adult theatre, children's productions, and spellbinding street performances.

The upcoming international theatre festival of Al Din Theatre will feature three distinct theatrical styles: adult theatre, kids theatre, and street theatre. It's a tapestry of entertainment woven from the threads of more than 20 countries, with participants donning various hats - actors, guests, and discerning judges of the theatrical tapestry.

Beyond the performances, the festival will unfurl a series of meticulously curat-



FILE - HH Taghreed bint Turki accompanied by Abdelmoneim al Hasani at Al Din Theatre festival exhibition 2018.

ed workshops and interactive sessions. These sessions are tailor-made, offering a golden gateway for aspiring artists, young theatre enthusiasts, and street performers to imbibe wisdom from industry luminaries, further nurturing their ardour for the performing arts.

While the spotlight will undoubtedly be on Oman's burgeoning cultural scene, the festival's overarching

mission is to transcend borders. It's a platform that champions artistic expression and fosters profound cultural exchanges. Oman's homegrown talents will be engaging with a global ensemble, bringing the world to their doorstep. Amidst the performances, the festival will serve as a bridge, connecting Oman's heritage with the cultures of the world, and attracting cultural tourists through exhibitions and



FILE -The late Omani actress Shamaa Mohammed in the judging session with the Kuwaiti actress Muna Shaddad (Street Theatre) 2018

immersive experiences.

Theatre in Oman often explores themes that resonate with the local audience, including heritage preservation, cultural identity, and contemporary challenges. These narratives draw from Omani history, folklore, and daily life, creating a connection between the performers and their audience.

In recent years, Oman has witnessed a surge in contemporary theatre productions.

The Royal Opera House Muscat has played a pivotal role in promoting theatrical arts by hosting international and local performances. Additionally, various independent theatre groups and talented playwrights have emerged, breathing new life into Oman's theatre landscape. Their works often address pertinent social issues, reflecting the changing dynamics of Omani society.



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Young people in China are now venturing into ceramics and loving the freedom that it allows them.

Chinese youth trade city-living for ceramics

CHINA'S PORCELAIN CAPITAL Jingdezhen is attracting droves of young people drawn to the city of artisans in search of an escape from the urban rat race among its ceramics workshops. The picturesque eastern city home to China's best-known porcelain has seen an influx of young professionals seeking to learn an ancient art taught there for more than a thousand years. Times are tough for young people in China, with youth unemployment at

record highs, sluggish economic growth and, for many, the opportunities their parents' generation enjoyed are simply not attainable. But in Jingdezhen they find something different: low rent, a slower pace of life and a proximity to nature in a city of just 1.6 million inhabitants, very small by Chinese standards. From her one-bedroom apartment on the seventh floor, He Yun, a 28-year-old illustrator, enjoys a panoramic view of the surrounding green hills for just 500 yuan (\$68) a month.

She arrived in Jingdezhen in June after being laid off and found a place where she didn't feel "any pressure". "I came because on social media everyone was saying that it was a great place for craft fans, like me, and that there was a scent of freedom," she said. "When I lost my job, I stayed at home and got depressed. But once I arrived here, I found that it's super easy to make friends." "No more need to set the alarm in the morning," she smiled. "I have zero pressure now!"

LOOKING FOR MEANING A typical day for He starts with a laid-back breakfast, before heading to a workshop to make her ceramic candle holders and necklaces, which are then fired in one of the city's many kilns. "At the end of the afternoon, we go to the surrounding villages and swim in the streams to relax," she said. "I put my work on Xiaohongshu" — a Chinese app similar to Instagram — "where people contact me to buy. But



we mainly sell at the market," she said. Between trendy cafes, boutiques and stands offer glasses, bowls, cups, teapots, plates, necklaces or earrings. Chen Jia, 24 with dyed red hair, makes feminist pendants in the shape of sanitary napkins. A music graduate who arrived in June, her first jobs as a piano teacher and in a milk tea shop and cafe weren't to her liking. "I am looking for meaning in my life," she said. "Many young people today no longer want to clock in at work at a fixed time." China's transformative economic rise was built on the backs of a growing middle class, who were promised they could enjoy the trappings of prosperity and give their children a better life if they worked hard enough. But the country's millennials and Gen Z have faced altogether different prospects: youth unemployment has reached a record level, exceeding 20 per cent according to official figures, and pay is low. It's in that context that the "tang-ping" counterculture has thrived. Literally meaning "lying flat", it's come to represent a general rejection of society's expectations, giving up a great career and money to concentrate on a simple life and pleasures. And Jingdezhen has become a



haven for those seeking just that. At the Dashu pottery school, around 20 students work with clay on their pottery wheels or chat as they sip iced lattes. Training costs 4,500 yuan a month (\$617), a very affordable price. "Many young people cannot find work" explained the 39-year-old director who calls herself Anna. "They come here to reduce their anxiety." "Ceramics are very accessible. In two weeks, they can produce simple works and sell them at markets."

NEW LIFE One of them, Guo Yiyang, 27, resigned in March from a well-paid job as a computer programmer. After working overtime for years, he said he wanted to "take a breather". "In big cities... you just work. You don't have your own life," he said, adding he "never again" sees himself working that way. "The desire for another way of life" is also what motivated Xiao Fei, 27, a former interior designer who resigned and came to Jingdezhen in June. "I didn't have time for myself," she said. "I came home tired and I didn't want to talk to others." "I feel happier, more free and I meet people who have the same ideals."

— AFP

ENTERTAINMENT

5 can't-miss movies from the Toronto film fest

THE TORONTO INTERNATIONAL Film Festival wrapped up on Sunday, after a whirlwind 10 days chock full of world premieres, special presentations, talks with key film-makers and TV debuts. "American Fiction" won the coveted People's Choice Award, which has in the past helped to predict Oscars success. The following is a look at some of the key movies shown in Toronto:

AMERICAN FICTION Which Black stories are told in American culture? Who decides? Those are some of the provocative questions addressed in Cord Jefferson's debut feature "American Fiction," a searing satire starring Jeffrey Wright of "Westworld" fame.

The film, which premiered in Toronto, tells the story of Thelonious "Monk" Ellison (Wright), an African American author and university professor who is told by his publishers that his writing isn't "Black enough." So he writes a novel using a pseudonym that features a litany of clichés about being Black. Of course, the book is a monster hit, movie producers want to adapt it, and Ellison must navigate the fallout from his own actions. Adapted from Percival Everett's novel "Erasure," the movie from the 41-year-old Jefferson — an Emmy-winning writer who has worked on shows like "Succession" and "Watchmen" — also stars Issa Rae, Sterling K Brown and Tracee Ellis Ross. Awards prediction site Gold Derby has Wright and Jefferson among the early Oscar contenders for best actor and best adapted screenplay. But the win in Toronto could boost its Academy Award stock. The film opens in North America in November.

THE HOLDOVERS Director Alexander Payne of "Sideways" fame is a perennial Oscars favourite, and he certainly has entered the awards conversation with his latest effort, 1970s-set



Fans of TIFF having their photo taken in front of the logo. — AFP

dramedy "The Holdovers," on which he reunited with Paul Giamatti. Giamatti plays Paul Hunham, a cantankerous prep school teacher forced to remain on campus over the year-end holidays to look after the "holdovers" — students with nowhere to go for the vacation. Eventually, he is left with just one teen: Angus (newcomer Dominic Sessa), who is navigating family issues. The pair, along with cafeteria manager Mary (Da'Vine Joy Randolph), build their own unlikely family over the course of

the holiday. Gold Derby lists "The Holdovers" — the first runner-up in Toronto — among the early top Oscar contenders for best picture, director, original screenplay, actor (Giamatti) and supporting actress (Randolph). The heartwarming movie, which had its world premiere at the Telluride festival before screening in Toronto, opens in US theatres in November.

THE BOY AND THE HERON Is Japanese animation master

Hayao Miyazaki finished making feature-length films? The answer is unclear, but if "The Boy and the Heron" is indeed his last, the 82-year-old Studio Ghibli legend will have gone out on a high note. The film — a meditation on love, loss and the horrors of World War II — was a hot ticket in Toronto, where it had its international premiere after opening in Japan in mid-July. The semi-autobiographical movie, Miyazaki's first in a decade, was the second runner-up for the TIFF People's Choice Award. The film follows young Mahito as he moves with his father to the countryside after his mother perishes in the fire-bombing of Tokyo. After meeting a talking heron, he enters a surreal and perilous fantasy world in search of his mom. "The Boy and the Heron" opens in December in the United States.

DUMB MONEY "Dumb Money," which earned rousing applause at its world premiere, recounts the stranger-than-fiction story of the amateur investors who turned shopping mall video game store GameStop into a Wall Street phenomenon in 2021. The film, which opened in select North American cities on Friday,

follows Keith Gill (Paul Dano), who invested his life savings in GameStop and posted on social media about it under the username "Roaring Kitty." Other small-time investors took Gill's lead as they communicated on Reddit, and the so-called "meme stock" blew up amid wild trading in January 2021. The surge was seen as driven at least in part by retail investors who banded together to retaliate against short sellers like hedge fund billionaire Gabe Plotkin (Seth Rogen).

IN RESTLESS DREAMS: THE MUSIC OF PAUL SIMON If you're a music fan, look no farther than Alex Gibney's engrossing deep-dive into the career of the legendary Paul Simon, from his fraught partnership with Art Garfunkel to his solo career and embrace of world music. The movie splices together archival images with new interviews in which the 81-year-old folk-rock icon reveals how he is coping with deafness in his left ear. It also tracks the development of his latest album, "Seven Psalms," which was released in May. The film, which will also screen at the London Film Festival, does not yet have a release date. — AFP



HEALTH

Does Vitamin C actually help your skin?



IF YOU'VE SPENT time exploring the skin-care side of TikTok, you know that dermatologists love to tout the benefits of vitamin C serums and creams. They claim the vitamin can brighten and firm the skin, protect it from sun and environmental damage, diminish dark spots, and even reduce the signs of aging.

"All of its various benefits make it a top recommendation for most dermatologists," said Dr. Fatima Fahs, a dermatologist in Michigan.

Yet, if you dig into the research on how vitamin C actually affects the skin, a different picture emerges. In a 2021 review published in The Journal of Cosmetic Dermatology, for instance, Fahs and her colleagues evaluated how effective various vitamin C formulations were at improving skin health. They concluded that although some formulations seemed to benefit the skin, the overall results were mixed.

The problem is that although vitamin C is probably good for the skin, it's hard to make a product that works the way it's supposed to.

HOW VITAMIN C WORKS — IN THEORY

Research suggests that when vitamin C penetrates the skin, it protects and improves it in various ways.

It's an antioxidant, so it can neutralize damaging molecules called free radicals, which "accelerate signs of aging," said Dr. Whitney Bowe, a dermatologist in New York City.

Vitamin C can also stimulate the skin's production of collagen, a protein that increases skin firmness and elasticity and helps keep it plump and hydrated. Because of this, "using a powerful, stable vitamin C serum consistently over time can help smooth out the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles," Bowe said.

Finally, vitamin C can brighten dark spots because it inhibits an enzyme called tyrosinase that causes skin discoloration, Bowe said. Although there has been little research on how effectively vitamin C does this, a small study published in 1996 found that vitamin C reduced the appearance of dark skin patches or age-related freckles in 19 out of 34 people who used it.

WHY SOME PRODUCTS DON'T WORK

Some vitamin C products aren't made in ways that ensure that the vitamin actually gets into the skin and does its job. "You really have to understand how to formulate them and how to package them properly," and not all companies get that right, said Dr. Patricia Farris, a dermatologist in

Metairie, Louisiana.

Vitamin C is an unstable molecule and can easily break down into a different molecule that doesn't help the skin, Bowe said. For example, L-ascorbic acid, a form of vitamin C found in many skin-care products, degrades when it is exposed to heat, a high pH or sunlight, she said — which can happen during transit and storage.

Even if the vitamin C in a product remains stable, it may not penetrate the skin deeply enough to benefit it. The skin's outermost layer repels water-loving molecules such as L-ascorbic acid — and that means that the molecule may not get sufficiently absorbed, Bowe said.

Other derivatives of vitamin C, such as tetrahexyldecyl ascorbate and tetra-isopalmitoyl ascorbic acid, have a different chemistry and can more easily penetrate the skin's outer layer, which is why some products contain those forms of the vitamin instead, Bowe said. Those formulations can also be gentler on the skin.

But these forms of vitamin C are relatively new and do not have as much research supporting their benefits, Fahs said. "The reality is: Human studies showing efficacy are still very limited," she said.

PICKING A PRODUCT

If you are considering a vita-

min C product that contains L-ascorbic acid, Fahs recommended looking for a formulation that also contains vitamin E and ferulic acid, both of which can improve the vitamin's stability and how well it penetrates the skin.

To maximize the chance that a vitamin C product will work, opt for one that is housed in opaque packaging and uses a pump applicator rather than a dropper, Bowe said. These features help prevent the vitamin C from degrading.

Farris recommended using vitamin C products made by trusted larger skin-care companies, such as SkinCeuticals, which are more likely to perform clinical testing for efficacy than smaller cosmetics companies.

Because L-ascorbic acid can cause irritation, people with sensitive skin or rosacea may want to use a product that contains one of the gentler forms of vitamin C, such as tetrahexyldecyl ascorbate, Fahs said.

Still confused about what, if anything, to buy? Talk to a dermatologist, Bowe said, although some doctors may be more knowledgeable about the research than others.

"Don't be afraid to ask questions to optimize your skin care," she said. "You deserve to find the products that work best for your skin's needs."

—NYT



Youtube blocks Russell Brand from making money through its platform

YOUTUBE SUSPENDED comedian and actor Russell Brand on Tuesday from making money from videos posted to the social media platform, three days after British news organizations published an investigation in which several women accused Brand of assault.



Russell Brand sitting on the stage

The channel is a potentially significant source of income for Brand, who was earning money through advertisements and paid promotions.

A spokesperson for YouTube said in an email that Brand, whose channel on the platform has 6.6 million subscribers, was suspended for violating YouTube's "creator responsibility policy."

"If a creator's off-platform behavior harms our users, employees or ecosystem, we take action to protect the community," the spokesperson said.

The spokesperson did not respond to an inquiry about how long the suspension would last.

Brand on Friday posted a clip to his channel denying what he called "serious criminal allegations." That statement was released the day before The Times of London and Sunday Times of London newspapers, and Dispatches, a TV program, published their joint investigation in which four women accused Brand of assault, including one accusation of abuse.

Brand once was a TV and radio star in Britain and in 2007 published a bestselling memoir. He had a brief Hollywood career that included a role in the 2008 rom-com "Forgetting Sarah Marshall," but he has lately pivoted to making online videos, running wellness events and touring comedy shows.

While Brand's earlier stand-up routines had a broadly left-wing focus, skewering the British establishment and examining subjects like social inequality, he has recently reoriented his output toward conservative talking points, often seeming to target an American audience. On YouTube, recent videos have included Brand discussing his skepticism toward COVID-19 vaccines and dissecting his own appearances on Fox News.

Brand also hosts a show on Rumble, a social media network associated with conservative voices, but he did not appear for a scheduled broadcast Monday. — NYT