

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS APPROVE PROMOTION FOR STATE EMPLOYEES

H M R E A F F I R M S S O L I D A R I T Y W I T H P A L E S T I N I A N S

SATISFACTION WITH FISCAL PERFORMANCE OVER THE PAST 3 YEARS

REVIEW OF 2024 DRAFT BUDGET IN CONSISTENT WITH PLAN GOALS

SPORTS CITY TO GROOM YOUTH FOR SUBSEQUENT GENERATIONS

CITIZENS TOLD TO TAKE PART IN MAJLIS ASH'SHURA ELECTIONS



DEVELOPING MEDIA SECTOR TO REALISE NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

PROMOTION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AS PER SCHEDULED PLAN

AFFIRMS OMAN'S SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

CALL FOR DE-ESCALATION; END ATTACKS ON CHILDREN, INNOCENTS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik chairs a meeting of the Council of Ministers at Al Barakah Palace on Wednesday.

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik chaired a meeting of the Council of Ministers at Al Barakah Palace on Wednesday. At the outset of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan gave thanks and praise to the Almighty Allah for the bounties of prosperity and stability. He prayed to the Almighty to perpetuate these bounties on Oman, to grant all health and to culminate their endeavours in success.

Then, His Majesty the Sultan reviewed domestic affairs. He expressed his satisfaction with Oman's fiscal performance over the past three years. He valued the good outcomes

that, he said, strongly contributed to consolidating the growth of the gross domestic product (GDP), upgrading the country's financial and economic indicators and generating some financial surplus that will be utilised in meeting a number economic and social priorities.

To this end, the Council of Ministers reviewed the draft of the State's Budget 2024 deemed consistent with the goals of the 10th Five-Year Plan.

In affirmation of his Royal attention to the care and welfare of youth — including proper grooming of youth as the best asset for subsequent generations, His Majesty the Sultan gave

directives to begin steps to carry out a project for establishing an integrated Sports City capable of hosting regional and international tournaments and competitions.

In this context, His Majesty the Sultan gave directives to develop infrastructure for camel races, serving as one of major sports events to which the activities of a large number of citizens are linked. These include furnishing main racecourses in the governorates of Oman in coordination with offices of governors and Oman Camel Racing Federation. This is envisaged to activate tourism activities in the governorates.

UPGRADING OF SERVICES

Then, His Majesty the Sultan reviewed the outcomes of assessment of all government units and their rates of performance during the first half of 2023. He commended the tangible progress in the performance of most government units. He also gave directives to exert more efforts and sustain them over the upcoming period to help raise the standard of government performance, with emphasis on improving the governance of procedures, organising business practice, gaining the confidence of beneficiaries and upgrading services.

The Council of Ministers hailed preparations for the Majlis Ash'shura's elections that were undertaken by the Ministry of Interior and all departments concerned, to elect members for the Majlis Ash'shura's 10th Term.

In this context, His Majesty the Sultan underscored the need for all citizens' dedicated participation in the elections and the selection of competent members who are capable of imparting their expertise, since the power of the Majlis Ash'shura is strongly linked to the those who would be elected by the voters.

TURN TO P2

As war rages, Israeli forces kill 27 Palestinians in West Bank

RAMALLAH: As Israel declared war on Hamas and pounded Gaza following Saturday's devastating attack by the movement, violence has risen in the occupied West Bank, risking escalation after more than a year of continuous flare-ups.

Israeli security forces have killed at least 27 Palestinians during clashes in the West Bank since Saturday, as Palestinians called on people in the Palestinian territory to join the fight against Israel's occupation.

On Wednesday, three Palestinians were shot dead by Israeli security forces and masked Jewish settlers in Qusra village near the northern West Bank city of Nablus, the Palestinian Foreign Ministry said, after the Israeli army said it was supplying licensed citizens with thousands of firearms "to bolster defence systems" across the country.

The Israeli military has said it is prepared for an escalation in the West Bank and its forces have



A girl attends a demonstration in support of Gaza at the Bourj Barajne Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut on Wednesday. – AFP

been on high alert, carrying out arrests and thwarting possible attacks.

By Wednesday, military checkpoints remained closed and roads in several parts of the West Bank were blocked with mounds of dirt, restricting movement.

After hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced out of their homes in the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation, Palestinians have sought an independent state in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza.

That prospect seems as far away as ever amid expanding Israeli settlements on Palestinian land, cutting communities from each other, and a freeze in US-sponsored negotiations.

Human rights groups have said Israeli authorities have systematically repressed Palestinians for decades in policies that amount to apartheid and since 2007 have imposed a crushing land, air and sea closure on Gaza's population.

MORE REPORTS ON P5



HM PRESIDES OVER CABINET MEETING



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq presided over the Council of Ministers meeting at Al Barakah Palace on Wednesday.



COUNCIL OF MINISTERS APPROVE PROMOTION FOR STATE EMPLOYEES

FROM PAGE 1

NATIONAL ACTION

This approach assumes significance because the upcoming stage of national action calls for combining all efforts and utilising innovative and modern methods in order to safeguard the country's gains and accomplishments, contribute to strategic planning and push the march of progress forward.

In line with rapid growth seen in all segments of the media sector, notably the updates to modern media platforms, the Council of Ministers underlined the importance of developing this sector and devising active plans to take advantage

of its developments in a manner that contributes to realising the national objectives of Omani media.

PROMOTIONS

The Council of Ministers approved the promotion of Omani employees at units of the State's Administrative Apparatus (seniors of 2013 to 2016), so that the employees could access higher grades during 2024 and 2025, in accordance with the scheduled programme.

This was pursuant to the attention accorded by His Majesty the Sultan to social affairs and in complementation of the system of assessment of individual performance of employees and institutional achievement with a view

to upgrading the overall government performance, disseminating the 'culture of performance' and developing the spirit of innovation and excellence.

After the Council of Ministers' reviewing a progress report about Al Batinah Coastal Road project, His Majesty the Sultan gave directives to accelerate the steps undertaken by the Council of Ministers to address the challenges and difficulties facing the implementation of the project. The Royal directives also point to finalising related cash compensation before the end of 2023.

REGIONAL AFFAIRS

Speaking about regional and international affairs, His Majesty the

Sultan reviewed the critical developments and the violence taking place in the Palestinian arena. In this context, His Majesty the Sultan reaffirmed the Sultanate of Oman's solidarity with the Palestinian people. He reiterated Oman's support for all efforts calling for de-escalation, notably cessation of attacks on children and innocent civilians.

His Majesty the Sultan also called for releasing hostages in accordance with the principles of the international humanitarian law. He urged the international community to shoulder its responsibilities by protecting civilians and lifting the illegal siege on Gaza and the rest of the Palestinian territories.

His Majesty the Sultan called for a resumption of the peace process to enable the Palestinian people to regain all their legitimate rights, notably the establishment of their independent state on the 1967 borders, with Al Quds Al Sharqiyah (East Jerusalem) as its capital, as per the principle of the Two-state Solution, the Arab Peace Initiative and all relevant UN resolutions.

At the conclusion of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan gave directives to address various matters of interest to the country and citizens.

He wished all success in realising the good of the nation and its loyal people.

— ONA



HM REVIEWS FISCAL SUCCESSES

HIS MAJESTY CHAIRS MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AT AL BARAKAH PALACE



1

PEACE FOR PALESTINE:
HIS MAJESTY
ADVOCATES
TWO-STATE
SOLUTION

2

**SOLIDARITY
WITH PALESTINE:**
CALLS FOR
PEACE AND
HUMANITARIAN
AID

3

**ECONOMIC
SUCCESS:**
HIS MAJESTY LAUDS
OMAN'S
IMPRESSIVE
GROWTH

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**OMAN'S
COMMITMENT
TO EMPLOYEE
GROWTH: OVER
62,000 PROMOTIONS
IN 2024-2025**

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**WORLD-
CLASS SPORTS
HUB: OMAN'S
INTEGRATED
SPORTS CITY
TAKES SHAPE**

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**HIS MAJESTY'S
VISION:**
A THRIVING
OMANI
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**COUNCIL
DECISION:**
PREPARATIONS
FOR SHURA
COUNCIL
ELECTIONS
HAILED

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**OMAN
GALLOPS
FORWARD:**
CAMEL RACING
INFRASTRUC-
TURE UPGRADE
IN FULL SWING

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**INVESTING IN
PROGRESS:**
RO 52 MILLION
FOR AL
BATINAH
COASTAL ROAD
COMPENSATION

10

**CAMEL RACING
REVIVAL:**
RO 6.5 MILLION
FOR 11 NEW
TRACKS
ACROSS
OMAN



HM greetings to King of Spain

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to King Felipe VI of the Kingdom of Spain on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to King Felipe VI and the people of Spain.

— ONA

Oman participates in tsunami exercise



The exercise aims to evaluate effectiveness of the early warning system against the danger of tsunamis in the Indian Ocean

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday took part in the regional exercise "IOWave23" which aims to evaluate and enhance the effectiveness of the early warning system against the danger of tsunamis in the Indian Ocean.

The drill was held at regional and national centres in countries adjoining the Indian Ocean rim.

The Sultanate of Oman was represented in the drill by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), the Ministry of Information, Royal Oman Police (ROP).

Further, the drill is considered an opportunity to test readiness in receiving tsunami warnings and assuring that all people in society are warned, as well as conducting tsunami scenarios. Further, the drill is conducted once every two years. — **ONA**

GCC culture ministers review 10-year strategy



His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham bin Tarik al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports, and Youth, extended honours to a select group of cultural, heritage, and artistic luminaries from the Gulf Cooperation Council countries

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, OCT 11

The twenty-seventh assembly of culture ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries wrapped up its three-day session in Muscat on Wednesday. This significant event addressed an array of pivotal issues, reinforcing the cultural endeavours within the GCC countries and the cultural strategy spanning from 2020 to 2030.

His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham bin Tarik al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports, and Youth, extended honours to a select group of cultural, heritage, and artistic luminaries from the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. These accolades recognised their significant contributions towards enriching the cultural landscape of the GCC countries.

Chairing the meeting, Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth for Culture, reflected on the meeting's context. He lauded the achievements, including the formulation of the



Gulf Cooperation Council meeting addressed an array of pivotal issues, reinforcing the cultural the cultural strategy spanning from 2020 to 2030

GCC countries' cultural strategy, which had inspired many projects, events, and collaborative cultural programmes.

These efforts not only adapted to the evolving regional, Arab, and global landscapes but also advanced the mission to uphold cherished cultural identities and safeguard Arab and Islamic values. This commitment to nurturing a robust intellectual and knowledge system becomes all the more crucial in a world increasingly exposed to ideas that challenge

age-old customs and traditions. Underlining the imperatives of cultural work, the meeting underscored the need for constant progression and the adoption of ambitious strategies and plans. These measures are necessary to attain the lofty strategic objectives set forth by the ministers, as they seek to foster well-rounded citizens and conscientious individuals who contribute meaningfully to holistic development. The meeting concluded with a set of recommendations.

Judicial Council exerts efforts to develop system

MUSCAT: The courts of the Sultanate of Oman handled 143,960 lawsuits during 2022, an increase of 13,000 lawsuits over 2021 figures. The lawsuits were undertaken by 59 courts, among them 45 courts of first instance, 13 courts of appeal and one Supreme Court.

As many as 8,824 were adjudicated by the Supreme Court, where 75 per cent of them were settled. The courts of appeal undertook 42,845 cases, with a final decision rate of 64 per cent, while the courts of first instance adjudicated and sealed 67 per cent of the lawsuits filed to them.

A report issued by the Supreme Judicial Council stated the council's keenness to expand the scope of judicial competencies.



The courts of the Sultanate of Oman handled 143,960 lawsuits during 2022

Accordingly, the number of judges during 2022 was increased to 324 judges, from 293 in 2021.

The report showed that the number of notary public departments in the governorates of Oman stood at 61. Notary public departments registered 194,717 new contracts by 2022, in addition to non-marriage or widowhood attestations. — **ONA**

Furniture factory fined for using old material

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahalbalushia

In a significant crackdown, authorities have seized nearly 4,000 kilograms of discarded materials, including sponges, worn cloth, used wood, and old furniture, which were being used to manufacture furniture and mattresses falsely presented as new.

The Consumer Protection Department in Al Batinah South Governorate made the seizures in Al Rustaq to curb the violations by unscrupulous suppliers and prevent the circulation of unauthorised products.

Mohammed bin Khalid bin Hamoud al Hina, Head of Market Control Department, explained the circumstances leading to the raids. During a routine inspection of various commercial establishments in the governorate, officials visited a furniture and mattress supplier's factory. There, they discovered excessive waste materials, such as wood, sponge, worn cloth, and



The practice involved recycling discarded materials through grinding

used furniture, stored without maintaining health standards. These materials were reused and processed with specialised machines and then distributed as new furniture and mattresses to specialised stores across the Sultanate of Oman.

This devious practice involved recycling these discarded materials through grinding and crushing machines, followed by shaping and cutting to produce furniture and mattresses.

Besides financial implications, such practices have health repercussions. The Consumer Protection Department took swift legal action against the culprits. The seized items were investigated promptly destroyed, and the factory was fined.

'Seekers of Horizons' bag first place in NASA Space Hackathon

SIHAM AL SAIDI
MUSCAT, OCT 11

In a remarkable demonstration of innovation and unwavering dedication, a University of Technology and Applied Sciences Rustaq team named 'Seekers of Horizons' clinched the coveted top prize at the esteemed NASA Space Applications Hackathon 2023.

This global event, hosted at the enchanting Jawharat Alwasel resort in Bidiyah, showcased their winning project, a work that not only captured imaginations but also greatly enhanced awareness about the critical climate challenges our world faces.

The 'Seekers of Horizons' consisting of Rawaa bint Abdullah al Farsiya, Safaa bint Ahmed al Alawiyah, Asmaa bint Abdulrab al Balushiya, Amjad bint Abdullah al Maawaliya, and Ahmed bin Said al Harathi, were duly honoured with the title of the finest project in the open science category, highlighting their remarkable dedication to confronting climate-related issues.

Central to their project stands a documentary film. Safa al Alawiyah, one of the team members, said, "The film is an exploration of our planet's environmental dilemmas. Through a skilful blend of literature, visual media, theatrical performances, music, and art, we have ingeniously crafted a narrative suitable for all ages. The film narrates the saga of NASA's mission to monitor our atmosphere, with a specific focus on Precursor 5-Sentinel, a mission of paramount importance in comprehending and addressing climate challenges."

The team recalled the catastrophic Australian wildfires of 2019-2020, which unleashed approximately 700 million metric tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. The global ramifications of this disaster underscored the urgent need for climate change mitigation. In this crucial endeavour, NASA played a pivotal role by deploying the 5P-Sentinel satellite, a component of the European Space Agency's Copernicus programme. This



The showcased winning project, a work that not only captured imaginations but also greatly enhanced awareness about the critical climate challenges

satellite is designed to monitor Earth's atmosphere, collecting high-quality data on various atmospheric components and pollutants, particularly those crucial for air quality, climate change monitoring, and environmental research.

The winning 'Seekers of Horizons' team is delighted over the recognition. It has ignited a

global interest in climate action. Their work sheds light on the indispensable role that space agencies like NASA play in addressing climate challenges and advancing environmental research. Their recognition also underscores their exceptional efforts in uncovering the underlying factors behind natural disasters, underscoring the urgency of

immediate climate action. The significance of the Copernicus programme's 5P-Sentinel satellite in climate monitoring cannot be overstated. It serves as an invaluable tool in comprehending the composition of our planet's atmosphere. Its focus on air quality, climate patterns, and environmental research equips scientists and policymakers

with the data necessary to make informed decisions for the betterment of our planet.

In a world with an urgent need to combat climate change, the remarkable accomplishment of the Seekers of Horizons showcases the power of innovation and the importance of global awareness. Their project earned accolades and aligned seamlessly with Oman's strategic vision. Initiatives like these, supported by organisations like NASA, arm people with the means to confront our planet's environmental challenges and secure a sustainable future.

The Seekers of Horizons have not only claimed a prestigious prize but have also etched their names as champions of climate change awareness in Oman. Their story serves as a compelling reminder that dedication and creativity can drive transformative change, with today's youth demonstrating a profound understanding of global climate issues and their significant contribution to raising awareness and advancing research on a global scale.



Youth Centre concludes 2023 summer programmes

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahalbalushia

MUSCAT: The Youth Centre celebrated the conclusion of the 2023 summer programmes in the Wilayat of Sur in the South Al Sharqiyah Governorate, under the auspices of HH Sayyid Dr Adham bin Turki al Said in the presence of Dr Yahya bin Badr al Maawali, Governor of South Al Sharqiyah, and Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth.

The closing ceremony included a visual presentation about the summer programmes presented by Maryam bint Nasser al Kharbushi, Acting CEO of the

Youth Centre.

It was a great learning experience for the participants, as the event was supported by Oman Liquefied Natural Gas Company (LNG) and other public and private partners.

The Youth Centre held more than 80 programmes from June to August 2023, benefiting 5,431 young men and women from various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

The programmes were aligned on three main tracks, the first being the talent and skills track. It took care of the talents and abilities of young people and worked to implant the idea of transferring skills and talents for the economy and additional

income for them.

The second was the consulting track, which provided consulting programmes including aspects of mental health, legal, entrepreneurial and vocational consulting, and others.

The third track was entertainment, which created events and recreational activities for young people that contribute to their recreation.

Apart from this, there were virtual programmes to reach the largest segment of young people.

The Youth Centre implemented summer programmes in all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman this year, aiming to refine and develop young people's skills and capabilities.



About 5,431 men and women benefited from programmes held by the Youth Centre from June to August



Omani hospitality champions for 2023 were honoured in which awards in 28 categories were awarded

Hospitality champions winners feted

MUSCAT: The Omani Hospitality Champions 2023 winners were honoured on Tuesday. The awards in 28 categories were shortlisted from 146 nominations received from 24 properties across Oman.

The awards function was held on October 10 at Sheraton Oman under the auspices of Sayyid Tarik bin Shabib al Said, Director, Renaissance Services, in the presence of Azzan bin Qassim al Busaïdi, Under-Secretary, Ministry of Tourism.

The event, organised jointly by Apex Media and National Hospitality Institute (NHI), is considered a morale booster for young Omanis to join the hospitality industry and take up diverse roles. It is also an acknowledgement of the professionalism shown by senior employees in varied hotels and

resorts who have shown the way for the new generation over the years.

The 28 categories included regular awards for front office, housekeeping, mastery in the kitchen, as well as special awards for 'Unsung Hero', and 'Young Hotelier of the Year'. A new category - Lifetime Achievement Award - was introduced for an individual who has dedicated a significant number of years to working successfully in the industry. The selection is done based on testimonials from his/her management and colleagues, besides guest feedback.

Laila Zakwani, Executive Director, Apex Media, said, "It was great to see the awards growing in strength every year - which was quite evident from the overwhelming number of nominations received this year.

These awards have been instituted not just to reward excellence in the hospitality industry on varied fronts, but also to encourage young Omanis to consider fulfilling careers in this field."

Robert MacLean, Principal, NHI, the architect who crafted these awards to encourage young Omanis to bring in more professionalism in this field, said, "These awards have been designed to celebrate the contributions of Omani talent in the hospitality sector in Oman. I am particularly impressed by the calibre of the nominated individuals from various properties. The judges would have had a tough time shortlisting the 'best from among the best'. I congratulate those who made it to the top this year and hope they will continue in the same spirit as well as provide an example for others to follow suit."

Muscat Clearing signs MoU with Qatar CDC

MUSCAT: Muscat Clearing and Depository (MCD) on Tuesday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Edaa (Qatar CDC) Mohammed bin Said al Abri, CEO of MCD and Shaikh Saif bin Abdullah al Thani, CEO of Edaa. The MoU aims to exchange knowledge and expertise in all fields related to central clearing and depository and settlements in a bid to keep pace with international standards.

— ONA

Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtaining of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-refundable)	
					Small and Medium Companies	Local Companies
re-announces (273/2023)	Supply and installation of air conditioners for the Omani Women's Association building in the Wilayat of Madha	Companies specialized in the field of supplying electrical, mechanical and industrial machinery and equipment and spare parts registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first, second, third or fourth degree	Tuesday 31-10-2023 02:00 PM	Monday 20-11-2023 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
381/2023	Preparing a draft business continuity policy for the Ministry of Social Development	Companies specialized in the field of information technology services / design, installation and maintenance of information programs and systems and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board with excellent or first degree	Tuesday 31-10-2023 02:00 PM	Monday 20-11-2023 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O

❖ 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 **Thursday 12/10/2023**.

❖ 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

Acting RNO chief receives Chinese Navy Fleet chief



MUSCAT: Commodore Mohammed bin Hamoud al Zedjali, Acting Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), received at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Wednesday the Commander of the Chinese Navy Fleet (156) and his accompanying military delegation.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on several naval matters of mutual interest.

— ONA

Large drug haul seized



MUSCAT: The police command in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, in cooperation with the Directorate-General of Combating Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, foiled an attempt by an international drug smuggling ring to smuggle more than 3,740,000 captagon tablets that were concealed inside wooden school furniture.

TENDER NOTICE

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

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

Tender No.	Description	Tender documents price (R.O)	Class	Last date for collection of documents	Last date for Submission of documents
100/2023/ MAFWR/HQ- 12 - Recall - 1	Maintenance Works of Storage Dams In Wadis Meda (1 , 2) and Baal Dhad, Shahab Asaib in Wilayat Rakhyut Governorate of Dhofar	25/-	Fourth	Thursday 12/10/2023	Thursday 19/10/2023

- Interested Companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.

- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.

- Preference will be given to companies whose bid includes the largest percentage of Omanization and possible purchase of national products.

- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration (regarding the exemption from submitting a bid bond in tenders).

- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.

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

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

SALE OF VEHICLE/EQUIPMENT

Leading Construction Co. in Oman intends to dispose of their used vehicles and equipment, in 'as is where is' condition. The items identified are presently located at their Barka Khazaen and will be offered for inspection to the public on 15/10/2023, 16/10/2023 and 17/10/2023 between 08:00 am to 12:00 pm and 03:00 pm to 05:00 pm. Last date for submission of closed tender is 17/10/2023 at 05:00 pm at our Al Khoud office.

Interested parties may contact at

Tel: (+968) 26983767 / 26983777/

Mobile: (+968) 91354151



Israel pounds Gaza as death tolls on both sides rise sharply

GAZA CITY: The death toll from five days of ferocious fighting between Hamas and Israel rose sharply overnight as Israel kept up its bombardment of Gaza on Wednesday after recovering the dead from the last communities near the border where Palestinian fighters had been holed up.

In Israel, the death toll from Saturday's shock cross-border attack by Hamas rose to 1,200, making it the deadliest attack in the country's 75-year history, while Gaza officials reported more than 900 people killed as Israel pounded the territory with air strikes.

Hamas said two of its top officials had been killed, while Israel's military said the bodies of roughly 1,500 Hamas fighters had been found.

Fears of a regional conflagration have surged ahead of an expected Israeli ground incursion into Gaza.

At least 30 people were killed and hundreds wounded as Israel pounded the Gaza Strip with hundreds of air strikes overnight, officials said on Wednesday.

The strikes destroyed several buildings of the Islamic University in Gaza City, a university official said.

The Israeli military confirmed it had hit dozens of Hamas targets during the night.

It said fighter jets destroyed "advanced detection systems" that Hamas used to spot military aircraft.

They also hit 80 targets in the Beit Hanoun area of the northeastern Gaza Strip, including two bank branches the military said.

In response to Saturday's attack, Israel imposed a "total siege" on Gaza, suspending supplies of food,



People watch as a firetruck is deployed outside a burning collapsed building following Israeli bombardment in Gaza City. — AFP

water, electricity and fuel to the already blockaded enclave.

In announcing Israel's latest death toll on Wednesday morning, army spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Conricus said the figure was rising not because of the ongoing fighting, but because "we are discovering bodies of dead Israelis in the various communities."

The Israeli army has called up 300,000 reservists and massed tanks and other heavy armour both near Gaza and on the northern border with Lebanon.

The military said its forces had dislodged holdout Hamas fighters from more than a dozen communities near the border and

The United Nations said more than 263,000 people had been displaced inside Gaza, most taking shelter in UN schools

were largely back in control.

But late on Tuesday, in the southern Israeli city of Ashkelon, troops backed by helicopters and drones exchanged fire with several militants, leaving three fighters dead, the army said.

Israeli munitions have continued to hammer Gaza, a densely populated city of about 2.3 million people.

Hamas said the strikes killed two of its senior figures: Zakaria Muammar led its economics section, and Jawad Abu Shamala coordinated ties with other Palestinian factions.

Eight Palestinian journalists have also been killed in the strikes, according to media unions and officials.

The United Nations said more than 263,000 people had been displaced inside Gaza, most taking shelter in UN schools.

White smoke billowed from among fishing boats after an air strike on Gaza's port, and in Jerusalem the deserted streets were targeted by Hamas rocket fire. — AFP

NORWAY URGES DONORS TO MAINTAIN AID TO PALESTINIANS

OSLO: Norway, which chairs an international donors group for Palestine, on Wednesday urged the international community to maintain its aid to Palestinians following the Israeli-Hamas fighting. "The situation will only deteriorate further if the international community suspends or reduces its assistance at this critical juncture," Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt said.

After Saturday's bloody attack on Israel, several countries, including Austria, Denmark, Germany and Sweden, announced they were suspending their development aid — but not humanitarian aid — to the Palestinians.

"As chair of the international donor group AHLC, Norway encourages the international community to continue its financial assistance to the Palestinian people," Huitfeldt said.

"This includes support to the Palestinian Authority channelled through the World Bank, assistance via international organisations such as the UN system, and support to humanitarian organisations and to the Palestinian civil society."

She said Norway was maintaining its aid while "continuously assessing the viability of advancing ongoing projects in Gaza", currently being pounded by heavy artillery strikes by the Israeli army.

"There is no reason to suspect that any financial assistance from Norway has benefited Hamas or affiliated groups," she said. — AFP



Shells from Israeli bombardment land in the water in the Gaza City seaport. — AFP

POPE URGES HOSTAGES FREED, WORRIED ABOUT GAZA SIEGE

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis called on Wednesday for the immediate release of hostages taken in fighting between Hamas and Israel, and expressed his concern over the siege of Gaza.

"I ask that the hostages be released immediately," the 86-year-old head of the worldwide Catholic Church said at the end of his weekly audience at the Vatican.

He added: "It is the right of those who are attacked to defend themselves, but I am very worried about the total siege in which the Palestinians live in Gaza, where there have also been many innocent victims."

"Extremism does not help reach a solution to the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians, but fuel hatred, violence, revenge and only make both sides suffer."

"The Middle East does not need war but peace, a peace built on justice, dialogue and the courage of fraternity."

The death toll from five days of ferocious fighting between Hamas and Israel rose sharply overnight as Israel kept up its bombardment of Gaza on Wednesday. — AFP



Relatives of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes, react at a hospital in Gaza City. — AFP

China seeks to work with Egypt on Israel-Gaza war



Smoke billows during an Israeli air strike in Rafah in the southern Gaza. — AFP

BEIJING: China is seeking to work with Egypt to help ease the Israel-Hamas war that erupted after a deadly attack by the Palestinian group, its Middle East envoy has said as he urged a ceasefire.

Zhai Jun spoke by phone with Egypt's assistant minister for the Palestinian territories, according to a readout of the conversation published by Beijing.

"China is willing to maintain communication and coordination with Egypt, push both parties of the conflict to cease fire and stop violence as soon as possible," Zhai said.

He also urged "the international community to form a joint force and provide humanitarian support to the Palestinian people".

Thousands of people have been killed since Hamas's shock assault on Saturday.

Meanwhile in Gaza, officials have reported more than 900 people killed as Israel pounded the territory with air strikes.

Since the assault, Egypt has intensified its push for diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the spiralling violence.

Egypt has historically been a key mediator between Israel and the Palestinians, and was the first Arab country to sign a peace treaty with Israel in 1979.

China has positioned itself in recent months as a mediator in the Middle East, brokering a restoration of ties in March between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Zhai added that the "fundamental solution lies in the implementation of a 'two-state solution'", calling on key players in the conflict to "make practical efforts" towards this end "with the greatest sense of urgency". — AFP

Jordan's king says no stability in region without Palestinian state

AMMAN: Jordan's King Abdullah said on Wednesday no peace was possible in the Middle East without the emergence of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel.

The latest violence — which broke out when Hamas fighters attacked Israel at the weekend — showed the region would not "enjoy stability, security or peace" without a sovereign Palestinian state on land that Israel had captured in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, he said.

A two-state solution was the only option, the monarch told deputies in a speech at the opening of a new parliamentary session.

"Our region will never be secure nor stable without achieving just and comprehensive peace on the basis of the two-state solution," the monarch said.

A two-state solution has long been the bedrock of international peacemaking efforts, but the process has been moribund for years and the possibility of it happening has dimmed even before the renewed bloodshed.

King Abdullah has since the start of the latest conflict been engaged in a flurry of diplomatic efforts with Western and regional leaders urging swift action to de-escalate the situation, officials say.

Officials said the monarch, whom US President Joe Biden called, will voice the kingdom's concerns with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken when he arrives



An Israeli army self-propelled howitzer fires rounds near the border with Gaza in southern Israel. — AFP

Our region will never be secure nor stable without achieving just and comprehensive peace on the basis of the two-state solution

JORDAN'S KING ABDULLAH

in Amman.

"A Palestinian independent and sovereign state should be on June 4th, 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and so that the cycles of killing, whose ultimate victims are innocent civilians, end," King Abdullah said.

The outpouring of anger against Israel also fuelled a large rally in downtown Amman, where several thousand protesters chanted slogans in support of Hamas. — Reuters



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In brief

■ MEXICO CITY



LIDIA SLAMS COAST LEAVING WIDESPREAD DAMAGE

Rescue workers on Wednesday were scrambling to clean up the mess left by Hurricane Lidia, which slammed into Mexico's Pacific coast overnight, leaving one person dead in the western state of Nayarit. Lidia, which has weakened to a Category 2 storm with maximum sustained winds of 110 km/h, is expected to continue producing heavy rainfall and gusty winds as it moves inland over west-central Mexico.

Lidia made landfall as a Category 4 storm triggering torrential downpours, causing rivers to overflow, toppling trees and leading to significant flooding in numerous western states of Mexico. — **Reuters**

■ NIAMEY



MILITARY ORDERS UN OFFICIAL OUT WITHIN 72 HRS

Niger's post-coup military regime has ordered the United Nations coordinator in the country to leave within 72 hours. It comes a day after the United States cut off more than \$500 million in assistance to Niger and as France begins withdrawing troops after they were also ordered out.

The Nigerien foreign ministry said in a statement on Wednesday that the government was expelling Louise Aubin, the UN's resident and humanitarian coordinator, "to take all necessary measures to leave Niamey within 72 hours".

The military regime has already criticised "the perfidious actions" of the UN chief, saying they were "likely to undermine any effort to end the crisis in our country". — **AFP**

■ TOKYO



CHINESE SCIENTISTS JOIN FUKUSHIMA WATER REVIEW

Chinese scientists will this month take part in extensive sampling of Fukushima's coastal waters for the first time since the release of treated wastewater from its stricken nuclear plant began, Japanese officials said on Wednesday.

Experts from China will join those from Canada, South Korea and the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in collecting samples of water, sediment and marine creatures from October 15 to 23.

The survey will also collect seafood samples from the region's markets, the import of which has been banned by Beijing. — **AFP**

Russia says 'improved' position around east Ukraine town

MOSCOW: Russia on Wednesday said its forces had strengthened their position on the frontline near Avdiivka, a day after Ukraine warned Moscow was stepping up strikes to encircle the eastern town.

Avdiivka is symbolically and strategically important to Kyiv, lying just north of the Moscow-controlled city of Donetsk that was seized by separatist forces in 2014.

It has since become a symbol of Ukrainian resistance against Moscow, with Kyiv clinging on there despite relentless Russian attacks during the Kremlin's almost 20-month long offensive.

"Actions from the southern group of forces supported by aviation, artillery fire and heavy flamethrower systems, improved the situation along the front line in the vicinity of Avdiivka," the Russian defence ministry said.

Local Ukrainian officials said that Moscow's forces had launched an artillery attack on the town in the morning and were firing incessantly.

"Battles continued throughout the night" in the north and south of the town, the head of the town's administration Vitaliy Barabash said on Wednesday.

Barabash said Ukrainian troops were "most likely finishing" repelling Russian forces.

Ukrainian officials were "engaged in persuading people to evacuate everyday", he said.

Ukraine's armed forces said Russian forces had "intensified actions" in several areas including Avdiivka.



Ukrainian servicemen ride atop a tank near the frontline town of Bakhmut. — **Reuters** file photo

Actions from the southern group of forces supported by aviation, artillery fire and heavy flamethrower systems, improved the situation along the front line in the vicinity of Avdiivka

RUSSIAN DEFENCE MINISTRY

"Our defenders repelled all enemy attacks and prevented the loss of lines and positions," military spokesman Andriy Kovalyov said.

Meanwhile, — Ukraine on Wednesday called for greater global support to help with demining large swaths of the war-torn country's land, warning that up to a third of its territory could be contaminated with ordnance.

"Russian mines and shells in Ukraine are a problem that must be solved together," Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said via video link

Nato to respond if Baltic Sea pipeline damage deliberate

BRUSSELS: Nato will discuss damage to a gas pipeline and data cable running between member states Finland and Estonia, and will mount a "determined" response if the cause is proven to be a deliberate attack, Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said on Wednesday.

The damage on the Balticconnector pipeline and telecommunications cable was confirmed on Tuesday after one of the two pipeline operators, Finland's Gasgrid.

Helsinki said the damage was likely caused by "outside activity" and the cause was being investigated, stoking concern over regional energy security and pushing gas prices higher.

"The important thing now is to establish what happened and how this could happen," Stoltenberg told reporters in Brussels ahead of a meeting of the military alliance.

"If it is proven to be a deliberate attack on Nato-critical infrastructure then this will be, of course, serious, but it will also be met by a united and determined response from Nato"

The pipeline, between Inkoo in Finland and Paldiski in Estonia, crosses the Gulf of Finland, part of the Baltic Sea which stretches eastward into Russian waters and ends at the port of St Petersburg.

Balticconnector is jointly operated by Estonian electricity



A view of the Balticconnector pipeline as it is pulled into the sea in Paldiski. — **Reuters**

and gas system operator Elering and Finnish gas transmission system operator Gasgrid, which each own half of the pipeline.

The Kremlin described the incident as "disturbing" and said it was awaiting further information.

Russia's Nord Stream pipelines were damaged by an attack in the Baltic Sea, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said at a regular news briefing on Wednesday, referring to an incident in September 2022.

Sunday's incident came about a year after the larger Nord Stream gas pipelines, which cross the Baltic Sea between Russia and Germany, were damaged by explosions that authorities said

were caused by sabotage.

Henri Vanhanen, research fellow at the Finnish Institute for International Affairs, said the central issue would be how Nato would react if there was evidence of a state actor behind the Baltic Sea pipeline damage.

"I think the big question in the long term is that do we have a clear set of potential countermeasures for such activities? What is the deterrence?" he said.

The Finnish government said preparedness levels had been raised at critical infrastructure, as officials including President Sauli Niinisto were given a situational overview at an extraordinary meeting on Wednesday. — **Reuters**

during a donors' conference on demining in the Croatian capital Zagreb.

Shmyhal said up to six million people were actively at risk from extensive mining across Ukraine.

If the demining efforts are not increased "it will take many decades to clear Ukraine of mines", Shmyhal noted.

Ukrainian forces are currently locked in a bitter counteroffensive against entrenched Russian positions along the heavily-mined front line.

Mines have proven to be a formidable obstacle in slowing Ukrainian and Russian advances across the battlefield.

Even as the war rages on, Kyiv has called on international partners with experience in demining to help clear the ordnance.

Ukraine has made demining a priority, while dozens countries and partner organisations having pledged some 300 million dollars to help with the effort, Shmyhal said.

— **AFP**

US House Republicans eye Scalise, Jordan in speaker race

WASHINGTON: Republicans in the US House of Representatives met on Wednesday to choose between two candidates — Steve Scalise and Jim Jordan — to lead their narrow majority a week after a small group of dissidents ousted Speaker Kevin McCarthy.

As lawmakers gathered for the closed-door vote, neither candidate appeared to hold a clear advantage. Scalise, who is No. 2 on the leadership ladder, has drawn the support of many veteran and establishment Republican lawmakers, while Jordan, an outspoken leader of the party's right wing, had the backing of many conservatives.

McCarthy could be in the mix as well, as he has not discouraged talk of a comeback, as could Patrick McHenry, the acting speaker.

The secret-ballot vote is the start of what could be a long and messy process to install a new speaker after a small faction of far-right Republicans deposed McCarthy last week and threw the chamber into chaos.

Before lawmakers start voting on a speaker, they are expected to decide on what threshold is needed to win: a simple majority of Republicans, or an absolute total of 217 votes, enough to ensure victory in the full House.

Representative Tom Cole said the higher threshold could allow a handful of holdouts to create gridlock, as they have repeatedly done this year. "It's just overly complicated and we ought to just pick a winner," he said.



US House Majority Leader Steve Scalise (R-LA) speaks with the media as he arrives to join House Republicans meeting on Capitol Hill in Washington. — **Reuters**

Scalise and Jordan told Republicans at a closed-door forum on Tuesday night that they would each back the candidate chosen as nominee, an agreement that could help expedite matters.

"My unfortunate estimation is that it will take several rounds and maybe even days of voting," Republican Representative Ben Cline said in an interview.

It took only eight Republicans to oust McCarthy last week, a fact that could make leading the caucus a challenge for any new speaker.

Representative Ken Buck, one of the eight, said a "significant number" of Republicans could decline to vote for a candidate in Wednesday's first ballot.

Buck said Jordan and Scalise provided unsatisfactory answers on the question of reining in spending on Tuesday night. He predicted that more candidates could join the race.

— **Reuters**

Exploring the roots and nurturing communication



Dr Nisma Haris

The writer is a general physician and content creator

Male inexpressiveness is the most challenging trait to deal with for most of the women. The role they play in providing for the family in terms of protection and guardianship is the backbone of raising a strong and responsible household. Yet they are often questioned for their inexpressive attitude and approach in day-to-day family life. But what has shaped this attitude and what goes through their minds; let's dig in. To begin with, it is important to understand that a female mind and a male mind are entirely different. Their thought processes and their perception of society and the world are entirely different. Here, there is no question of who is wrong and who is right but getting to know the foundation of inexpressiveness. Well, it can be of varied kinds. One is about being 'totally inexpressive' towards fellow male or female friends or wives and another type can be 'selective expressiveness'; they are comfortable and able to express their heart out among their

male counterparts but find it difficult to engage in expressing their feelings towards their wives. The latter is more encountered in society across all cultures. Over the years, the vague standards of societal masculinity have jotted the dots with not expressing their emotions out to be an applaudable trait. They have been considered strong enough to not express and hold their emotions back and this has shaped this behaviour to a substantial extent. If we rewind to their adolescence, they had spent less time with their mothers or sisters and there developed a void in understanding how to share and express their feelings with the female family members. However, the good news is this trend is changing over time and men are becoming more expressive than they used to be in the earlier days. It's even more pivotal to understand the fact that this inexpressiveness should never be equated with carelessness. They do care and work hard to sweat in order to provide all the comfort for their household.

IT IS EVEN MORE PIVOTAL TO UNDERSTAND THE FACT THAT INEXPRESSIVENESS SHOULD NEVER BE EQUATED WITH CARELESSNESS

The workplace pressures, the daily exhaustion, and the ruthless world that a male deals with on an everyday basis to safeguard his loved ones also contribute to speaking less about his daily ordeal and he feels at ease by saying little or not saying anything at all and keeps himself confined in his cave where only selective folks get entry to share. The problem pops up because the female system is designed by nature to expect expressions of love and comfort and consoles. A female needs a sense of security through the caring words being said. And when this expectation is met with an inexpressive attitude, the collision occurs. Albeit, a female knows pretty firmly that her partner cares for her, she constantly needs verbal assurance. If we as males and females understand our roles and stop pushing one another to the extremes that can go a long way toward dissolving this issue. So next time, when gentlemen sometimes express themselves and ladies, just let them be when they are not willing to; as this is how our programming is set by nature!

Economic concerns loom large as Poles prepare to vote

STANISLAW WASZAK

Ahead of Sunday's elections in Poland, petrol is being sold by the state energy giant Orlen at budget prices in what experts called "an election present". For analysts this is just one example of an economy managed for political gain by a government that is putting off difficult choices for later. "The peculiarity of this government is an economic policy that is totally dominated by the short-term effect without long-term considerations," said Witold Orłowski, head of experts at the consultancy PwC Poland. Since the populist Law and Justice (PiS) party came to power in 2015, Poles have enjoyed high social welfare benefits while the government has made enormous investments in infrastructure and defence. Many experts question whether these are the signs of a flourishing economy or of a government that is managing the accounts to make things seem better than they are. The opposition has made economic worries part of its election campaign, while the government has focused on national security, sovereignty and migration. Whether or not PiS win a third term or are defeated by the liberal Civic Coalition opposition on Sunday "it is clear that the economic situation will not be easy to handle" for any government, Orłowski said. The focus so far has been on consumption rather than dealing with debt and inflation or boosting investments -- measures that would spur long-term growth. Inflation has remained high in Poland, with the EU forecasting a figure of 11.4 per cent for 2023. Investments meanwhile have fallen to just 16.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) -- the lowest level in 20 years, below the EU average of 22.5 per cent. Growth is expected to remain sluggish with a forecast of 0.5 per cent expansion in 2023, according to the EU. Even if public debt in Poland remains relatively low at around 49 per cent of GDP "we do not know the full extent of debt because the data has been distorted or disguised by the government," Orłowski said. "This lack of transparency in public finances is scandalous" particularly since the government has recently made large arms purchases from South Korea and the United States after Russia's attack of Ukraine. — AFP

What does a 'complete siege' of the Gaza Strip mean?



Emma Bubola

The writer is a reporter for NYT based in London



Ben Hubbard

The writer is the Istanbul bureau chief for NYT

Israel's defence minister's order to place a "complete siege" on the Gaza Strip came on top of a 16-year blockade that Israel, often along with Egypt, has imposed on the coastal territory. The announcement by Defence Minister Yoav Gallant on Monday that Gaza would receive "no electricity, no food, no water, no fuel" after a major incursion by Palestinian gunmen left hundreds dead has led aid agencies to warn of an exacerbated humanitarian crisis. Under the long-standing blockade, the densely populated strip, with more than 2 million residents, nearly half of whom are younger than 18, faces severe restrictions on the movements of goods and people. Most commodities in Gaza, from foodstuffs to construction supplies, are imported from Israel through official border crossings, according to the United Nations. Gaza gets most of its electricity via Israeli power lines, and produces some at a power plant in Gaza with fuel imported from Israel. It receives a smaller number of goods through its much shorter border with Egypt. Electricity shortages are chronic, with power often available for only 12 to 15 hours per day. That undermines health services, water pumping and purification and the area's fragile economy, aid workers say. Movement of people in and out of Gaza was heavily restricted before the attacks, with Israel and Egypt granting small numbers of people permission to travel, mostly for work or medical care. On Saturday, after Palestinian shooters began their assault inside Israel, Israeli authorities stopped supplying electricity, leaving Gaza's residents with only about three or four hours of power per day, according to the UN's humanitarian office, which said Gaza's power plant might soon run out of fuel. Now, Israel has closed both of its crossings with Gaza, the Kerem



The ruins of the Yassin Mosque in the Shati refugee camp, just outside Gaza City.

Shalom Crossing for cargo and the Erez Crossing for people. "Before things were restricted, now they are blocked entirely," said Tania Hary, the executive director of Gisha, an Israeli nonprofit that focuses on free movement of Palestinians in Gaza.

HUMANITARIAN OFFICIALS SAID A COMPLETE BLOCKADE WOULD CREATE MORE SEVERE SUFFERING FOR PALESTINIAN CIVILIANS IN GAZA.

Humanitarian officials said a complete blockade would create more severe suffering for Palestinian civilians in Gaza. "Overwhelmed hospitals treating thousands of wounded will now

have to do so without reliable access to electricity," Mahmoud Shalabi, a senior programme manager for Medical Aid for Palestinians, a charity based in the UK, said in an email. Egyptian officials have not said whether Israel's announced siege of Gaza would affect their policy toward the movement of goods and people in and out of the territory. Gaza's border with Egypt remained open with limited traffic on Tuesday, and truckloads of food, construction material, fuel and emergency medical supplies entered over the weekend. But Egypt also heavily controls the movement of people and goods across its border crossing, opening and closing it in response to security conditions. Even if Egypt left its crossing open, experts said, it could not fill the gaps left by the complete closure of Israel's crossings. In 2022, some 32 per cent of goods entering Gaza came from Egypt, Gisha said in a report. — The New York Times

Pandemic preparedness cannot wait

As a firm believer in multilateralism, I was heartened that the United Nations General Assembly adopted a political declaration on pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response at its first-ever high-level meeting on the subject in September. It confirms that world leaders recognise the existential threat of pandemics and are committed to breaking the panic-neglect cycle, whereby policymakers pull out all the stops to fight disease outbreaks, only to turn their attention elsewhere once the crisis ends.

The landmark declaration has generated much-needed momentum for a global pandemic treaty, which is currently under development at the World Health Organization. But translating a political commitment into a meaningful agreement requires significant buy-in from WHO member states, and negotiations are sure to be arduous.

As this process unfolds, we must implement practical measures to preserve the knowledge gained during the Covid-19 pandemic, and to improve upon the innovative mechanisms that emerged from it. Any eventual treaty can thus enter into force with many working parts already in place. And, in the meantime, the world will be better prepared for the next infectious-disease emergency.

The pandemic may have faded from our collective consciousness, but with official Covid-19 deaths nearing seven million and the pandemic's cost to the United States economy alone reaching \$14 trillion, it is clear that a more strongly coordinated global response is required to protect against future threats. And make no mistake: another pandemic is an evolutionary certainty. In addition to the current rise in Covid-19 cases, the world is



José Manuel Barroso

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AS MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS DEBATE HOW TO MITIGATE FUTURE DISEASE OUTBREAKS, WE CAN TAKE PRACTICAL STEPS TO IMPROVE UPON THE INNOVATIVE MECHANISMS

already experiencing more climate-related health emergencies, including outbreaks of infectious diseases such as cholera and yellow fever.

The good news is that some progress is already being made on this front. The Covid-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) facility, established in 2020 by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (whose board I chair), the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, the UN, and the WHO, has delivered nearly two billion doses of vaccines. The vast majority went to lower-income countries, where 81 per cent of health workers and 67 per cent of older people received at least two doses. Averting more than 2.7 million deaths, the initiative is undoubtedly the most successful response to a global health emergency in history.

As we prepare to phase out COVAX at the end of the year, Gavi has already devoted considerable effort to assessing the facility's shortcomings and has taken practical steps to do better next time. That means, from the outset, having enough cash to preorder vaccines on behalf of lower-income countries — just like wealthier countries reserved Covid-19 doses. It also means incentivising investment in vaccine-production capacity across Africa and in other underserved regions that were hit hard by export bans.

Building up manufacturing networks, if done right, is a multi-year process. But it is necessary, as is immediate access to cash, to counter the tendency, apparent during the pandemic and rooted in national self-interest, to direct scarce supplies to the countries with the most money rather than the most need. And more needs to be done to ensure that countries are prepared, to improve vaccine readiness, and to sustain a broad coalition of partners ready and willing to implement a coordinated response.

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A GIANT AQUARIUM



The remains of a giant aquarium are seen in Berlin. A final report on what led a giant Berlin aquarium to burst last December, sending 1,400 tropical fish gushing into a hotel lobby, came back inconclusive on Wednesday. — AFP

Conservationists push ‘nature positive’ as biodiversity’s net zero

JACK GRAHAM

A coalition of conservation and business groups is calling for governments and companies to adopt a global ‘nature positive’ goal of having more of the natural world left in 2030, but critics say the aim is too vague and may be open to abuse.

From deforestation and pollution to overfishing, human actions are causing often irreversible biodiversity loss, while eroding nature’s ability to absorb planet-heating carbon dioxide emissions and ward off the worst of global warming.

The Nature Positive Initiative aims to create a collective mission around nature, much like the 2015 UN Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius that sent a signal to policymakers, markets and the public, said Eva Zabey, CEO of Business for Nature, a corporate coalition.

Originally launched at COP15 UN nature talks in Montreal last December, campaigners now want to put some meat on the bones - to better define their goals and how companies and other institutions measure their contributions towards them.

“Ultimately, it’s about strengthening our accountability systems in order to be able to increasingly make sure companies are held responsible for their impacts on nature and biodiversity,” Zabey said.

But critics say the terms of nature positive are unclear and could be used to offset destruction in one place with restoration in another, like some

companies use carbon markets to reach ‘net zero’ instead of cutting their own emissions.

Despite the involvement of large conservation organisations like WWF and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), some campaigners doubt the power of nature positive as a tool to stem environmental destruction.

Marília Monteiro Silva, senior portfolio manager in nature finance at Greenpeace International, believes it is a “problematic” concept as the term is being used before there is a “clear and aligned understanding” of what it means.

Silva said biodiversity was too complex to measure in a similar way to carbon emissions, and that doing so neglected nature’s intrinsic value.

“You’re basically talking about measuring what is unmeasurable,” she said. But those involved with the initiative say companies must avoid and reduce their own damage before looking to increase nature elsewhere and transform how they interact with nature more broadly.

“We need to hold people to account, particularly for irreplaceable parts of nature,” said E J Milner-Gulland, professor of biodiversity at the University of Oxford and co-lead of the Nature Positive Universities network.

But she said organisations and companies her team had analysed

would eventually need to offset a significant portion of their environmental impacts, even if strong actions were taken to avoid and reduce them first.

“We can’t solve these problems by just protecting wild nature,” she said. “All analysis shows that we have to protect wild nature and we have to change our supply chains - and this net argument is fundamental to that.”

She said work was being done to create standardised biodiversity metrics which were appropriate to local contexts, but could be compared at scale, such as the Accounting for Nature framework developed in Australia.

A major challenge facing the Nature Positive Initiative is

the potential for its dilution by companies looking to use the slogan, but not transform how they operate in practice.

Marco Lambertini, special envoy for WWF International, said it was not meant to be a buzzword, but a measurable global goal to “inject a clear, high level of accountability”.

He said many companies had been cautious in embracing it in the absence of clear guidance, but initiative partners were releasing more resources on how to disclose and take action on nature impacts. Last month, Business for Nature and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, for example, worked with the World Economic

Forum and published guides for companies in 12 different sectors.

Meanwhile, an international working group of business and finance executives launched a set of guidelines from the Taskforce on Nature-Related Financial Disclosure for companies to report their nature-related risks and impacts.

Lambertini said biodiversity was “by definition local”, meaning restoration work must be local too, such as regenerating a degraded area of the Amazon rainforest.

That, he argued, could make it easier to ascertain whether efforts to protect it were doing what they promised.

“It has to be like for like. It has to be local compensation,” he said. But many companies have a long way to go to even understand the effects of their operations and sourcing on nature. Marissa Balfour, a corporate engagement adviser at US-based non-profit The Nature Conservancy, said she was surprised by the lack of visibility companies had throughout their supply chains when she worked in the textile and apparel industry.

“A huge barrier is lack of traceability into a company’s value chains,” she said, particularly for the raw material stage - which is where the largest impacts on nature tend to happen.

— Thomson Reuters Foundation



A fisherman throws a net from his canoe in Xokleng Laklano indigenous land Santa Catarina state, Brazil. — Reuters file photo

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SOHAR THUMP BAHLA TO GO TOP

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 11

Sohar thrashed Bahla 3-0 in the seventh round of the Omantel League at the Nizwa Sports Complex on Tuesday.

Bahla, entering the match with high hopes to overturn their previous defeats, faced a well-organised Sohar. Sohar skillfully orchestrated their attacks and coordinated passes, effectively neutralising Bahla's attempts to advance. Despite Bahla's efforts to create opportunities, the first half concluded in a goalless draw.

The second half saw minor changes at the beginning, yet both coaches made strategic substitutions to reinvigorate their players. Bahla's offensive attempts, however, were thwarted by Sohar's solid defence. In the latter part of the match, Bahla's offensive strategy backfired, leading to defensive errors. Capitalising on this, Sohar's Mohsin Jawher opened the scoring in the 81st minute with a successful shot, followed by another goal in the 84th minute. Daniel Etor sealed the victory with a third goal in the 90+6th minute, concluding the match with a decisive 3-0 win for Sohar.

Following this victory, Sohar temporarily ascended to the top position in the league, accumulating a total of 14 points, tying with Al



Sohar and Bahla players fight for the ball during the Omantel League seventh round match at the Nizwa Sports Complex.

Nahdha. Meanwhile, Bahla find themselves temporarily in the 11th position, holding 4 points.

Bahla's struggle continues this season with their fifth loss, adding to the complexity of their position in the league. With only one victory in the first round, the team faces a growing risk of descending to the 12th and last position.

IBRI STUN DHOFAR

Ibri defeated Dhofar 2-0 at the Al Saada Sports Complex on Tuesday.

Dhofar dominated the ball and created chances from the beginning of the match but failed to effectively exploit them against Ibri defence, who relied on counter-attacks. Ibri took advantage of one of these counter-attacks in the seventh minute, as their professional player Bruno scored the opening goal. Despite repeated attempts by Dhofar, they were unable to break through Ibri defence. Khalid Al Ghatrifi reinforced Ibri lead with a header from a set piece, ending the first half with

The surprise win lifted Ibri from the last position temporarily to the ninth position with six points, while Dhofar remained at seven points, holding the seventh position



Ibri players celebrate a goal against Dhofar.

Ibri leading 2-0.

Dhofar entered the second half with enthusiasm, but they couldn't score against a well-defended Ibri goal. The two teams continued to exchange attacks until the end without a change in the score. Ibri secured the victory with a 2-0 score, earning the three points.

This result lifted Ibri from the last position temporarily to the ninth position with six points, while Dhofar remained at seven points, holding the seventh position.

AL WAHDA EDGE AL SHABAB

In another match, Al Wahda defeated Al Shabab 1-0 at the Al Rustaq Sports Complex.

Al Wahda's goal was scored by Walid al Saadi in the 59th minute, after following up on a corner kick that bounced off Al Shabab's defence.

Al Wahda raised their tally to 7 points, advancing to eighth place. Al Shabab's balance is frozen in sixth place with 8 points.

Third national camel race concludes today

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, OCT 11

More than 1,800 camels competed in the third race of the 21th edition of national camel event at Al Bashayer Camel Racing Track in Adam and in Royal Camel Crops (RCC) Track in Barka.

The race is organised by Oman Camel Racing Federation from October 10 to 12, with wide participants from various governorates, competing in 88 races divided into three days. Eighteen races were held on the first day for Hagayeg category for 3 km. Twelve races were held on the second day for Lagaya for 4 km, in addition to two 2 km races for human riders. Twelve races are scheduled for the third day, 6 races for Al Yethaa category for 5 km, 3 races for Thanayaa category for 6 km and 3 races for Al Hool category for 6 km.

At Barka track on Wednesday, 'Shorot' and 'Zeyarah', owned by Amer bin Salim al Zaree, snatched the two opening titles in human rider races.

'Al Shaheanyah', owned by Saud bin Salim al Manee, emerged winner in first 6 km race, the second race was won by 'Al Aalamyah', owned by Hamed bin Mohammed al Wahibi, the third race was won by 'Al Wadeh', owned by Hamood bin Abdullah al Moharbi and the fourth race was won by 'Jalmodah' owned by Mohsin bin Ali al Wahibi.

'Khazamah' claimed the fifth race, owned by Humaid bin



Hamed al Zaree, 'Mohatem' finished first in sixth race, owned by Salim bin Al Beed al Wahibi, the seventh race was won by 'Al Shaheanyah', owned by Hamood bin Hamed al Wahibi. 'Khayal', owned by Abdullah bin Sultan

al Ghufali, snatched the eighth round, 'Nasee', owned by Waleed bin Sulaiman al Rushaidi, claimed the ninth round, 10th race was won by 'Al Haylah', owned by Naseer bin Salim al Masoodi, the 11th race was

claimed by 'Al Gathabah', owned by Bader bin Saud al Moonsi and finally 'Al Shamhek', owned by Hamed bin Gedayer al Gedali, finished first in the 12th round.

On Wednesday competitions in Al Bashayer field, 'Shaqrah' grabbed the 6 km race, owned by Hatim bin Said al Gahafi, the second race was won by 'Ertwaz', owned by Bader bin Hamed al Jenaibi, the third winner was 'Al Baz' owned by Mohammed bin Al Abed al Harsoosi and the fourth race was won by 'Romyah' owned by Saleh bin Ali al Wahibi. 'Nothaa' claimed the fifth race, owned by Hamed bin Musalam al Ghafo, 'Al Fares' finished first in sixth race, owned by Said bin Mubark al Amri, the seventh race was won by 'Zahyah', owned by Humaid bin Mohammed al Jenaibi. 'Musyha, owned by Mohammed bin Shutayet al Habsi, snatched the eighth round, 'Shaheen', owned by Nasser bin Al Abed al Harsosi, claimed the ninth round, 10th race was won by 'Ramez', owned by Al Hamdi bin Salim al Daree, the 11th race was claimed by 'Melan', owned by Khalifa bin Hoeden al Mahri and finally 'Mukhaseem', owned by Said bin Ali al Malki, claimed the honours in the last round.

The top ten winners in all races (88 rounds) will get cash prizes.

The fourth national race will be held from October 31 to November 2 at Al Bashayer Camel Racing Track in Adam and in Royal Camel Crops (RCC) Field in Barka.



Tomokazu Harimoto and Hina Hayata in action.

HARIMOTO, HAYATA PROGRESS IN WTT CONTENDER

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 11

Japan's mixed double duo, World No 4 Tomokazu Harimoto and World No 8 Hina Hayata beat Puerto Rico's pair of Daniel Gonzalez and Adriana Diaz 3-0 (11-3, 11-5, 11-3) to advance into quarterfinals of mixed doubles event at WTT Contender Muscat 2023 on Wednesday. Harimoto and Hayata will meet their teammates Miwa Harimoto and Sora Matsushima in the quarterfinals as they defeated Zhu Chengzhu and Lam Siu Hang from Hong Kong 3-1 (13-11, 11-7, 7-11, 11-5).

Japan's Tomokazu Harimoto also sealed berth in the last 16 round in the men's singles event as he defeated Martin Allegro from Belgium 3-1 (12-10, 11-9, 7-11, 11-2). Japan's Hina Hayata also progressed to the last 16 round in the women's singles event as she beat Tatiana Kulkova 3-0.

The third edition of WTT Contender Muscat 2023 reached to its excited final rounds. On Thursday, the mega event will feature Round of 16 matches of women's singles and men's singles

while quarterfinals in men's, women's and mixed doubles categories and semifinals in mixed doubles will also be staged.

Spanish duo of Maria Xiao and Alvaro Robles secured slot in the quarterfinals after they stunned Hong Kong duo of NG Wing Lam and Wong Chun Ting 3-2 in a tight clash. Mixed pair of Singapore comprising Wong Xin Ru and Pang Yew En Koen will meet the Spanish paddlers in the quarterfinal as they won against Anna Hursey and Liam Pitchford 3-1.

Oman's doubles duo of Muhanad al Balushi and Asad al Raisi received a 3-0 loss against Bence Majoros and Avatar Nandor Ecseki from Hungary. The triumph moved the Hungarian paddlers to the quarters.

Sweden's men's doubles team featuring Anton Kallberg and Kristian Karlsson registered a 3-1 win over South Korea's Lim Jonghoon and An Jaehyun to enter the quarterfinals. The Swedish paddlers will meet Germany's Dang Qiu and Benedikt Duda as they beat Li Hon Ming (Hong Kong) and Ludovic Gombos (USA).

Alcaraz dumped out by Dimitrov



Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov hits a return to Spain's Carlos Alcaraz during the Shanghai Masters tournament. – AFP

SHANGHAI: Grigor Dimitrov fought back to beat top seed Carlos Alcaraz in three sets and reach the quarterfinals on Wednesday in the latest upset at the Shanghai Masters.

The 18th seed won 5-7, 6-2, 6-4 against an out-of-sorts Alcaraz as the Bulgarian steps up his pursuit of a first ATP title since 2017.

He will next face the 22nd-seeded Nicolas Jarry after the Chilean defeated wild card Diego Schwartzman 6-3, 5-7, 6-3.

The first Shanghai Masters since the pandemic has opened up for Dimitrov after the exits of Daniil Medvedev, Stefanos

Tsitsipas, Holger Rune and Jannik Sinner.

Russia's Andrey Rublev is the highest remaining seed left in the draw at five. World number one Novak Djokovic is not in China.

"I'm still here, I'm not going anywhere," the 32-year-old Dimitrov said after dismissing Alcaraz.

Spain's Alcaraz, the world number two, was chasing a seventh tour-level title of the season but he uncharacteristically crumbled after winning the first set.

The 20-year-old Alcaraz took time to find his range and

Dimitrov broke for 3-2 in the first set with a vicious whipped forehand return.

Dimitrov was broken back as he served for the set in a riveting 10th game involving two thrilling rallies that both times saw Alcaraz come out on top.

Alcaraz held and then broke again to wrap the set up in just under an hour.

But rather than power on to victory, Alcaraz let the match get away from him.

The clean-hitting Dimitrov gathered himself to race into a 2-0 lead in the second set, then broke again for 5-2, before sealing

the set when Alcaraz shanked his return.

They went to a decider and an unusually flustered Alcaraz was broken in the third game after yet another unforced error.

Alcaraz let out a roar of anger as the match slipped away from him.

Dimitrov held his nerve to serve out his first victory over the Spaniard on his second match point.

"I knew what I had to do," said Dimitrov.

"I knew I had to apply constant pressure against him.

"Even if I was down, even if my shots were not good enough, I had to put him in uncomfortable positions.

"He doesn't like being on the back foot."

Alcaraz, who had been the favourite for the Shanghai crown in Djokovic's absence, said he had always been up against it.

"He was on another level today, this Grigor," said Alcaraz, who lost to Sinner in the semi-finals in Beijing and won't look back on his visit to China with much fondness as a result.

"I was all the time defending, I could not find the way to put myself in a position to attack."

The efficient Rublev beat the American 12th seed Tommy Paul 7-5, 7-5 in their last-16 encounter in the late-night match.

Rublev meets Ugo Humbert of France in the quarter-finals after the 32nd seed demolished JJ Wolf, also of the United States, 6-1, 6-2 in just 57 minutes. —AFP



Ruwi Rangers crowned champs

MUSCAT: Ruwi Rangers clinched the first title of the 2023-24 Oman domestic season in style as they cruised to a seven-wicket victory over Bousher Busters in the Oman D20 final at the Oman Cricket Academy ground in Al Amerat on Tuesday night.

The T20 tournament pitted the eight top-flight teams vying for the coveted crown over 14 days with a total of 32 matches being played.

It was the second time in the three-year D20 tournament history that Ruwi Rangers emerged as champions, having won the inaugural title in 2021. Defending champions Darsait Titans bowed out in the Eliminator.

The final was expected to be a thriller with both the teams reaching the summit clash with maximum number of wins in the group stage. Ruwi Rangers won six of the seven games while Bousher Busters claimed five victories from seven.

In fact, Ruwi Rangers had an upper hand going into the final as they had defeated Bousher Busters in Qualifier 1. Bousher Busters then booked a place in the final after they defeated Amerat Royals in Qualifier 2. Amerat Royals had won the Eliminator against Darsait Titans.

Put to bat, Bousher Busters had a decent start as Mohammed Adeeb Usmani playing a sedate innings of 69 off 61 balls. They were restricted to a paltry 133, with Rangers' pace duo of Bilal Khan and Kaleemulaah picking two wickets each and Sanju Sajeev

claiming a three-wicket haul.

Chasing a modest target, Hannan Rizwan's 60 off 57 and a fiery knock by Khalid Kail, who smashed 35 off 20, steered Rangers to victory. Wasim Ali, Aqib Ilyas and Sufyan Mahmood picked a wicket each.

Rizwan was adjudged Player of the Final. Aqib Ilyas of Bousher Busters was adjudged the Player of the Tournament for his allround performance that saw him gather 405 runs at a strike rate of 162+ and claiming nine wickets in nine matches of the tournament.

Paul Sheridan, Oman Cricket (OC) vice-chairman, handed the champions trophy to Rangers' skipper Mohammed Nadeem.

Speaking after the title win, Nadeem said, "It was absolutely a great tournament for us. We displayed collective team effort in all departments. We have a good bunch of experience in Mohammed Naseem, Bilal Khan, Kaleemullah, Karan Sonavale and myself and some young talent like Adeeb Usmani and Khalid Kail. I thank our team management, co-owner Chaitanya Khimji, team manager Vinu Mathew and our coach Prashant Chandran. We also thank Oman Cricket and the ground team staff for providing us excellent facilities."

Duleep Mendis, OC Chief Development Officer handed the runners-up trophy to Bousher Busters skipper Sufyan Mahmood while Ashley Fernandes, ITW, presented the Player of the Final trophy to Hannan Rizwan.

Aditya to skipper Oman in ACC U19 Premier Cup



MUSCAT: Aditya Gurumukhi will lead a bunch of talented Oman U19 cricketers at the forthcoming ACC U19 Premier Cup Malaysia

2023, which will be played from October 13-24.

The U19 50-over tournament, organised by the Asian Cricket Council (ACC), is a qualifying event for the ACC Men's U19 Asia Cup to be held in Pakistan in December this year.

Oman have been placed in Group B in the 16-team tournament along with Qatar, China and fancied UAE.

The other three groups comprise Nepal, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Iran in Group A, Singapore, Kuwait, Thailand, and Maldives in Group

C and Hong Kong, Malaysia, Japan, and Indonesia in Group D. The matches will be staged at three venues. The top teams from each group will qualify for the semifinals.

Speaking ahead of the team's departure, Oman coach Syed Aamir Kaleem said: "The squad is balanced with a combination of experienced

and newcomers. The team has been training hard from the past two months, which included a few practice games with quality senior sides and inter-squad games to work on match situations.

"The boys are confident and positive. We are looking forward to play quality cricket in the coming few days. We certainly aim to do well and bring glory, more importantly, qualify for the Asia Cup."

The top three teams from the tournament will qualify for the ACC Men's U19 Asia Cup.

OMAN U19 SQUAD

Aditya Gurumukhi (C), Aryan Bisht (VC), Narayana Satish, Mustaqeem Asif, Ashish Valappil, Rahil Habibulla, Varshieth Sai, Prathiesh HR, Arafat Islam, Girihran K, Aditya Girish, Saumya Sampat, Adharsh Srinivasan, Wajih Abbas.

Officials: Coach: Syed Aamir Kaleem, assistant coach: Amir Ali, manager: Sher Mohammed, and physio: Sarvanan T
Oman's games (all matches begin at 5.30am, Oman time): Oct 13: Oman vs Qatar (YSD UKM Oval), Oct 16: Oman vs UAE (YSD UKM Oval), Oct 18: Oman vs China (Bayuemas Oval), Oct 22: Semifinals; Oct 24: Final and 3/4th place.

BankMuscat honours 20 Green Sports teams



MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, recently organised an event celebrating the 20 winning teams for this year's 12th edition of the 'Green Sports' programme, with the attendance of Shaikh Waleed bin Khamis al Hashar, Bank Muscat Chief Executive Officer, in addition to other executives from the bank and representatives of the winning sports teams.

Since its inauguration in 2012, the programme has benefitted 183 teams with over 50,000 members across the Sultanate of Oman. These sports teams attract a large number of young people in Oman, helping them showcase their talents and providing them with opportunities for physical, emotional, and mental development.

The Green Sports programme is one of the bank's flagship CSR programmes aiming at sporting skills of the Omani talented youth in

the sports and cultural domains. The support provided by the programme includes greening of football pitches, water desalination and lighting. In addition, the programme annually receives excellent participation by sports teams from across the governorates desiring to enhance green spaces for the Omani youth to improve their sporting skills by equipping these spaces with sports facilities. This year, 124 teams have competed, thereby asserting the programme's success and popularity among Omani youth.

During the celebration, Sami Bait Rashid, Assistant General Manager, Meethaq Personal Banking, Bank Muscat, said that year after year, the programme sees excellent participation by sports teams from across Oman confirming the bank's tremendous support in making the programme a great success among the Omani youth. He further added that it will continue its commitment to providing ample opportunities

for young Omanis to develop their talents, thanking the teams for their cooperation in making the programme a grand success.

He also emphasised that Bank Muscat will continue supporting and developing the Green Sports programme to keep pace with the recent developments in this prominent sector, especially when it comes to equipping the green spaces with modern infrastructure facilities necessary to create an ideal platform for social engagement among the youth, encouraging the winning sports teams to continue their efforts to serve the community better at the sports, social, and cultural levels.

Expressing his happiness and pride in the Kamazar Sports Team from Khasab Musandam, Shaikh Zaid bin Mohammed al Kamzari, the winning sports team manager, said that 'Green Sports' represents an important initiative for developing the sporting skills and talents of the Omani youth. Al Kamzari

also emphasised that the winning sports team will successfully complete developing the green fields partnering with the bank, thanking Bank Muscat for this one-of-a-kind communal and societal initiative that contributes to the achievement of direct and indirect objectives.

From his side, Juma Bin Abdullah Al Sulaimi, the manager of the Itihad Imti Sports and Cultural Team from Izki, also said the programme plays a vital role in enhancing the sports teams' contribution to developing the Omani community and enhancing the infrastructure needed to improve the football green fields. Expressing his pride in being one of the winning teams and happiness with the support provided by the program, Al Sulaimi further added that this programme is of huge importance in terms of improving the Omani youth's sporting skills and equipping them with convenient space to practice various cultural and sporting activities.





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Pact signed to develop sustainable aviation fuel in Oman

MUSCAT: The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) signed a joint memorandum of cooperation with the OQ Group and Sky Energy Company to study the development of a facility to manufacture sustainable aviation fuel in the Sultanate of Oman.

The signatory parties will identify the basic capabilities necessary to establish a unit in this field and build capabilities by benefiting from global expertise in this field.

The memorandum of cooperation also stipulates examining the technologies used in manufacturing sustainable green aviation fuel.

The agreement was signed by Eng Nayef bin Ali al Abri, President of the Civil Aviation Authority, Ghalib bin Said al Maamari, Vice-President of



Eng Nayef bin Ali al Abri, Ghalib bin Said al Maamari and Oscar Meijerink pose for photo during the ceremony.

Alternative Energy Sector at OQ Group, and Oscar Meijerink, General Manager of Future Fuels at Sky Energy.

This strategic cooperation reflects the shared vision of the

Sultanate of Oman playing a vital role in the production and use of green fuel by implementing joint

plans aimed at achieving zero neutrality by 2050 and working with partners in this field, which allows for evaluating the best ways to enhance the green economy.

Al Abri stressed CAA's continuous work to enhance efforts to reduce the environmental impacts of civil aviation activities in accordance with the Civil Aviation Law issued by Royal Decree No. 76/2019, which gave CAA the authority to issue regulations to protect the environment from the effects of civil aviation activities based on international standards and the legislation in force in Oman in coordination with the relevant authorities.

Meanwhile, Al Maamari said that this step reflects the continued exploration of the Sultanate of Oman's promising

potential in the field of green fuel, especially with regard to the possibility of producing sustainable aviation fuel, which contributes to reducing carbon emissions resulting from the aviation industry in the medium and long term.

This, according to him, is compatible with the government's plans to reach zero neutrality by 2050 and position the Sultanate of Oman as a global centre for green industries. For his part, Meijerink added that this partnership reflects the efforts made by the Civil Aviation Authority and the OQ Group in promoting green fuel in the Sultanate of Oman, stressing the company's commitment to supporting these efforts and harnessing its capabilities and expertise in the field of sustainable aviation fuel globally. — ONA

\$7.5m polymer products project to come up in Samayil Industrial City

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 11

Oranss Technology Company and Mobel Polymers have signed an agreement to establish polymer products manufacturing factory in Samayil Industrial City, with an investment value of \$7.5 million for its initial phase.

An agreement was signed by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) for setting up a polymer products manufacturing factory in Samayil Industrial City with an investment of \$7.5 million in the first phase.

Signing on behalf of the project investors were Sharifa al Numani, Chairperson of Oranss Technology Board of Directors, and Dr Hany Makary, Chairman of Mobel Polymers Board of Directors.

The signing took place in the presence of Eng Dawood bin Salim al Haddabi, CEO of Madayn, on the sidelines of the Home and Building Expo at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Commenting on this agreement, Sharifa al



The partnership represents the strong bond between the Sultanate of Oman and Egypt.

Numani pointed out that the factory's output will serve as a pivotal source of raw materials for various manufacturing sectors within Oman, which were previously reliant on imports, thereby catalysing the growth of Omani industries.

"The partnership forged between Oranss Technology and Mobel Polymers represents the strong bond between the Sultanate of Oman and Egypt, encouraging innovation, economic growth, and international cooperation," she said.

FAO says coastal women play vital role in Oman's fisheries sector

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 11

The fisheries sector in Oman plays an important role in achieving food security and eradicating poverty, according to Hasna al Harthiyah , Assistant Representative of the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) in the Sultanate of Oman. More than 90 per cent of fisheries in the country are small-scale, and coastal women play a vital role in the sector, specifically in post-harvest activities, she noted.

The FAO recently conducted a socio-economic survey in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources on the cost of production in fisheries.

The survey showed that small-scale fisheries generated high returns from investments and showed good economic performance. This is due to the good management and abundance of the productive marine resources of the country.

The value of production was estimated at about RO 240 million and the average landed value was RO 0.7 / kg.

The survey also highlighted the vital role that coastal women play in fishing activities along the entire coast.

Coastal women are involved



More than 90% of fisheries in the country are small-scale, and coastal women play a vital role in the sector, specifically in post-harvest activities

HASNA AL HARTHIYAH
Assistant Representative,
FAO Oman

in a variety of tasks, including collecting shells, picking sea cucumbers and collecting oysters, sewing nets, and manufacturing and marketing marine products. Some also help their husbands and family members with artisanal fishing activities.

Despite their important contributions, coastal women in Oman often face challenges in access to markets, finance, and training.

FAO is working with the government and other partners to address these challenges and empower coastal women to play an even greater role in the fisheries sector. For example, FAO is implementing a project to develop the capacities of coastal women in small-scale fisheries. The project is providing training in a variety of areas, including business management, marketing, and food processing. FAO is also working to connect coastal women to markets and financial services.

By supporting coastal women, FAO is helping to ensure the sustainability of the fisheries sector in Oman and improving the livelihoods of coastal communities.

GROWTH THROUGH TOURISM

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group) would like to invite competent and experienced companies to participate in the following Tender:

Tender No.	29/2023
Tender Title	Setting and Implementing Sales and Marketing Strategies for the Four Seasons Branded Residence in Muscat Governorate
Tender Submission Closing Date	1.11.2023
Tender Process Details	Please visit: www.omran.om/tenders/



omanobserver.om/tenders/

Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group)
Tel: +968 24 39 11 11
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FORD UNVEILS NEXT-GEN FORD EVEREST IN OMAN

MUSCAT: Recently Ford Motor Company unveiled the all-new Ford Everest 4x4 SUV at an exclusive GCC distributor meet in Oman. Providing on-ground support was Ford's Oman distributor — Arabian Car Marketing Company.

The Next-Gen Ford Everest made its Middle East debut for the first time ever, blending adventure-ready capability with exceptional comfort and customer-focused technology in a rugged, refined, and fun-to-drive SUV.

Engineered to excite, the Next-Gen Ford Everest has been built for the adventurous – with capability at its core. Inside, premium levels of craftsmanship have created a quiet and refined sanctuary for up to seven, while class-leading technology and safety features offer driver and passengers comfort and peace of mind on every journey.

To showcase this, three trims of the Next-Gen Ford Everest were presented at the reveal; XLS, XLT and Limited. A range of different variants and models will be available, depending on the



market, to meet the needs of Ford customers.

Everest's wider track and longer wheelbase enabled designers to create a more progressive, muscular appearance. Designers also put a lot of thought into the function and feel of the interior, taking inspiration from modern homes and bringing in plush materials, premium finishes, and ambient lighting in areas customers will appreciate them best.

The XLT and Limited trims are equipped with integrated wireless charging, while all series receive

a svelte new leather trimmed e-Shifter, and an electric parking brake.

Access to the third row is much easier thanks to second-row seats that slide further forward than before.

Additionally, all occupants now have places to store their things and depending on the model, charge their devices with power outlets in all three rows.

The Everest Limited trim further elevates the interior and exterior experience with a best-in-class Bang & Olufsen 12-speaker system delivering premium audio

ambient lighting and a dual-panel sunroof.

On the outside, the Limited comes with exclusive 21-inch alloy wheels and a variety of chrome accents.

The Next-Gen Ford Everest is also equipped with an 8-inch digital instrument panel in addition to large, high-resolution portrait 10.1-inch or best-in-class 12-inch touchscreens.

Next-Gen Ford Everest is loaded with Ford's latest SYNC 4A system, which comes customer-ready with its voice-activated communications, entertainment, and information systems.

The Ford Everest will soon be available at Ford showrooms in Oman. Arabian Car Marketing Company has been bringing smiles to customers with Ford's spectacular range of vehicles for more than three decades. With its team of talented professionals, easy availability of spare parts and full-fledged service facilities, Arabian Car Marketing Company enhanced experiences for Ford customers, giving them several opportunities to enjoy a fulfilling ownership period.

Ooredoo celebrates strong enterprising women across Oman



Participants of the sixth Ooredoo Omani Women's Incubators Forum

MUSCAT: Marking Omani Women's Day, Ooredoo recently held the sixth Ooredoo Omani Women's Incubators Forum under the auspices of HH Sayyidah Meyyan bint Shihab al Said and in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development.

The event brought together participants in Ooredoo's women-dedicated incubators to celebrate their projects and ability to achieve a work-life balance, while contributing to Oman's economy.

Ooredoo believes that supporting the skills development of strong Omani women drives growth for their families, communities, and the economy.

After all, "women hold up half the sky," as the saying goes, and, in Oman, women were once famously described by His late Majesty Sultan Qaboos as one of the wings Oman requires to "soar high" in that same sky like a bird.

The event celebrated the 'Upgrade Your Incubator' competition held for Omani women to win prizes towards the digitalisation of marketing by using technology and social media to drive the visibility and profitability of their projects.

Women's incubators also showcased their products from which winners were selected.

Moreover, an upcoming skills and creativity workshop was introduced, while sessions focused on social media content creation, empowering small and medium enterprises, and the art of merchandising.

Other activities included the 'Best Omani Traditional Dress and Poetry' contests.

The Omani Women's Incubators Forum was partly supported by Otaxi Oman and part of the 'Ooredoo Goodwill' programme, which covers various CSR activities and initiatives enabling Ooredoo to make a real difference in the communities it serves.

To date, at least ten thousand Omani women have benefitted from Ooredoo's incubators.

These learning hubs support them in developing skills and setting up businesses in information technology, beauty, cooking, sewing, and handicrafts.

Through such initiatives, Ooredoo acts as a catalyst to build a supportive ecosystem and empower women with skills, visibility, and a network.

Unimoni opens remodelled branch in Avenues Mall

MUSCAT: Unimoni Exchange, a leading remittance and foreign exchange brand in the Sultanate of Oman, has opened its refurbished branch in Avenues Mall, with a fresh look and feel, the new location is spacious and bright with modern fitout and technology, which makes it more convenient for our valued customers.

"In our constant endeavour to provide the best customer experience we are glad to open our refurbished outlet in the Avenues Mall, Al Ghubra.



Unimoni Exchange's remodelled branch in Avenues Mall

With more space and new look, it gives a fresh feel to our customers with same commitment of unmatched customer service.

Our remodelled branch is well equipped to provide greater experiences and enhanced convenience to the customers.

We look forward to welcoming our existing and new customers," said Boban MP, CEO Unimoni Oman.

Unimoni Oman offers a suite of services for consumers and corporates, delivered through

multiple touch-points such as retail stores, digital and mobile solutions, and self-service kiosks, across the Sultanate of Oman.

Unimoni Oman commenced its operation in the Sultanate of Oman in the year 1995.

The brand offers its customers money transfer and foreign exchange services.

An ISO-certified brand and member of prestigious global associations have been recognised and awarded for its quality and business excellence over the years.



OOMCO celebrates further operations expansion in Saudi

MUSCAT: Marking the occasion of Saudi Arabia's 93rd National Day, Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) recently celebrated opening three additional service stations in the Western Region. The company's network in KSA expanded this year by 10 sites bringing the total number of operational service stations to 26.

The Oman-based fuel marketer announced that it aims to operate 30 stations across Saudi Arabia by the end of 2023, which aligns with its aim to become one of the top five fuel marketers, but we are also allowing our

OOMCO celebrated Saudi National Day at select service stations across the rapidly developing Kingdom. It hosted festive and family-friendly activities at three of its sites in Jeddah in the West and at four stations in Al Ahssa, Dammam, and Al Qatif in the East.

"The International Monetary Fund recently confirmed that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was the fastest growing G20 economy in 2022.

By further expanding our operations, we are not only serving a vast market with a multitude of opportunities, but we are also allowing our business to grow.

We are pleased an Omani has successfully travelled across borders," said Jaber Mansour al Wahaibi, General Manager of International Retail, Business Development, Strategic Planning, Marketing and Digital at Oman Oil Marketing Company.

Serving a wide variety of customer segments and as part of its non-fuel growth and retail transformation process, OOMCO service stations have developed into welcoming one-stop destinations where customers can buy quality fuel, lubricants, and other products and services.

OOMCO's successful business model is a source of competitive advantage transferable across the region and Africa, including Tanzania and Egypt, among the other key growth markets for the Oman-based fuel marketer.

Interns get to work after being selected for OAB's Ruwad Al Arabi programme

MUSCAT: 30 young Omani prodigies began their journeys with Oman Arab Bank (OAB) by participating in the Ruwad Al Arabi (Leaders of Tomorrow) Internship Programme.

The interns are currently gaining hands-on experience across various banking departments, providing them with a unique opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge in a real-world setting.

The programme has received an overwhelming response from young Omanis, with around 2,000 applicants vying for the prestigious internship programme. University and college graduates were carefully selected after a thorough interview process, ensuring that the most enthusiastic, hardworking and willing-to-learn graduates were chosen.

Sulaiman al Harthy, CEO of Oman Arab Bank, said: "I have been delighted to see so many enthusiastic young new faces joining the organisation as Ruwad Al Arabi really kicks into gear, bringing a wealth of fresh ideas and energy to the bank.



30 young Omani interns began their journeys with OAB's internship programme

This educational journey promises to be mutually beneficial in terms of what they will learn and what we will learn from them.

During their 12 months with us, they can expect to grow and learn new skills, making them ready for work. I can already see that we have unearthed some talents who will undoubtedly be assets to the bank."

Ruwad Al Arabi interns have been actively involved in various departments, including customer experience, digital banking,

marketing, and finance. They also had the opportunity to meet, be trained, and be mentored by experienced OAB professionals.

The one-year programme provides participants with meaningful work experience and the skills required to bolster employment prospects within, or outside, the banking sector.

With such an initiative, OAB is not only investing in the future of the banking industry, but also contributing to the development of Oman's economy.

Al Muaiyid al Khalasi, a participant in Ruwad Al Arabi who is a graduate of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences said: "Being part of this initiative has already given me a true image of corporate life and work, with a great understanding of how things operate behind the scenes in the banking sector.

So far, I have been lucky enough to work on several events, which gave me an appreciation of event management and the people who work in this area, as well as observing the team during negotiations and improving my comprehension of that aspect of the business. I'm excited to learn much more in the weeks ahead."

The goal of Ruwad Al Arabi is to improve the employability of young Omanis while growing the workforce.

As OAB celebrates its 50th anniversary, the bank's commitment to nurturing young talent and promoting financial literacy is a testament to its dedication to the people of Oman and its vision for a prosperous future.



Weed growth erodes output of Omani wheat: Study

QASIM AL MAASHANI

MUSCAT, OCT 11

A comprehensive research study conducted at Sultan Qaboos University has revealed a persistent issue in the extensive wheat fields of Najd in Dhofar Governorate: the rampant growth of weeds.

These weeds relentlessly compete with wheat plants for essential resources such as food, water and sunlight, ultimately leading to reduced yields and economic returns for farmers.

The study, titled “Effective Strategies for Weed Management in Wheat Fields to Enhance Food Security,” was conducted by a team of experts: Dr Mohammed Farouk, Head of the Plant Sciences Department and Associate Professor; Dr Walid bin Mubarak al Busaidi, a Gardening Researcher; and Dr Ali bin Masoud al Subhi, a Researcher specialising in Plant Diseases, in the Faculty of Agricultural and Marine Sciences.



Wheat cultivation is an increasingly important agricultural activity in Oman.

The research team closely observed a mix of fine grasses and broad-leaved herbs in the Najd wheat fields. They found that the use of wheat seeds containing harmful weed seeds, along with the application of fresh, partially

decomposed, and unheated animal manure, significantly contributed to the proliferation of weeds.

Unfortunately, many farmers have been neglecting proper weed management, often relying on

costly and inefficient mechanical control methods.

The team also highlighted the fact that chemical pesticides for weed control are prohibited in the Sultanate of Oman. However, some farmers have resorted to

illegal imported herbicides.

Nevertheless, due to a lack of knowledge and technical expertise in deploying chemical pesticides for weed control, this approach has not proven effective in curbing the economic losses caused by weeds. The team's conclusion emphasised the urgent need for proactive and effective weed management strategies in wheat fields.

Implementing these strategies is projected to increase wheat production by 20-30 per cent, thereby contributing significantly to Oman's pursuit of food security.

The research team has proposed a set of measures to combat the weed problem in wheat fields, thereby contributing to enhanced food security and environmental protection.

These measures include: Using certified wheat seeds free of weed seeds; applying well-decomposed animal manure; implementing integrated weed management (IWM) practices that combine cultural, mechanical, biological, and chemical control methods;

and raising awareness among farmers about the significance of weed management and the safe and effective use of herbicides

According to Eng Fael al Jahfali of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, invasive weeds pose a significant threat crop cultivation in Dhofar Governorate, with resultant impacts for the environment, livestock and agricultural production.

He called for collaborative efforts involving specialised institutions, farmers, and other stakeholders to implement effective control measures, including planting resistant varieties, chemical control and mechanical control.

Al Jahfali highlighted that invasive weeds can reduce agricultural crop production, harm trees and wild plants, deplete soil fertility, and increase the risk of desertification. Some invasive weed types have adapted to the desert environment, making them even more challenging to control.

Integrated residential neighbourhoods showcased at Home & Building Expo



One of the exhibits is seen at the Home & Building Expo.

NASRULAH AL AJMI

MUSCAT, OCT 11

The Integrated Residential Neighbourhoods Programme (Sourh) — a far-reaching sustainable housing solution supported by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MoHUP) — is among the key attractions of the Home & Building Expo currently underway at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC).

The Sourh housing initiative exemplifies the Ministry's commitment to promoting sustainable urban planning and revitalising the housing and real estate sector.

A crucial focal point in this year's October Urbanism campaign is the Ministry's active participation in the Home & Building Expo 2023. Through its presence at the 3-day expo, the Ministry is keen to introduce its landmark housing initiative, among other projects, to a broader audience.

The Sourh programme serves a dual purpose: the construction of comprehensive residential neighbourhoods from the ground up, beginning with essential infrastructure and extending to recreational facilities, while also nurturing the growth of sustainable communities that generate investment and employment

opportunities for residents. These housing options are both diverse and characterised by their distinctive designs, which hold the potential to stimulate economic growth in the region.

On display at the Home & Building Expo is the model of Al Naseem neighbourhood, a flagship of the Ministry's Sourh initiative. The exhibit offers a glimpse into the Ministry's vision by showcasing its target audience, available facilities and services.

As the pioneering residential development under the Ministry's purview, Al Naseem neighbourhood is poised to have a substantial economic impact in Oman.

In addition to spotlighting Al Naseem neighbourhood, the Ministry has unveiled site plans for the development of new integrated neighbourhoods in other parts of Oman.

These new sites are strategically designed to align with the objectives of October Urbanism, which places a strong emphasis on creating a culture of sustainable urban planning and flexible adaptability to changing life dynamics.

The goal is to construct an urban economy that caters to the needs of both individuals and communities, generating employment opportunities and fostering economic growth.

Oman oil exports reach 205 million barrels until end-August

MUSCAT: The total quantity of oil exports of the Sultanate of Oman by end of August 2023 reached 205.012 million barrels, by calculating the average price per barrel at \$79.8. The country's oil exports represented 80.1 per cent of its total oil production, reaching 255.814 million barrels.

The statistics data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information showed the total production of crude oil in Oman decreased by 2.5 per cent, reaching 199.497 million barrels, while the total production of the condensate oil increased by 7.4 per cent, reaching 56.316 million barrels. The average daily production of oil reached 1.052 million barrels till end of August 2023.

China has topped the oil-importing countries from the Sultanate of Oman at end of August 2023, with total exports amounting to 186.212



An oil rig in Oman is seen in this illustration picture.

million barrels, followed by Japan with 7.384 million barrels, then India with 2.716 million barrels, while the oil exports of Oman to other

countries reached 6,748 million barrels.

The data pointed out the total domestic production and import of natural gas amounted to 35.860 billion cubic metres till end of August 2023, up by 1.8 per cent, compared to the same period in 2022, when the total domestic production and import of natural gas at that time was 35.242 billion cubic metres.

Statistics showed that the industrial projects accounted for 58.5 per cent of natural gas uses in the Sultanate of Oman till the end of August 2023, where uses for industrial projects reached 20.968 billion cubic metres.

The total use of natural gas by oil fields reached 9.011 billion cubic metres, the uses of natural gas by the power plants reached 5.704 billion cubic metres, and 175.200 million cubic metres of natural gas used by industrial estates in the Sultanate of Oman till end of August 2023.

OCCI participates in governance modeling conference in Istanbul

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, OCT 11

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) participated in the ‘Governance Modeling Roadmap to Stimulate Sustainable Development’ conference, in Istanbul on October 10-12, 2023.

The Chamber's participation aims to activate the principle of governance and urge private sector institutions and companies to apply governance in procedures and businesses in a way that creates a competitive environment capable of keeping pace with regional and global changes in order to invest in available opportunities and enhance economic competitiveness.

The delegation was headed by Eng Ibrahim bin Abdullah al Hosni, Chairman of OCCI's Digital Economy and Artificial Intelligence Committee, who stressed that governance is an important element for the success of any institution and the implementation of its development strategy capable of achieving the goals. He added the conference worked on laws and legislation and their impact on implementing the good governance system and enhancing combating corruption to achieve a system of transparency and



Delegates are seen during the conference.

justice.

For his part, Dr Yahya bin Khamis al Hussein, member of OCCI's Labour Market Committee, presented a paper entitled “Indicators of sustainable development and their relationship to governance”, presenting the experience of the Sultanate of Oman, where it is discussed sustainable development indicators, their availability, the challenges facing their application, and current and future work to address them.

Meanwhile, Fahd al Sunaidi said, “This participation allowed

us to learn about the importance of governance in managing companies' business and controlling the quality of executive processes in institutions.” Karim al Balushi, an Omani delegate, said that he benefited from discussions with a group of businessmen, lawyers and lecturers at the conference who have experience and high academic degrees and who have extensive experience in the field of governance. He added, “As a businessman in Oman and one of those who aspire to continue and work to expand the activities

of the institutions under my management and responsibility, expansion and growth will not be achieved unless there is a system characterised by honesty, integrity and transparency.”

Another delegate, Omar al Mundhiri said that participation in the conference enriched the audience about the concept of governance and its role in institutions and companies.

Several topics on governance and the problems arising from not applying the correct rules of governance and solutions to them were discussed.

Citizens need to elect the best in Shura elections



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

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

In two weeks, the Sultanate of Oman is all set to hold elections for the Majlis Ash'shura 10th Term. There are many challenges that the citizens face. The government agencies need to heed to the recommendations and suggestions of the Majlis Ash'shura.

Hence the question comes... do voters care about the electoral programmes presented by some candidates contesting the elections which will be held on October 29.

Based on feedback from the public, I believe that eligible voters will choose their candidates based on their affiliations, and not the capabilities and competencies of

the candidate. It will also depend on the candidate's relation with the voter. Merit should be taken into account when choosing a candidate.

It is imperative that voters cast their ballot for the most competent candidate. This will ensure that only the wise, enlightened and responsible candidates will be elected to the Majlis Ash'shura. The elected members should also ideally have analytical skills, deep insight of issues of significance to his community, and issues of national interest.

As we are impacted by global events and developments, it is only the knowledgeable and insightful can come up with the

SHURA MEMBERS OR THOSE ELECTED TO OTHER REPRESENTATIVE BODIES HAVE A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY IN HANDLING ISSUES OF IMPORT TO THE COMMUNITY, AND THE COUNTRY IN GENERAL

best solutions to mitigate these impacts on the local population. Hence the need to vote only for the most responsible candidates.

Shura members or those elected to other representative bodies have a great responsibility in handling issues of import to the community, and the country in general. The government, for its part, must take into account the opinions, suggestions and recommendations submitted by the Majlis Ash'shura. This approach will enhance the prestige of the elected members and encourage them to be fair and committed to their constituents. At the same time, whose actions and deeds violate local laws and legislations must

be made accountable.

Today, candidates use social media and public engagements to reach out to their constituents. Nowadays, voters choose their candidates based on a loose set of criteria, and not on his/her competence. This shortcoming should be addressed, so it does not become a norm when future generations cast their ballots.

Today, there are dozens of challenges facing the Omani society that require the new Majlis Ash'shura to focus on in its discussions and proposals. The issue of job-seekers, low salaries, laid-off workers, supply shortfall in housing, among other social and economic issues, require appropriate solutions.

Fragile global economy faces new crisis

The International Monetary Fund said on Tuesday that the pace of the global economic recovery is slowing, a warning that came as a new war in the Middle East threatened to upend a world economy already reeling from several years of overlapping crises.

The eruption of fighting between Israel and Hamas over the weekend, which could sow disruption across the region, reflects how challenging it has become to shield economies from increasingly frequent and unpredictable global shocks. The conflict has cast a cloud over a gathering of top economic policymakers in Morocco for the annual meetings of the IMF and the World Bank.

Officials who planned to grapple with the lingering economic effects of the pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine now face a new crisis.

"Economies are at a delicate state," Ajay Banga, the World Bank president, said in an interview on the sidelines of the annual meetings. "Having war is really not helpful for central banks who are finally trying to find their way to a soft landing," he said. Banga was referring to efforts by policymakers in the West to try to cool rapid inflation without triggering a recession.

Banga said that so far, the impact of the Middle East attacks on the world's economy is more limited than the war in Ukraine. That conflict initially sent oil and food prices soaring, roiling global markets given Russia's role as a top energy producer and Ukraine's status as a major exporter of grain and fertiliser.

"But if this were to spread in any way then it becomes dangerous," Banga added, saying such a development would result in "a crisis of unimaginable proportion."

Oil markets are already jittery. Lucrezia Reichlin, a professor at the London Business School and a former director general of research at the European Central Bank, said, "The main question is what's going to happen to energy prices."

Reichlin is concerned that another spike in oil prices would pressure the Federal Reserve and other central banks to further push up interest rates, which she said have risen too far too fast.

As far as energy prices,



ALAN RAPPEPORT

The writer is an American journalist. He is currently an economic policy reporter at The New York Times, based in Washington.



PATRICIA COHEN

The writer is the global economics correspondent, based in London, and the author of "In Our Prime: The Fascinating History and Promising Future of Middle Age" (Scribner).



World Bank President Ajay Banga speaks on the second day of the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, in Marrakech, Morocco. – Reuters

THIS NEXT-GENERATION OF SOVEREIGN DEBT CRISIS IS PLAYING OUT IN A WORLD THAT IS COMING TO TERMS WITH A REAPPRAISAL OF GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS IN ADDITION TO GROWING GEOPOLITICAL RIVALRIES. ADDED TO THE COMPLEXITIES ARE ESTIMATES THAT WITHIN THE NEXT DECADE, TRILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN NEW FINANCING WILL BE NEEDED TO MITIGATE DEVASTATING CLIMATE CHANGE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

Reichlin said, "we have two fronts, Russia and now the Middle East."

Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas, the IMF's chief economist, said it was too early to assess whether the recent jump in oil prices would be sustained. If it is, he said, research shows that a 10% increase in oil prices would weigh down the global economy, reducing output 0.15% and increasing inflation 0.4% next year. In its latest World Economic Outlook, the IMF underscored the fragility of the recovery. It maintained its global growth outlook for this year at 3% and slightly lowered its forecast for 2024 to 2.9%.

Although the IMF upgraded its projection for output in the United States for this year, it downgraded the euro area and China while warning that distress in that nation's real estate sector is worsening.

"We see a global economy that is limping along, and it's not quite sprinting yet," Gourinchas said. In the medium term, "the picture is darker," he added, citing a series of risks including

the likelihood of more large natural disasters caused by climate change.

Europe's economy, in particular, is caught in the middle of growing global tensions. Since Russia attacked Ukraine in February 2022, European governments have frantically scrambled to free themselves from an overdependence on Russian natural gas.

They have largely succeeded by turning, in part, to suppliers in the Middle East.

Over the weekend, the European Union swiftly expressed solidarity with Israel and condemned the surprise attack from Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip.

Some oil suppliers may take a different view. Algeria, for example, which has increased its exports of natural gas to Italy, criticised Israel for responding with airstrikes on Gaza.

Even before the weekend's events, the energy transition had taken a toll on European economies.

In the 20 countries that use

the euro, the IMF predicts that growth will slow to just 0.7% this year from 3.3% in 2022. Germany, Europe's largest economy, is expected to contract 0.5%.

High interest rates, persistent inflation and the aftershocks of spiralling energy prices are also expected to slow growth in Britain to 0.5% this year from 4.1% in 2022.

Sub-Saharan Africa is also caught in the slowdown. Growth is projected to shrink this year by 3.3%, although next year's outlook is brighter, when growth is forecast to be 4%.

Staggering debt looms over many of these nations. The average debt now amounts to 60% of the region's total output — double what it was a decade ago. Higher interest rates have contributed to soaring repayment costs.

This next-generation of sovereign debt crisis is playing out in a world that is coming to terms with a reappraisal of global supply chains in addition to growing geopolitical rivalries. Added to the complexities are

estimates that within the next decade, trillions of dollars in new financing will be needed to mitigate devastating climate change in developing countries.

One of the biggest questions facing policymakers is what impact China's sluggish economy will have on the rest of the world.

The IMF has lowered its growth outlook for China twice this year and said on Tuesday that consumer confidence there was "subdued" and that industrial production is weakening. It warned that countries that are part of the Asian industrial supply chain could be exposed to this loss of momentum.

In an interview on her flight to the meetings, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said she believed China has the tools to address a "complex set of economic challenges" and that she does not expect its slowdown to weigh on the US economy. "I think they face significant challenges that they have to address," Yellen said. "I haven't seen and don't expect a spillover onto us."

— The New York Times

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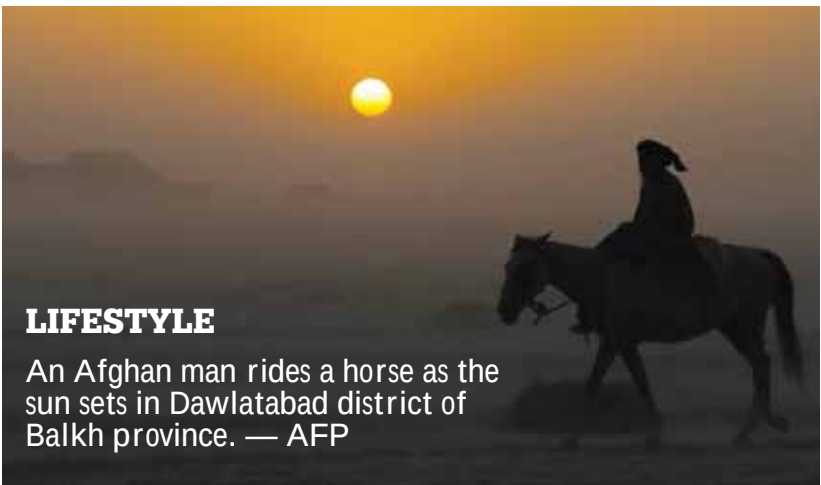
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LIFESTYLE

An Afghan man rides a horse as the sun sets in Dawlatabad district of Balkh province. — AFP



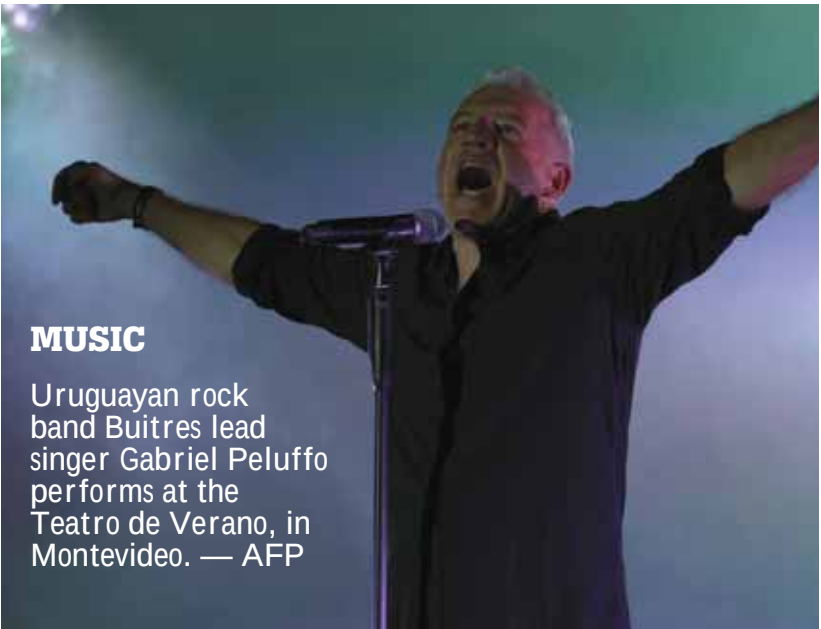
GUITAR

Martin Nolan, Executive Director, Chief Financial Officer, and a principal of Julien's Auctions, shows Eric Clapton Fool guitar during the media preview for Julien's played, worn, torn rock 'roll iconic guitars and memorabilia' in Gardena, California. — AFP



PRINCESS

Britain's Catherine, Princess of Wales, reacts during a visit to Nottingham Trent University, in Nottingham, central England. — AFP



MUSIC

Uruguayan rock band Buitres lead singer Gabriel Peluffo performs at the Teatro de Verano, in Montevideo. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

A cyclist rides past pedestrians sitting on the banks of the Garonne River at sunset next to the Dome de la Grave landmark (CL), in Toulouse, southwestern France. — AFP

art & life

THURSDAY | OCTOBER 12, 2023 | RABEE AL AWWAL 26, 1445 AH | OMAN OBSERVER | www.omanobserver.om | features@omanobserver.om



BUTHAINA AL RIYAMI

For centuries, art has been known for speaking on behalf of the artist and a critical response to the artist's surroundings. Artists continue to use art to reflect their critical perspectives on certain situations and discuss social situations. Abdullah al Kalbani is an Omani artist whose artworks are themed around social issues and situations because he believes that art can depict every psychological and social scene deeply. Al Kalbani insists that art is a message that places the onus on its people to grasp. Thus, even if he believes in 'Art for the sake of art' and follows it



in some of his work, he finds himself in a position where he must hold and deliver the message of art to stimulate and cause social changes. "Family" is one of the artworks that Al Kalbani



always finds himself drowning in its details and concepts that it holds. Cats are an important element in this artwork, as in most of his works. Three sculptures are used to show different family



members: mother, father and son. In his work, Al Kalbani criticises the stereotype of the emotional role; the mother is always the source of emotion in the family structure, which

deforms the father's love. The three sculptures are placed very carefully to convey the artist's perspective, emphasising the presence of fatherly love and affection, albeit of a different nature than

maternal love and affection. The son sculpture is very close to the mother sculpture, showing the essence of expressing maternal love, affection and care. The harmony between the two sculptures allows viewers to feel that it is exactly the same as maternal love in real life, leading to the stereotype that "mother is the only source of emotion between parents". The father sculpture is placed a little bit far away from the son sculpture. However, when the viewer looks closer, he can see that the father sculpture's attention and concern are focused on his son. It can be seen that a father's love usually appears in different ways, always ready to protect.



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Riyadh Hosts 2-Day KCON Concert

THE MOHAMMED Abdu Theater in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, witnessed an exceptional two-day KCON concert that featured an incredible lineup of artists. The event attracted a massive crowd of Korean music enthusiasts, who gathered to enjoy performances by their favourite groups.



On the first day, the theatre came alive with electrifying performances from Super Junior D&E, HIGHLIGHT, HYOLYN, EVERGLOW, KARD, 8TURN, and RIIZE. The audience was treated to a series of energetic and captivating shows that left them enthralled.

The excitement continued on the second day as the stage welcomed Super Junior, OH MY GIRL, TEMPEST, THE NEW SIX, EVNNE, EELTZ U+P, and DREAMCATCHER. These renowned groups delivered

powerful and unforgettable performances, showcasing their talent and captivating the audience.

The Mohammed Abdu Theater was transformed into a hub of music and entertainment, equipped with cutting-edge sound and lighting systems to enhance the concert experience for the attendees. Fans from across the Kingdom and beyond gathered in Riyadh to celebrate Korean culture and share their love for K-pop.

The KCON concert at the Mohammed Abdu Theater signi-

fies the growing international collaboration in the music industry, promoting cultural exchange and bridging gaps between different communities. The event's ability to attract a diverse audience from various backgrounds highlights the universal appeal of Korean music.

In the aftermath of the concert, the audience expressed their elation and satisfaction, praising the exceptional performances delivered by the talented artists. The success of the two-day KCON event at the Mohammed Abdu Theater further solidifies its position as a premier venue for hosting world-class music events in Riyadh.

SCIENCES

Huge ancient solar storm revealed by tree rings in French Alps

ANNUAL GROWTH RINGS inside the ancient remains of Scots pine trees in the Southern French Alps have revealed evidence of the largest-known solar storm, one that might have fried satellites and knocked out electricity grids had it occurred today.

Researchers said on Monday the solar storm - the sun sending a large burst of energetic particles into space - occurred 14,300 years ago. Evidence for it manifested as a huge spike in radiocarbon - an isotope, or form, of the element carbon - detected in the growth rings of the tree remains along the Drouzet River near the town of Gap.

Earth at the time was in the



grips of the last Ice Age, as human hunter-gatherers eked out a living in difficult conditions in many places around the world.

"At the time, those living on Earth would have likely first seen a bright solar flare - a flash in the sky," said Tim Heaton, a professor of applied statistics at the University of Leeds in England and one of the authors of the study published in the Royal Society's Philosophical Transactions A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences journal.

"Then several hours later, they likely would have seen a huge aurora in the sky that would extend much further towards the equator than current auroras. They wouldn't have noticed the high-energy particles or been aware that they were experiencing a geomagnetic disturbance," Heaton added.

Energetic solar particles would have flooded Earth's upper atmosphere, causing a chain of nuclear reactions and leading to a sudden spike in production of radiocarbon that would have been absorbed into the tissue of growing trees.

"About 10 years ago, scientists discovered that extreme solar events including solar flares and coronal mass ejections can create short-term bursts of energet-

ic particles that can create spikes in radiocarbon production occurring over the course of a single year," said Edouard Bard, a professor of climate and ocean evolution at the Collège de France and the research centre CEREGE.

Nine such extreme solar storms now have been identified using tree-ring radiocarbon evidence, with the most recent in 774 and 993 AD.

The largest directly observed solar storm, called the Carrington Event, occurred in 1859, wreaking havoc on telegraphs and creating a nighttime aurora so bright that birds sang as if the sun was rising. The one 14,300 years ago would have been something like 10 times more severe.

The effects of solar storms can disable electronics.

"If similar solar storms happened today, they could be catastrophic for society, as we are so reliant upon technology," Heaton said.

"They could do enormous damage to our electricity grids, potentially causing nationwide blackouts lasting months, permanently putting satellites out of action with the huge bursts of energetic particles destroying their solar panels and stopping us communicating with them, and pose severe radiation risks to astronauts and aviation. In the worst-case sce-

nario, the impact could cost us billions, or even trillions, of dollars in lost GDP," Heaton added.

The trees, buried at the end of the last glaciation period, had begun to fossilise but still retained organic material.

"The good preservation of the trunks and their in-life position - still rooted, with pieces of bark remaining - indicate that the trees were rather quickly buried," said study co-author Cécile Miramont, a professor of paleoenvironments and paleoclimates at Aix-Marseille University in France and the research institute IMBE. "Subfossil wood originates when wood is buried in an anaerobic environment, with an absence of microbial and chemical degradation."

The researchers corroborated their findings by detecting a corresponding spike in another chemical isotope in Greenland ice-cores dating to the same year.

"We do not know what causes such extreme solar storms to occur, how frequently they might occur or if we can predict them," Heaton said. "This is the big question: will our communications, electricity grids and satellites mostly be able to withstand their impacts and just suffer temporary effects before quickly coming back online? Or will they catastrophically fail?" — Reuters



MUSIC

Music too fast for feet



IT WAS FRIDAY night, and the clubgoers in Münster were primed to go hard. Decked out in black clothes and sunglasses, despite the dim light, the young crowd chanted the name of Héctor Oaks, a Spanish DJ, as he began playing his signature muscular, fast techno. Standing on top of the club's risers, the crowd desperately tried to keep up with the beat. Instead of moving their legs, many just oscillated their hips.

Neele Hoyer, 21, a college student attending the event, explained that most other German techno fans of her age had developed affinity for such breathless music. "It's gone totally mainstream," she said. Dancing to such a fast beat could sometimes be strenuous, she added, but "this is what's normal to us."

In recent years, Oaks, 32, has become a prominent figure in a broader trend in electronic music. While conventional techno is often played at around 120 to 130 beats per minute, Oaks and other DJs often play at 145 or above. The resulting hard-charging, breakneck sound has become the defining sound of Europe's dance floors since the lockdown phase of the pandemic.

A data analysis by German public broadcaster RBB this summer found that the top elec-

tronic music tracks of 2022 had much faster tempos than similar songs in 2016. Specialist dance music publications like Mixmag and Beatportal have noted the trend, and many of the buzzy DJs of the moment, like Ukraine's Daria Kolosova and Polish DJ VTSS, are known for cranking up the speed.

"I see it everywhere," said Casper Tielrooij, the founder of Dekmantel, a label and annual electronic music festival in Amsterdam. "It's not only techno, but jungle and trance and drum and bass." He argued that although the zeitgeist had started to change before COVID, the faster, harder genre of techno had "exploded during the pandemic" and tastes were partly being shaped by young people who had spent their late teens or early 20s in lockdown.

Luigi Di Venere, a techno and house DJ who often plays at Berghain, a Berlin techno club, said that "there's this idea that they need to speed things up to make up for it, and in case it happens again." He added that the less "organic" and more "robotic" fast music suited a generation of clubgoers more connected to online culture.

He argued that the brisk sound is partly sustained by a kind of feedback loop: As some DJs play faster, their co-head-

liners imitate their style to keep up the energy in the club. "You can't just be a grandma and go, 'Tra-la-la, 120 BPM,'" he said, adding that he believed the trend still hasn't reached its peak.

In an interview, Oaks said that he began developing his sound in 2013, by melding traditional techno sets with other genres, including trance. Music played at a higher speed, he said, causes dancers' hips, rather than their feet, to resonate, fostering a movement more akin to hovering than dancing. "I've thought about this a lot," he added.

He recalled that the music he played was an outlier on the European club scene a decade ago. But he partly grew a following at Herrensauna, a Berlin-based party known for its harder sound. The Herrensauna DJs' 2018 appearance on the influential Boiler Room platform, which hosts livestreamed sets, was a "turning point" for his kind of music, he said. "After that, you could see everything switched."

The style's success was likely fueled by other developments, including the proliferation of online DJ streams, like Hör, during the pandemic's lockdowns. According to Di Venere, because these streams were often shorter than normal club sets, DJs were pushed to squeeze in as much ener-

gy as possible, and the high-octane results became a staple at Europe's illegal pandemic-era raves.

Since coronavirus-prevention measures were relaxed last year, the sound has now transitioned to the continent's clubs, including in smaller cities like Münster, which has a population of about 300,000. Oaks is now regularly booked at venues in Ibiza, for instance, which were previously known for their softer, warmer sound.

Tahliah Simumba, 25, a Scottish musician who DJs as TAAHLIAH, grew her following during the pandemic with pop-inflected sets that often culminated at 170 BPM. In a recent phone interview, she said that TikTok, the video app, has been crucial in shaping post-pandemic club culture. The app, which focuses on snappy clips, has a large user base of techno fans, and its short videos favour fast-paced music.

She added that, as a younger DJ raised in an online environment, her sound was largely developed in isolation from the dance floor. "I try not to be held back by hierarchical idea of what DJing is," she said. "I want to be having as much fun as possible, and what is DJing, after all, other than playing music you like?"

— NYT

THE CHANGING WORLD



Shaddad al Musalmy

'Waiting time too long to bear'

So last week my seven-year-old son came back from school with high fever.

As always, we first administer a paracetamol dose and give it some time to react, probably around forty minutes but whenever it reoccurs again then we opt to take him to the nearest health centre.

Health centres are a great opportunity for us but to be honest the reception you get can sometimes trigger your anger leading to lowering your self-esteem due to the tension of seeing different patients with different symptoms.

As I took my son to the health centre around 9.30 pm, the queues were not as long as during the day. So I was glad that we would get quick medical attention for my son as at this moment he was having a very high fever and very weak that he could not even stand or sit.

I immediately rushed to the triage room. My token was not next but I thought I would just get some emergency help at least to cool down his temperature but to my surprise before I could utter a word, the duty nurse asked me if it was my token. I said no but...

Before I could utter out "the but," he ordered me rudely to go sit and wait for my token.

I tried to murmur that he should at least give him something to cool his fever but he again cut my words short and told me to sit and wait.

Honestly, at this point, I lost my temper and asked in an angry tone. "Even in a matter of extreme illness you can't attend to us even if it is not my token yet?" He still insisted that he has other patients to handle.

I know whoever comes to any hospital has a health issue but let us be realistic. Not every patient's situation is like the other's.

Some come for results collection from their lab blood tests, others come for routine check up while others come for minor cases and others are seriously unwell.

The waiting list of the long queues at health centres are frustrating. When someone is sick, the frustration becomes double as one has to endure both pain and then waiting and in some cases triple the pain as suddenly you are told there is a system shutdown and so you have to wait much longer.

To make the story short, around 12.45 am after midnight, I was lucky enough that it was my token but prior to seeing the doctor, I was again kept for more than half an hour due to existing patients who came in to show the doctor their ECG findings.

My turn finally arrived but as I entered the doctor's room, he again said he was having a quick meeting with the same duty nurse who had ignored me earlier so I had to sit and wait. Then the moment came when I finally went in again. However, I was told there was a sudden system shutdown and tokens had mixed up.

I was fed up now and decided to lay my complaints to the doctor until he was convinced to take my son in.

As a nation, I believe Oman can do better in terms of health centres. If a vote would be casted, the majority, if not all, would opt for the process to be shortened.

Taking tokens, (which sometimes are offline) then waiting for the long triage room queue and then again waiting for the long queue to see the doctor is exasperating.

I personally am of the view that since it is a health centre where they expect hundreds of patients on a daily basis, then time wasted on the triage over temperature, weight and blood pressure checks can be done right inside the doctor's office.

It would be better if a token leads you directly to the doctor's room and from there to the pharmacy.

We are very thankful we get medical help but we also believe something better and less frustrating can be planned. Till next...

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

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