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ZAMPA HELPS STEER AUSSIES PAST SRI LANKA



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THE BANK OF JAPAN'S SEDUCTIVE WIDOW-MAKER TRADE



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NAJMA AL BALUSHI'S JOURNEY OF OMANI ELEGANCE AND EMPOWERMENT



MUSCAT

STEPS TO ENHANCE ROLE OF STARTUPS

HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Honorary President of the Promising Omani Startups Programme, on Monday chaired the fourth meeting of the Supervisory Committee of the Omani Promising Startups Programme 2023. The meeting was held in the presence of representatives of government departments who are members of the programme's Supervisory Committee, as well as representatives of startup companies. The meeting discussed progress reports about the programme's initiatives aimed at enhancing the march of startups and entrepreneurs.

DETAILS ON P2

2ND VERSION OF INTAKHIB APP

The Ministry of Interior launched the second version of Intakhib app which will be used by voters to cast their ballot for the 10th term of Majlis Ashshura under the auspices of Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, on Monday. Sayyid Hamoud affirmed that the ministry is moving ahead with the digitalisation of all services and programmes as part of its strategy and utilisation of advanced technology and artificial intelligence to facilitate the process for both voters and candidates.

DETAILS ON P3

OMAN FOLLOWING GAZA SITUATION



On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, on Monday received participants in the 15th meeting of the GCC attorneys general, hosted by the Sultanate of Oman. After a welcoming note, HH Sayyid Fahd pointed out that the Sultanate of Oman is following up, with great sorrow and grief, the developments of events in the Palestinian territories and the ensuing negative repercussions that compounded the suffering of the brotherly Palestinian people.

DETAILS ON P2 (PHOTO BY MOHAMED AL RASHDI)

Duqm set to emerge as vibrant investment hub for industries



HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said at the opening ceremony of the First Duqm Economic Forum.

DUQM: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, on Monday presided over the opening ceremony of the First Duqm Economic Forum.

The two-day forum aims to highlight the economic milieu and investment opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman in general and the Special Economic Zone in Duqm (SEZAD) in particular.

The event discusses new approaches in green industries and renewable energy, especially those attracted by the zone as part of its capacity as a centre for industry, investment and global trade. It also showcases the role of the zone in the efforts exerted towards the transformation to using renewables and technologies in production and exporting.

Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), said: "Over the next two days, this First Duqm Economic Forum will showcase the game-changing potential of Duqm – as a vibrant investment hub for new methods of manufacturing and promoting innovation".

SEE ALSO P13

OPINION

P8



Dr Ahmed Mahmood

The key to transformative thinking

P9



Lakshmi Kothaneth

Love thy neighbour!

PROJECT TO CUT CO2 EMISSIONS



In a groundbreaking initiative known as the Oman Blue Carbon project, the Environment Authority and MSA Green Projects Company have teamed up to plant 100 million mangrove trees across the Sultanate of Oman.

DETAILS ON P3

Oman hosts GCC meeting today

CALLS MOUNT TO LET AID IN TO BESIEGED GAZA STRIP

MUSCAT/GAZA: The 43rd Extraordinary Session of the GCC Ministerial Council will meet here on Tuesday to discuss the developments in Gaza Strip.

Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi, GCC Secretary-General, stated that the convening of the emergency session of the Ministerial Council to discuss the developments in Gaza comes in response to a request submitted by the Sultanate of Oman, the country currently holding the GCC presidency, following consultation with the GCC countries.

The GCC secretary-general said that this emergency meeting aims to hold discussion and consultation among the GCC member states on the developments and the serious Israeli violations in Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy made a phone call with Philippe Lazzarini, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The two sides stressed the importance of maintaining efforts to ensure the supply of humanitarian and relief aid to Gaza Strip.

They affirmed the urgent need for resuming the work of electricity and water lines, fuel, food and medicine for the people of Gaza. They also demanded the termination of the Israeli military operations in Gaza. Sayyid Badr and Hakan Fidan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, held consultations over phone, on Monday.



A view shows the remains of Palestinian houses destroyed in Israeli strikes in the central Gaza Strip on Monday. – Reuters

They discussed regional and international efforts aimed to end Israeli escalation and to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid to the inhabitants in Gaza. The two sides stressed the importance of the peace option based on the two-state solution and the right of the Palestinians to self-determination and to establish their independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Diplomatic efforts to arrange a ceasefire to let aid reach the besieged Gaza Strip failed on Monday, and Israel ordered the evacuation of villages in the territory near its border with Lebanon, raising fears the war could spread to a new front.

Israel has put Gaza, home to 2.3 million Palestinians, under a total blockade and pounded it with unprecedented air strikes, and is widely expected to launch a ground assault. Gaza authorities say at least 2,750 people have been killed there. According to the United Nations, a million Gazans have already been driven from their homes. Power is out, sanitary water is scarce, and the last fuel for emergency generators could be used up within a day.

SEE ALSO P6&7



HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth met in Duqm on Monday with some CEOs and Board Chairmen of global companies. — ONA

Sayyid Theyazin meets CEOs of global companies

DUQM: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth met in Al Duqm on Monday with some CEOs and Board Chairmen of global companies who are participating in Duqm Economic Forum, being organised in the Special Economic Zone in Al Duqm (SEZAD).

At the outset of the meeting, HH Sayyid Theyazin welcomed the CEOs. Then, he reviewed the investment opportunities available in the fields of renewable energy and clean energy, such as green hydrogen and green ammonia that come in line with Oman's approach to achieve the goals of zero carbon neutrality by 2050, the facilities provided to investors, and.

HH Sayyid Theyazin also touched on the investment climate of Oman, especially in SEZAD.

He lauded the agreements and memorandums of

understanding signed by a number of international companies with the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) to implement projects in the green industries sector in SEZAD.

HH Sayyid Theyazin called on other companies to take advantage of the investment opportunities available in the various economic zones and free zones in Oman generally, and in SEZAD specifically.

On their turn, CEOs and Board Chairmen of the global companies commended the promising investment opportunities and multiple logistical services they saw in SEZAD.

The meeting was attended by Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidi, Chairman of OPAZ, Dr Abdullah bin Nassir al Harrasi, Minister of Information and Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority. — ONA

SAYYID FAHD RECEIVES GCC ATTORNEYS GENERAL



The meeting reviewed topics on the agenda that aimed at consolidating benign endeavours to meet the aspirations of GCC states for a better future. — ONA

MUSCAT: On behalf of His Majesty the Sultan, HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, on Monday received participants in the 15th meeting of the GCC attorneys general, hosted by the Sultanate of Oman.

After a welcoming note, HH Sayyid Fahd pointed out that the Sultanate of Oman is following up, with great sorrow and grief, the developments of events in the Palestinian territories and the ensuing negative repercussions that compounded the suffering of the brotherly Palestinian people.

HH Sayyid Fahd expressed the hope that all offensives will

be terminated and respect for rules of the International Law maintained.

“The Sultanate of Oman reaffirms its permanent support for all efforts being exerted to stop the attacks and demolition that led to massive loss of life and property, hoping that sincere efforts will succeed in the termination of the violence and resumption of negotiations to support security and stability in the region. Oman also hopes that the Palestinians will obtain their legitimate rights in their independent state,” HH Sayyid Fahd said.

HH Sayyid Fahd affirmed that GCC states strive to support greater communication among

them by achieving everything that would meet the aspirations of GCC peoples.

“The judicial field receives the attention of GCC states and GCC regulations and laws have been unified. This contributed to facilitating litigation procedures in courts,” HH Sayyid Fahd explained.

He said that Oman attaches special importance to everything related to the judiciary and the development of adjudication to ensure the application of justice and the accomplishment of equality among all citizens in all rights and duties.

HH Sayyid Fahd also touched on some proposals related to the GCC Attorneys General's

meeting, which were approved and set on schedule.

The meeting reviewed topics on the agenda that aimed at consolidating benign endeavours to meet the aspirations of GCC states for a better future.

Meanwhile, the GCC attorneys general expressed their thanks and gratitude for Oman's hosting the 15th meeting GCC attorney general and its strive to ensure the success of the GCC march. The meeting was attended by Shaikh Al Fadhl bin Mohammed al Harthy, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers and Attorney General Nasr bin Khamis al Sawa'ee. — ONA

Sayyid Bilarab chairs Omani startups' supervisory committee meet

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Honorary President of the Promising Omani Startups Programme, on Monday chaired the 4th meeting of the Supervisory Committee of the Omani Promising Startups Programme 2023.

The meeting was held in the presence of representatives of government departments who are members of the programme's Supervisory Committee, as well as representatives of startup companies.

The meeting discussed progress reports about the programme's initiatives aimed at enhancing the march of startups and entrepreneurs. It also looked into ways to enhance partnership with Oman Airports Company with a view to allocating spaces for startups and entrepreneurs. The designated spaces are envisaged to serve as smart business centres that keep pace with the entrepreneurs' aspirations to engage in technology and innovation.

The committee reviewed a map of the startups system that monitors basic challenges and comprises elements needed during the stages of establishment and growth. These include the development of skills and capabilities, higher education and research, financing and investment, legislation and laws, private sector support and the development of technical environment.

The meeting also discussed



The committee reviewed a map of the startups system that monitors basic challenges and comprises elements needed during the stages of establishment and growth. — ONA

a progress report on an analytical study on the startup system in Oman. The study, conducted by Startup Genome Foundation, seeks to draft recommendations and initiatives to implement the system. The Foundation organised interviews and meetings with owners of some Omani startup companies, decision makers in the institutions that support the entrepreneurship system. The study came up with proposals, recommendations and initiatives that encourage the establishment of startups whose realisation

requires the combined efforts of all partners of the system.

On the sidelines of the meeting, an innovation centre was opened at Oman Airports Company, with the prime aim of empowering innovative ideas for startup companies and attracting investors. The facility will showcase the experience of technical companies in digital applications, provide platforms to display the latest technologies and build effective links, besides serving as a link between startups and established technology companies. — ONA





MoI showcases latest voting apps

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 16

The Ministry of Interior launched the second version of Intakhib app which will be used by voters to cast their ballot for the 10th term of Majlis Ashshura under the auspices of Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, on Monday.

Sayyid Hamoud affirmed that the ministry is moving ahead with the digitalisation of all services and programmes as part of its digitalisation strategy and the utilisation of advanced technology and artificial intelligence to facilitate the process for both voters and candidates.

The Ministry of Interior organised a media meeting to explain the updates and new features of the second version of Intakhib application. The Ministry reviewed the artificial intelligence technology that introduced audio reading feature for the first time to enable people with visual impairments and the sign language feature for people with speech and hearing impairments to enable them to cope with the electoral processes.

Abdulahman bin Ali al Hinai, director of the Intakhib Application project explained that the audio description feature for people with visual impairment will be applied starting from opening the app, uploading the ID card and selecting and confirming the candidate.

This initiative announced at a press conference, positions Oman as the pioneering country globally to integrate artificial intelligence features into the electoral process.

Abdulahman bin Ali al Hinai,



Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior affirmed that the ministry is moving ahead with the digitalisation of all services. – ONA

The updates include features such as audio reading capabilities for the visually impaired and sign language integration for individuals with hearing and speech impairments

Project Director of the “Intakhib” application, showcased key updates during the press conference. The updates include features such as audio reading capabilities for the visually impaired and sign language integration for individuals with hearing and speech impairments. The audio comment feature is particularly impactful, empowering visually impaired individuals to cast their votes independently through an intuitive and user-friendly interface.

Al Hinai emphasised that the speed of capturing a personal photo for the voter has become faster in the new version by adding the feature of identifying whether the eye is open or closed — for visually impaired individuals — so that they can exercise their electoral rights and choose their candidate through an audio file containing the names of the candidates for the

same electoral headquarter. Shaikha bint Mohammed al Jassasiyah, a visually impaired individual, praised the app’s new features, affirming the right of all people with disabilities to vote independently and without assistance. She noted that the additions to the application facilitate the voting process for blind people without any help from any location.

Sultan al Amri, representing the deaf and mute community, shared his positive experience with the user-friendly interface and smooth electronic voting process provided by the application. He commended the Ministry of Interior for fostering inclusivity and easing the voting experience for individuals with hearing and speech impairments.

This makes Oman the first country globally to integrate AI features into the electoral process.

Ahmed bin Abdullah al Maamari, the project director of the electoral register overseeing the “Election” app, presented various electoral services included in the application and the new artificial intelligence features for analysing voting indicators and predicting voter percentages every hour. For the first time, voter data will be published based on the geographical distribution of villages, states, and provinces, including age groups, during the voting day.

Al Maamari mentioned that the artificial intelligence service consists of an hourly newsletter, estimates, and statistics for the previous hour and the upcoming hour during the voting day. Al Maamari pointed out that Oman is the first country in the world to integrate artificial intelligence features into the electoral process.

Al Maamari highlighted the updates made on the discussion platform, which received improvements by introducing visual aspects through which various issues and topics related to the electoral process are discussed.

The advancement has been achieved by hosting a group of officials from the Ministry of Interior, former members of the Majlis Ashshura, several academics, researchers, journalists, media professionals, heads and members of student advisory councils at universities, members of Omani student associations outside Oman, and individuals with special needs.

It is in addition to the main themes and sub-topics brought up by users of the discussion platform related to various aspects of the electoral process.

Oman chairs 15th meeting of GCC Attorneys General



The meeting discussed a set of topics, including the draft rules for child protection during the investigation phase, draft rules for immediate payment in crimes of a financial nature and financial penalties. – ONA

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Public Prosecution, chaired the 15th meeting of GCC attorneys general at the Al Bustan Palace Hotel in Muscat on Monday.

Attorney General Nasr bin Khamis al Sawae, who chaired the meeting, said that rapid developments taking place in the world today, notably new crime scenarios, called for a unified stance to address their impacts. He stressed the need to deal firmly with all attempts that might constitute a violation of public order, both domestically and at a regional level.

The meeting discussed a set of topics, including the draft rules for child protection during the investigation phase, draft rules for immediate payment in crimes of a financial nature and financial penalties and a bill on the ethics of artificial intelligence in the field of

public prosecutions.

The conferees considered holding interactive seminars to exchange knowledge about the GCC legislation and laws and reviewed the experiences of public prosecution departments in member states.

The Public Prosecution in Oman outlined the “Burhan” system for remote investigation. The United Arab Emirates briefed the gathering about its experience in digitising criminal legislation, while Saudi Arabia outlined cases of financial fraud crimes. The Public Prosecution department in Qatar also showcased its experience in establishing a public prosecution office during World Cup 2022.

Outstanding members of public prosecution departments in GCC states were felicitated. They were awarded the Hamid Al Othman Prize. — ONA

Oman takes part in 61st session of AALCO



JAKARTA: The Sultanate of Oman is currently taking part in the 61st Annual Meeting of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO), which began in Indonesian capital Jakarta on Monday. Oman’s delegation to the meeting is led by Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs. The event addresses various legal issues relevant to Asian and African countries. – ONA

Political Affairs Undersecretary meets Palestinian Ambassador

MUSCAT: Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs held a meeting on Monday with Dr Taisser Farahat, Ambassador of the State of Palestine to the Sultanate of Oman.

The meeting underscored the firm stance of Oman in supporting the Palestinian cause. Shaikh Khalifa highlighted Oman’s efforts and contacts with Arab

and Foreign countries to stop the brutal Israeli aggression and killing of innocents in Gaza, the necessity of allowing humanitarian aid and rejecting attempts to displace the people of Gaza Strip.

On his turn, the Ambassador conveyed the appreciation of the Palestinian Authority and people for Oman’s stance and efforts. He expressed his delight at the Omani citizens’ solidarity with Gaza.

— ONA



The meeting underscored the firm stance of Oman in supporting the Palestinian cause. – ONA

Mangrove project to reduce 14m tonnes of CO2 emissions

MAI AL ABRI
MUSCAT, OCT 16

In a groundbreaking initiative known as the Oman Blue Carbon project, the Environment Authority and MSA Green Projects Company have teamed up to plant 100 million mangrove trees across the Sultanate of Oman. This ambitious project aims to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 14 million tonnes and promises to enhance the natural environment while generating an estimated economic benefit of around \$150 million.

As part of the National Zero Carbon Strategy 2050, this project targets planting 100 million mangrove trees in the Al Wusta Governorate, specifically in Shanna, Al Najda, Film, and Dharf Hitam.

The event happened under the auspices of Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources,



The project encompasses a vast 20,000-hectare area, with each mangrove tree projected to absorb 12.3 kilograms of carbon dioxide annually

and was attended by Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amari, Environment Authority Chairman and the CEO of MSA Green Projects.

The project encompasses a vast 20,000-hectare area, with each mangrove tree projected to absorb 12.3 kilograms of carbon dioxide annually. The investment phase spans a 27-year timeline, with carbon proceeds allocated as follows: The Authority will receive 30 per cent of the carbon returns in the initial decade, 70 per cent in

the subsequent six years, and 90 per cent in the final nine years.

The project will create many direct and indirect job opportunities and positively contribute to the local economy. Community engagement is also anticipated, with approximately 5% of the profits being channelled back into the community.

The government of Oman has had a long-standing interest in mangrove trees that thrive along the coast and in high-salinity waters



due to their unique biological characteristics and diverse environmental advantages. These include their remarkable ability to absorb substantial amounts of carbon dioxide, surpassing even tropical forests in this regard, thereby contributing to mitigating global warming.

The Qurum Natural Reserve in Muscat is declared a protected natural area through the Royal Decree (35/1975).

The Environment Authority has

been diligently working to ensure the sustainability of mangrove trees and their natural marine habitats. The Authority has planted nearly 797,760 seedlings at 32 locations throughout Oman, utilising modern techniques for sowing one million seeds and manually planting an additional 1,500,000. They have also undertaken the task of cleaning water channels and conducting awareness and environmental education campaigns to underscore the

significance of these plantations.

Oman is home to a single species of mangrove tree, Avicennia Marina, which adapts to the Omani environment characterised by hot weather and limited freshwater resources.

These trees can be found along the coastline from the northern Al Batinah Governorate to the southern Dhofar Governorate. Currently, the collective area covered by mangrove trees in Oman is approximately 1,000 hectares. Archaeological findings in the Qurum Natural Reserve in Muscat have unveiled the presence of mangrove trees, used by fishermen for over four millennia.

These trees are also distributed in Bandar Al Khairan and Qurayat in Muscat, Khor Al Qurm Al Kabir and Khor Al Qurm Al Saghir in Dhofar, as well as in Shinas and Liwa in Al Batinah, Khor Sur and Grama in the Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, and Mahout.



Women actively involved in the Majlis Ash’shura

A heartwarming tribute to Omani women

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, OCT 16

Omani Women’s Day is a momentous occasion dedicated to honouring the remarkable achievements and invaluable contributions of Omani women to society. On October 17, a significant and inspiring event is set to unfold – the grand inauguration of the Women’s Market, known as Souq al Harim, in Suhar.

The inauguration ceremony promises to be a heartwarming tribute to Omani women, commemorating their accomplishments and highlighting their pivotal role in the fabric of Omani society on this special day.

This event will not only underscore the significance of Omani Women’s Day but also act as a prominent platform to showcase the triumphs of Omani women and the transformative impact of the Women’s Market.

Located in the heart of the commercial district of Hambar in Suhar, the Women’s Market is a visionary project aimed at fostering a conducive environment for business owners, consumers, and market visitors. The market comprises an enclosed hall housing 26 shops, each spanning eight square metres, while also offering amenities such as a prayer room, public services, and storage facilities. Its design is a harmonious blend of traditional Omani architecture with a modern, contemporary twist, a construction feat that was achieved in a remarkable 16-month timeline.



The opening ceremony will feature an illuminating presentation emphasising the profound respect for Omani women and their encouragement to actively participate in the workforce, thus further propelling Oman’s development. A visual exhibit will vividly illustrate the historical and current status of Omani women in both the traditional Suhar market and the newly developed Women’s Market. Adding a touch of elegance to the celebration, classical symphonic melodies will fill the air. The Women’s Market project also carries another significant objective – the reinvigoration of the commercial landscape and value in the Hambar area, making it a more accessible and alluring destination for visitors. This initiative is aligned with the broader vision of creating a thriving economic environment and empowering women entrepreneurs.

The official inauguration of Suhar’s Women’s Market, coinciding with Omani Women’s Day, that symbolises the nation’s acknowledgment of the pivotal role Omani women play in Oman’s growth and development.

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahalbalushia

Omani women have emerged as influential leaders in the public and private sectors, actively participating in the Sultanate of Oman’s comprehensive development through the Majlis Ash’shura platform. The laws in Oman grant women the right to run and vote without any gender-based restrictions, reflecting the commitment to gender equality.

Omani women have been actively involved in the Majlis Ash’shura since its inception in 1994, starting with Muscat Governorate as the pioneering experiment and later expanding to all governorates. During this period, two women secured seats in the Majlis Ash’shura, marking a significant milestone in women’s participation in the political landscape.

The statistics reveal that Omani women have excelled in various fields, constituting over 33 per cent of the total workforce in the public and private sectors. Their active role in shaping Oman’s future and contributing to its progress has positioned them as scientific and practical leaders.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has emphasised the pivotal role of women in shaping the nation’s present and future, acknowledging their fundamental role in national development. The ninth period of the Majlis



Sumaya al Balushi

Ash’shura elections (2019-2023) witnessed a notable increase in the number of woman candidates, highlighting the success of Omani women in their roles within the Shura process. The election law for the Majlis Ash’shura, as outlined in Royal Decree No. 58/2013, guarantees the political rights of Omani women, aligning with the Basic Law of the State.

The Ministry of Interior ensures the transparency of the electoral process and promotes the expansion of Omani women’s participation in the Majlis Ash’shura. Omani women have not only worked within government agencies but have also

played vital roles in civil sectors and private sector companies, underscoring their significance in the nation’s development.

The Majlis Ash’shura serves as a platform through which Omani women contribute to society, showcasing their diverse capabilities. This reflects a mature, aware, and responsible society that recognises the importance of women’s voices in shaping the nation.

Dr Mohammed bin Khalfan al Asimi, Deputy Assistant Secretary-General for Sessions Affairs of the Majlis Ash’shura, has acknowledged the empowered status of women within the Majlis Ash’shura. Women have actively participated in addressing national issues, with a particular focus on women’s concerns. Although women’s representation in the Majlis may not be high, it signifies their ability to compete and secure seats through free elections.

Sumaya al Balushi, a member of the media team for the Majlis Ash’shura member elections for the tenth term, emphasises the importance of women believing in their role in the Majlis Ash’shura. She underscores the need for women to be part of nation building, turning the slogan that they are “half of society” into a tangible reality. Families and society at large should support and enable women to achieve their rightful positions.

Raysut Cement Company SAOG (RCC) sets the foundation for long-term sustainability and profitability

RCC, a leading cement manufacturing company in Oman, announces the implementation of a robust governance structure, enhanced governance practices, appointment of competent leadership and increased focus on liquidity management as part of its comprehensive turnaround strategy. These strategic initiatives aim to revitalize the company’s operations, enhance stakeholder value, and reposition RCC as a leader in the cement manufacturing industry in the region.

Recognizing the critical importance of sound governance and financial stability, RCC has taken proactive steps to strengthen its governance framework, ensuring transparency, accountability, and ethical practices throughout the organization. The new governance structure will foster a culture of integrity and compliance while promoting the interests of all stakeholders.

Key highlights of the governance enhancement include:

1. Focused Board for Subsidiaries: Appointing Mr. Khalid Al Massan and Mr. Husam Al Jahdhami being highly experienced professionals with diverse backgrounds and expertise for RCC subsidiary companies. The new board of the subsidiary companies comprised of individuals renowned for their governance acumen, strategic vision, and operational excellence will support the Holding Company Board to maintain better focus on other demanding turnaround initiatives for the group.
2. Governance Policies and Procedures: A comprehensive



set of governance policies and procedures have been implemented and will continue to be rolled out to align with industry best practices and regulatory requirements. These policies cover areas such as risk management, internal controls, information disclosure, and board governance, ensuring ethical conduct and safeguarding the interests of shareholders and other stakeholders.

3. Stakeholder Engagement: RCC recognizes the significance of engaging with its stakeholders to create enduring value. The company is committed to fostering open communication, actively seeking feedback, and addressing the concerns of shareholders, employees, customers, suppliers, and local communities. The Senior Staff engagement session in Salalah on 13/09/2023 was well received by the employees who expressed their support on the roadmap

outlined by the Chairman of the Board.

4. Meetings held with major Customers in Somalia and Yemen to understand the customer needs and to discuss how best to foster a mutually beneficial relationship going forward and to set the foundation for a stronger and beneficial penetration in these markets and beyond

In addition to governance improvements, RCC has placed a strong emphasis on liquidity management to ensure the availability of adequate resources for its operations and growth plans. The company is working closely with the appointed financial advisors, Sohar Islamic Bank, to implement a comprehensive liquidity strategy encompassing, but not limited to:

1. Working Capital Optimization: RCC has implemented rigorous working capital management practices to enhance operational efficiency, streamline processes, and optimize cash flows. This



approach will enable the company to maintain healthy liquidity levels and support its growth initiatives.

2. Capital Structure Optimization: The company has conducted a thorough review of its capital structure and has undertaken debt restructuring and is very optimistic on the proposed capital infusion being worked on with the support of the Sohar Islamic Banks. This proactive approach aims to strengthen the company’s financial position and provide a solid foundation for sustainable growth. RCC is actively engaging with financial institutions, investors, and other stakeholders to secure necessary funding and explore strategic partnerships with its long-term customers that will further bolster its liquidity position. These collaborations will be instrumental in supporting the company’s turnaround and future expansion plans.
3. Cost Optimisation: In its efforts to improve its cost base, the

company has taken a number of measures such as switching to cheaper energy source at Pioneer Cement Industry (PCI) in Ras Al Khaima while also working to operationalize the Waste Heat Recovery System (WHRS) at PCI and Salalah Plant. The use of the WHRS is expected to reduce energy cost by upto 30% once fully operational.

In addition, other cost reduction measures are also being taken in other areas of the business whilst at the same time the company is seeking to introduce new products which will have better margins.

RCC Board firmly believes that the implementation of these governance and liquidity initiatives will pave the way for a successful turnaround and position the company for long-term success. By fortifying its governance structure, enhancing transparency, and ensuring robust liquidity management, RCC is committed to building a sustainable future and delivering value to all stakeholders.

About RCC:

RCC is a leading cement manufacturing company with a rich heritage of producing high-quality cement products. With a commitment to excellence, innovation, and sustainability, RCC strives to meet the evolving needs of its customers while contributing to the development of the construction industry.

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Oman Airports to organise aviation hackathon



The Arabian Gazelle is the most frequently runover wild animal and this year witnessed around 52 run-over cases so far

MUSCAT: Oman Airports will organise today ‘AEROHACK from Oman Airports’ at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, which is the first hackathon of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman that is related to developing ideas in the airport sector.

This event aims to attract an elite group of innovators, technology developers, designers, students, start-ups, small and medium-sized companies, and university students.

Oman Airports seeks to adhere to its national commitment in promoting innovation in transportation projects, while

exploring new horizons in terms of constructive partnerships with industry innovators.

AEROHACK revolves around a set of innovative themes and topics, including reimagining passenger experiences and airport operations, the future of airport entertainment, excellence in marketing and communications, customer loyalty programs, automation, efficiency and cost-reduction solutions.

The primary focus will be on sustainability and expanding transportation options outside the airport, and enhancing safety, security and electronic privacy

- which are areas wherein the participating teams presented their ideas.

Oman Airports began early preparations for AEROHACK on July 16 and the registration of participating teams ran until August 31. The ideas were evaluated on September 3 and the 50 most innovative ideas were selected.

Subsequently, the owners of the 50 ideas were contacted and encouraged to develop them and resubmit them by September 19. The second stage of selection was on September 24 when the best 15 ideas were selected, after

which intensive workshops were held for the 15 teams to develop and reformulate their ideas from September 26-28.

The 15 teams that qualify for the finals of the event will undergo an intensive experience during the two continuous days before the end of the program, to develop and formulate their ideas through workshops and guidance provided by specialists in the fields of developing ideas and commercial projects. They will present their final presentations before the jury on the second day of the event.

— ONA

Alarm over wildlife roadkill crisis: EA

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 16

The Environment Authority (EA) has said that there have been increasing incidents of running over wild animals at Ras al Shajar Reserve in Qurayat.

According to statistics reported exclusively by Oman Arabic Daily, 292 wild animals died during the period 2018-2023 and there is an urgent need for effective solutions.

The Arabian Gazelle is the most frequently runover wild animal and this year witnessed around 52 run-over cases so far.

Zahrán bin Ahmed al Abdulsalam, Acting Director General of the Environmental Conservation Office, said, “Incidents of running over wild animals in the Ras Al Shajar Nature Reserve in particular and the rest of the areas in the Sultanate of Oman in general constitute a challenge.

Cases of running over wild and domestic animals occur on highways and byways, and we work at EA have been studying this phenomenon for more than three years.”



The Arabian Gazelle is the most frequently runover wild animal

EA said it has raised the issue of providing safe crossings for these wild animals with the Ministry of Transport and Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) and the Royal Oman Police (ROP) on all roads in the Sultanate of Oman.

Zahrán also stressed the lack of commitment by vehicle drivers on highways to the speed limit, especially on the Qurayat-Sur road. She pointed out that the reserve is an open reserve and is crossed by the Qurayat-Tyre road.

The reserve faces many challenges that lie in competition for pasture, climate change, habitat division, and poaching, in addition to accidents of running over wild animals, with an average of (58) run-over cases recorded.

A chance to explore Oman’s historical heritage

FRIENDS OF MUSEUMS MEMBERSHIP

MUSCAT: Membership of the Friends of Oman Museums’ offers an opportunity to delve into the cultural and historical heritage of the Sultanate of Oman.

Offered by the Friends of the Museum Department and the Community Outreach at the National Museum, this membership provides visitors, researchers, and academics with a continuous and permanent access to Oman’s cultural and historical legacy.



Exhibits at The National Museum in Oman

It also comes with various other privileges from participating institutions, including the Royal Opera House Muscat, the museums under the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism such as the Natural History Museum and the Omani-French Museum, along with the Children’s Museum under the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth. Lastly, the membership includes the History of Science Centre at the German University of Technology in Oman.

Members of Friends of Oman Museums’ enjoy free entry to the Museums in the Sultanate of Oman throughout the year, as well as free entry for one accompanying guest to both the National Museum and the History of Science Centre. For the museums under the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the

benefits are applicable on Saturdays only.

Members are also invited to attend various special events, official exhibition openings, exclusive value-added programmes, participation in special family workshops, and temporary exhibitions organised by the museums.

Additionally, the membership offers discounted rates of RO 2 for guided tours and exhibitions organised by the Royal Opera House Muscat and the House of Musical Arts. Participants also have the opportunity to explore the Museum’s galleries during the pre-opening hours before the general public opening timings.

Samia Mubarak Al Qasabi, Head of the Friends of Museums

and Community Outreach Department at the National Museum, stated, “The Friends of Oman Museums’ membership card aims to enhance the cultural role of museums, providing a unique and enriching experience for the members.

The National Museum, represented by the Friends of Museums and Community Outreach Department, handles membership requests, card issuance, and the planning and accomplishment of special programmes and events. We look forward to welcoming most of the cultural institutions, historical sites, and entities under the umbrella of the National Museum. This will provide even more diverse discounts, covering

preservation and conservation facilities and other services.”

Dr Asia Nasser Al Bu’ali, a member of Friends of Oman Museums’, said, “The concept of the membership is constructive and pioneering. It broadens the member’s understanding of the Museum, strengthening the relationship as it stands as a prominent symbol in the Sultanate of Oman. The Museum goes beyond the traditional role of a repository, transforming into a dynamic hub of education through diverse exhibitions, workshops, and events. These activities provide brief, concise information about the exhibits, enhancing the bond between the member and the Museum.”

— ONA

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (33/2023)

Companies specialized in the field and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tender documents for the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date
PRE/23/070 Re-Call	Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) of Oracle E-Business HRMS & Financial System	24/10/2023	05/11/2023
PRE/23/075 Re-Call	Upgrade and Centralize Awaya Call Manager for DGs at MM	24/10/2023	31/10/2023
PRE/23/140 Re-Call	AMC for UPS Systems at Muscat Municipality - Various Locations	24/10/2023	31/10/2023
PRE/23/178 Re-Call	Supply and Fixing of Shades near Kalbhu Park	04/11/2023	26/11/2023
PRE/23/184 Re-Call	Consultancy & Branding Services for Muscat Municipality	04/11/2023	26/11/2023
PRE/22/004	Development of Muttrah Souq	04/11/2023	26/11/2023
PRE/23/208	Design & Construction of Cutting and Trimming of Hillocks at Various Locations in Al Amirat	04/11/2023	26/11/2023
PRE/23/209	Design & Construction of Multi-Storey Parking at Darsait	04/11/2023	26/11/2023
PRE/23/239	Design & Construction of Itinerants Sellers at Al Mawaleh	04/11/2023	26/11/2023
PRE/23/094	Design & Construction of Renovation of Muscat Municipality Offices	04/11/2023	26/11/2023
PRE/23/230	Design & Construction of Drainage System at Boshar	04/11/2023	26/11/2023
PRE/23/240	Supply & Installation of Smart Poles in Al Nasim Park	24/10/2023	31/10/2023
PRE/23/241	Supply & Installation of LED High-mast Light	24/10/2023	31/10/2023
PRE/23/242	Supply & Installation of LED Outdoor LED Display System	24/10/2023	31/10/2023

1. Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.

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- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).

AIR ACADEMY CARRIES OUT TACTICAL EXERCISE ‘SHAMS 33’



SUHAR: The Sultan Qaboos Air Academy at the Royal Air Force of Oman (Rafo) on Monday conducted the practical demonstration of a tactical exercise codenamed ‘Shams 33’ for officer candidates, as well as a limited service course and a university officers’ course. The ceremony took place in the Exercise Zone in the Governorate of Al Batinah North under the auspices of Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hammad bin Sultan al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman, who listened to a briefing about the practical demonstration and the objectives of the training. – ONA

MWASALAT

مواصلات

Tender Number

T-25-2023

Tender Announcement

“Mwasalat” invites professional firms for the following tender:

Tender Name	Provision of MTU 4000 QLS Training to MWASALAT Staff تقديم خدمات التدريب في مجال MTU 4000 QLS لمواصلات		
Project Summary	MWASALAT is inviting proposals from qualified training institutions for the upskilling of its technical staff, in accordance with the specifications and terms set forth in the tender documents.		
Tender Fee	NIL	Grade & Specialty	Qualified & Specialized Training Institutions in the Field

Start date for tender document distribution

Tuesday, 17th October 2023

Last date for tender document distribution

Thursday, 26th October 2023

Last date for submission

Monday, 06th November 2023

The Tender documents may be shared by email during official working hours between 9:00A.M - 2:00 P.M.
Tenderers are requested to share commercial registration (CR) & business card through email tenders@mwasalat.om and tender number as the subject of email. Tender Document shall be shared by email.
The submission Date / Time shall be on or before the deadline specified in the above table.
Participants should submit their offers in the tender box located in the head-quarter National Ferries Company LLC (MWASALAT) at Ghala, Muscat (Jabal Shams Building 5th floor). Any proposal submitted after the given Date & Time shall be rejected.

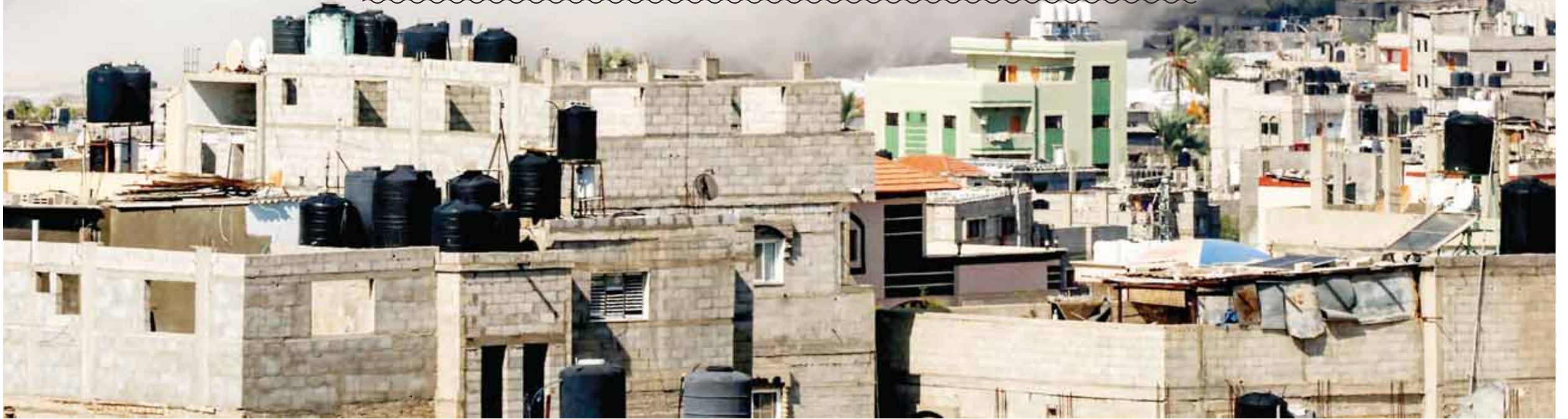
“Mwasalat”
Head Quarter, Ghala Tel: +968 1551
P.O.Box: 911 , Al Khuwair, PC: 135, Sultanate of Oman

For more information
please send to:
tenders@mwasalat.om



NO AID INTO GAZA AS DESPERATION MOUNTS FOR MILLIONS TRAPPED

SCENES OF PANIC, ANGER AND DESPAIR WERE AT EVERY CORNER. LADEN WITH SUITCASES, PLASTIC BAGS OR EVEN MATTRESSES, INHABITANTS OF NORTHERN GAZA WERE FRANTICALLY FLEEING TO THE SOUTH



Smoke billows after an Israeli air strike in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. – AFP

GAZA: Israel said on Monday there was no temporary truce to allow aid in or foreigners out of the Gaza Strip, as fears grew over the dire humanitarian situation faced by millions of Palestinians trapped in the heavily bombed enclave.

Israel declared war on Hamas a day after waves of its fighters broke through the heavily fortified border on October 7, with more than 1,400 dead people.

Reeling from the deadliest attack in its history, Israel unleashed a relentless bombing campaign of the Gaza Strip that flattened neighbourhoods and killed at least 2,750 people, mainly civilians.

As Israel continued to mass troops along the Gaza border ahead of a major offensive, the Arab League's chief called for an immediate end to military operations and for safe corridors

to allow in aid. In Gaza, scenes of panic, anger and despair were at every corner. Laden with suitcases, plastic bags or even mattresses, inhabitants of northern Gaza were frantically fleeing to the south after Israel's warning to vacate before its major offensive.

But the arrival of hundreds of thousands of people was putting further pressure on already stretched resources in the densely populated south where there is no escape valve.

"No electricity, no water, no internet. I feel like I'm losing my humanity," said Mona Abdel Hamid, 55, who fled Gaza City to Rafah in the south of the enclave, where she is staying with strangers.

Gazans are effectively trapped, with Israeli-controlled crossings closed and Egypt also having shut the Rafah border in the south due



A Palestinian woman reacts as she waits to collect the body of a relative from the hospital in the southern of Gaza Strip. – AFP

to the Israeli offensive.

Any departure of Palestinians from Gaza is a sensitive issue, with Arab nations fearing that it could lead to permanent expulsion, something which Blinken has also categorically rejected.

Foreigners have flocked to Rafah in the hopes of being let out, after Blinken said he was confident the crossing "will be open" for aid into the strip.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office dashed hopes of a deal, saying in a statement on Monday that "there is currently no ceasefire and humanitarian aid in Gaza in return for removing foreigners".

Israel has massed forces outside the long-blockaded enclave of 2.4 million in preparation for what the army has said would be a land, air and sea attack involving a

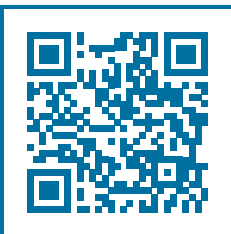
"significant ground operation".

Israel has also bolstered deployment to its northern border with Lebanon.

The UN agency supporting Palestinian refugees said on Sunday that one million Palestinians had already been displaced in the first week of the conflict — but the number was likely to be higher.

With around 9,700 injured in the heavy bombardments, hospitals in Gaza were also becoming overwhelmed with increasing numbers of dead and injured.

In southern Gaza, the city of Khan Yunis, usually home to 400,000 people, has more than doubled in population within just days, with terrified families carrying their children and few belongings crowded into every available space, indoors and outdoors.



Israeli strikes on Gaza intensify as humanitarian crisis deepens

GAZA: Israeli forces kept up their bombardment of Gaza on Monday after diplomatic efforts to arrange a ceasefire to allow foreign passport holders to leave and aid to be brought into the besieged Palestinian enclave failed.

Residents of Gaza said overnight air strikes were the heaviest yet as the conflict entered its 10th day with an Israeli ground offensive believed to be imminent.

Bombing carried on through the day, they said, and many buildings were flattened, trapping yet more people under the rubble.

Israel's chief military spokesperson, Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari, said there was no Gaza ceasefire and that Israel was continuing its operations.

Israel has imposed a full blockade and is preparing a ground invasion to enter Gaza. On Monday, rocket-warning sirens sounded in several towns



Palestinians search for casualties under the rubble at a site of a house destroyed by Israeli strikes in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza. — Reuters

in southern Israel, the Israeli military said.

Authorities in Gaza said at least 2,750 people had so far been killed by the Israeli strikes, a quarter of them children, and nearly 10,000 wounded. A further 1,000 people were missing and believed to be

under rubble.

Hundreds of tonnes of aid from several countries have been held up in Egypt pending a deal for its safe delivery to Gaza and the evacuation of some foreign passport holders through the Rafah border crossing.

Authorities in Gaza said at least 2,750 people had so far been killed by the Israeli strikes, a quarter of them children, and nearly 10,000 wounded

Hamas official Izzat El Reshiq said that there was "no truth" to the reports about the crossing opening or a temporary ceasefire.

The United States had told its citizens in Gaza to go to the crossing. The US government estimates the number of dual-citizen Palestinian-Americans in Gaza at 500 to 600.

Israeli planes also bombed three headquarters of the Civil Emergency and Ambulance Service in Gaza City, killing five people and paralysing the rescue services in those areas, health officials said. — Reuters

▶ Palestinians look for survivors trapped under the rubble of a building destroyed in an Israeli airstrike in Khan Yunis in the southern of Gaza. — AFP



▼ A rescuer salvages a gas canister from the rubble of a building after it was hit by an Israeli strike in Rafah. — AFP



▶ A wounded Palestinian boy looks at buildings destroyed during Israeli airstrikes near his home in the Rafah refugee camp. — AFP



Palestinian paramedics cry outside Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City. — AFP



Palestinians hoping to cross into Egypt and others waiting for aid wait at the Rafah crossing in the southern Gaza strip. — AFP

WORLD LEADERS SEEK TO CONTAIN ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR, PROTECT CIVILIANS

PARIS: As Israel prepares for a ground offensive into the Gaza Strip, the international community has mobilised to try to protect civilians and prevent the conflict spreading across the region.

Among the most active international players is the United States, whose Secretary of State Antony Blinken started a tour of six Arab countries on Friday, visiting Jordan, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. China and Russia have been more critical of Israel's response to the attack. But they might have some influence to prevent the conflict spreading.

There are numerous diplomatic fault-lines, as became clear at Friday's United Nations Security Council meeting, where Russia blamed the United States for the situation in Gaza.

European Council president Charles Michel has called a video-summit of European Union

leaders for Tuesday to seek a joint position on the war.

Rym Momtaz, at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), says we should not expect much.

"Expectations are low for what they can concretely achieve," she wrote in an online analysis.

"In recent years, the eruption of Israeli-Palestinian conflicts has sidelined European diplomacy."

Brazil, which holds the rotating presidency of the UN Security Council, has appealed to Israel to establish a humanitarian corridor so people in Gaza can flee to Egypt. "Israel needs to stop its bombing so Palestinian children and their mothers can leave the Gaza strip via the Egyptian border," he said on X.

Several initiatives, notably by Türkiye, Egypt and Qatar, are underway to secure the release of thousands trapped people in the Gaza Strip. — AFP

UN HUMANITARIAN CHIEF HEADING FOR GAZA AID NEGOTIATIONS

GENEVA: The UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths said he would be heading to the Middle East on Tuesday to try to help negotiate aid access to the Gaza Strip.

Griffiths said he was hoping to hear some "good news" later on Monday on aid access into the blockaded and besieged Palestinian enclave via the Rafah border crossing with Egypt.

"We need access for aid. We are in deep discussions with the Israelis, with the Egyptians and with others," Griffiths said in a video statement, adding that the process had been "hugely helped" by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to countries in the Middle East.

"I shall be going myself tomorrow to the region to try to help in the negotiations, to try to bear witness and to express solidarity with the extraordinary courage of the many thousands of aid workers who have stayed the course," he said.

The United Nations emergency relief coordinator is expected in Cairo on Tuesday and his trip to the region, including Israel, will last for "several days", a spokesman said.

"You cannot ask people to move out of harm's way without assisting them to do it, to go to places of their choice where they want to be safe, and with the humanitarian aid that they need to make that journey safely," Griffiths said.

He said he was hoping for good news on Monday on the Rafah crossing "to help those million people who have moved south, as well as those who live there already."



You cannot ask people to move out of harm's way without assisting them to do it and with the humanitarian aid that they need to make that journey safely.

MARTIN GRIFFITHS

The UN humanitarian chief

It has been closed since last Tuesday after three Israeli strikes in less than 24 hours, which damaged the terminal on the Palestinian side.

"We're living in the worst of times," said Griffiths.

"We need to be concerned about creating a situation – absurd as it may seem at the moment – where Israelis and Palestinians can live as neighbours, as friends, ideally, certainly as interlocutors, where they do not need to teach each other lessons through war." — AFP

CAIRO SUMMIT ON 'PALESTINIAN CAUSE' TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY

CAIRO: Leaders in Qatar and Kuwait received invitations on Monday for a summit in Cairo to be held on Saturday to "discuss developments and the future of the Palestinian cause and the peace process".

State media in both countries announced the invitations a day after Cairo announced its intention to host "a regional and international summit on the future of the Palestinian cause", during a visit by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. The Gulf Cooperation Council also announced on Monday it would hold an extraordinary meeting of its foreign ministers on Tuesday, "to discuss developments of the situation in the Gaza Strip". Ten days into the violent war that erupted between Hamas and Israel, diplomatic efforts

have yielded little success, as regional and world leaders try to secure humanitarian aid and prevent any regional spillover.

Meanwhile, The Arab League chief demanded on Monday an end to military operations in the Gaza Strip and charged that the siege of the enclave is "depriving the Palestinians of their humanity".

"We demand the immediate end of military operations and the opening of safe corridors to bring aid to the population," Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit said during an Arab justice ministers meeting in Baghdad.

Aboul Gheit said Israel's total siege of Gaza which has cut off water, food, electricity and fuel, was "depriving the Palestinians of their humanity and paving the way for ethnic cleansing". — AFP

The key to transformative thinking



Dr Ahmed Mahmood Al Lawati

The author serves as a Project Controls Team Leader at PDO and is a certified trainer at the Royal Academy of Management

This article delves into the concept of quiet leadership, originally introduced by David Rock in 1976. It explores the art of enhancing information processing within the brain without explicitly instructing individuals on what to do. The concept has been rigorously tested and has had a profound impact on thousands of individuals in countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, Singapore, and various others. The Iceberg model describes how our performance or results at anything is driven by our set of behaviours or habits. These are driven by our emotions, which in turn are driven by our thoughts. In order to utilise the above concept we have to motivate the thinking part that occurs in the brain. The brain has around 100 billion neurons. Each neuron may have up to 100,000 dendrites. The connections between our neurons, connected by the dendrites, are the maps that guide our thoughts, behaviours, and actions. The brain makes over a million new connections every second

between different points of thought and some of them are solutions from the inside. The newly formulated ‘aha’ moment gives energy to people so that they are motivated and take actions resulting from their own processing. Perhaps you have noticed that when we are for an idea we are more likely to allow tenuous links to become fact, and when we are against an idea we see even strong evidence as irrelevant. Given the fact that changing the way of thinking is one of the tough activities to be done by leaders, the six steps for a quiet creation of new habits is a good tool to ensure that. First, the aim of the leader is to empower others to think about the thinking process. This is done by letting others do the heavy thinking and figuring out the exact issues they want to solve themselves. The second is about listening for where people are heading when they describe the issue, rather than for what might not be working. In this step, it is essential to have an active listening ability so that potential pain areas are well spotted.

SKILL OF ACTIVE LISTENING DRIVES QUIET LEADERSHIP BECAUSE HEARING KEYWORDS FORMULATES THE DIRECTION OF THE DISCUSSION AND OFFERS HUGE INSIGHTS

The third is to work on improving the quality of every word we use when we are trying to improve others’ thinking. Research shows that we speak an average of one hundred words per minute, but think at much higher rates, about six hundred words per minute. The fourth step is called ‘Dance Toward Insight’ where a leader asks a very relevant insightful question so that individuals generate solutions themselves. The formation of patterns in answers forms the base of a new thinking process which is the fifth step. The final step follow-up step is about making sure people’s new thinking becomes reality, closing the gap between an idea and implementation plans. In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the importance of active listening. This skill will drive quiet leadership because hearing keywords formulates the direction of the discussion and offers huge insights. History provides a good lesson learned to be implemented in our day-to-day practice.

Meloni targets tax cuts, working mums in Italy budget

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni outlined her proposed 2024 budget on Monday, focused on tax cuts and incentives to get women back to work after having children. Ministers in Meloni’s hard-right government agreed around €24 billion (\$25 billion) in new measures focused on support for low- and medium-income families and companies after months of high inflation. There is concern in the financial markets at the lack of focus on getting Italy’s public finances in order, with Rome late last month having raised its deficit forecast. But at a press conference in Rome, Meloni insisted it was a budget that was “very serious and realistic and which does not waste resources, but concentrates them on the main priorities”. These priorities, financed with €15.7 billion in additional debt and unspecified spending cuts, are intended to “defend the purchasing power of families”, the prime minister said. The government is now forecasting a deficit of 4.3 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2024, up from 3.7 per cent estimated previously. The announcement in late September drew an immediate response from the financial markets, with borrowing rates for the debt-laden eurozone country rising sharply. The first budget from Meloni, the leader of the post-Fascist Brothers of Italy party, drew praise for its prudence. But commentators have warned of a loosening of the purse strings this year as she and her coalition partners seek to fulfil their electoral promises, particularly ahead of European Parliament elections next year. The budget plans on Monday include renewing a reduction in salary contributions for those earning up to €35,000 a year, at a cost of around €10 billion. Meloni said this would put an average of €100 a month into the pockets of 14 million Italians. As part of a wider plan of promised tax reform, the government has also decided to merge the first two tax brackets, meaning those earning up to €28,000 a year will benefit from a rate of 23 per cent, down from 25 per cent. Meloni, who campaigned as a “Christian mother” during national elections last year, also outlined more support for working mothers, as she attempts to boost Italy’s low birth rate. She said women with at least two children will be exempted from social security contributions, and promised “free” nursery places from the second child. — AFP

After three big quakes, too scared to sleep anywhere but outside



Christina Goldbaum

The writer is the Afghanistan and Pakistan bureau chief for NYT



Yaqoob Akbary

The writer works for the New York Times

HERAT CITY, ONCE A CENTRE OF MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC CULTURE, HOME TO POETS AND SCHOLARS, HAS TRANSFORMED INTO A CITY OF TENTS

The fear from a week of unrelenting earthquakes is palpable throughout the northwestern city of Herat in Afghanistan. Makeshift tents made of sticks and sheets have popped up across public parks, alleyways and grassy medians of main roads, the families within them too afraid to sleep in their homes. Men pray in the street instead of at mosques, pleading with God to stop the destruction. Office buildings are empty; the once-crowded money exchange that spanned four floors is closed. The only place in the city that is bustling is the airport, where those who can afford it have filled every plane heading out. In just five days, three major earthquakes rocked this slice of Afghanistan close to Iran, killing nearly 1,300 people and injuring around 1,700 more, according to the United Nations. A handful of villages outside the city have been completely destroyed, in the deadliest natural disaster to hit the country in decades. Herat City, the capital of the province, was spared the worst of the destruction. Apartment complexes, office buildings and some of the city’s ancient ruins were damaged but not razed like the fragile mud-brick homes in the desert villages outside the urban centre. But the 6.3-magnitude quakes — two on Saturday and another early on Wednesday morning — and their aftershocks have put residents already reeling from the Taliban takeover two years ago and subsequent economic collapse on edge. Now, Herat City, once a centre of medieval Islamic culture, home to poets and scholars, has transformed into a city of tents. Residents are racked with questions they fear the answers to: Will the quakes ever end? Will their family survive? Is this a punishment from God? “I’ve been scared; I was thinking I might lose my life,” said Rustam Yaqoobi, 45, standing outside a mosquito-net-turned-shelter in an empty, dusty lot on the outskirts of the city. “I can’t even think about the future, what will come. Only God knows.” In the yard of the city’s Great



Zainab Taraki cooks potatoes over a propane stove in a tent encampment at a park in Herat, Afghanistan.

Mosque, a centuries-old Islamic complex lavishly adorned with bright blue tiles, thousands of people have set up makeshift shelters and slept there for nearly a week. For Esmatullah Khaliqi, 25, and dozens of his relatives, including his 1-year-old daughter, their home since Saturday has been four sheets connected to wooden poles dug into the hard earth. There are neither toilets in the tent camp nor wells to collect water, and his family must spend the little savings they have to buy food from a nearby market and cook it on a gas burner outside their tent. On Wednesday, after the third major quake, a businessman came and distributed water and baked goods, nearly causing a stampede. His was the only aid that had arrived, Khaliqi said. Still, most families here have no choice but to stay until they feel it is safe to return home. “We’re afraid for our families, we’re afraid for our children,” Khaliqi said. “I can’t even go to our house to get tea or food because I’m scared to go inside.” For many, the earthquakes have amplified already troubling times. Residents in Herat, once a liberal bastion of Afghanistan, have been particularly devastated as the Taliban have imposed their ultraconservative vision for the country over the past two years. Herat University, one of the country’s largest colleges, was emptied of its thousands of female students because of government restrictions on education for women and girls. So-called vice and virtue police officers were stationed on the streets to enforce dress codes requiring women to be completely covered and edicts restricting how far they could travel without a male relative. After the US withdrawal and the collapse of the Western-backed government led to an economic crash, neighbouring Iran also cracked down on the many men in Herat who illegally migrate there for work, as tensions between the Taliban and Iranian authorities flared. “Yes, there is security now, but there are no jobs — and when there are no jobs, your life is hell,” said Mohammad Mujib, 45, sitting with his family in their makeshift home in Bagh-e-Millat Park, a hillside stretch of trees and gardens on the outskirts of the city. As Mujib spoke, his wife, Zainab, gently stirred a pot of oil on top of a gas canister preparing fried potatoes for dinner. Mujib said he used to make around \$600 a month as a safety manager on major infrastructure projects funded by organisations like USAID. With those projects now evaporated, he works as a rickshaw driver scraping together around 150 Afghanis — about \$2 — a day. — The New York Times

To comment & email: opinion@omanobserver.om

EDITORIAL

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Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in these pages are solely those of the authors and do not reflect the opinion of the Observer.

Love thy neighbour!

We breathe the same air we live on the same land. Etched in history the tug of war continues.

The concrete that mushroomed is now a concrete wasteland.

Underneath lie hopes and dreams pouring out are blood and tears.

There's neither flow of water, nor laughter in the air instead the wailing and siren fill the air along with dust and smoke. Images are of pain but not of fear for they have nothing to lose anymore. As children hurt too crave for freedom.

For without children, where is hope? Onlookers are we lost in thought.

With the commotion on sight, in search of light, can peace challenge the might? After all it's not a mere fight.

Is 'Love thy neighbour,' Just words? The neighbours are in distress.

For what harms thee harms me.

May peace be within you and me.

These were words that crossed the mind while watching news and as everyone else the images continued to churn in the head. A lot of times we do not know the impact of what we are watching or listening. But these are real incidents and actuality overpowers thoughts to create emotions.

What happens thousands of kilometres does have an impact as much as polluted air that knows no boundaries. And so this year, 2023, we are not marking Omani Women's Day like it is normally done because everyone feels the pain that is experienced in Gaza.

The events are cancelled but the achievements continue. There are many more inspirational stories that have been motivating others to follow their path to success.

Talking to career women on Omani Women's Day has made it clear — continuous learning is the way to evolve and maintain consistency. Do not get sidelined just because the trends have changed. Seasons change so does methodologies.

Self development is the only way forward the ladies point out. It might be a competitive world, let us accept the fact, and upgrade one's skills.

Treat it like a game and enjoy the victory and learn to lose gracefully but not to remain there. Take time to change the strategy and bounce back



Lakshmi Kothaneth @lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

WHAT HAPPENS THOUSANDS OF KILOMETRES DOES HAVE AN IMPACT AS MUCH AS POLLUTED AIR THAT KNOWS NO BOUNDARIES

with power and the only point to remember is to enjoy the game. Do not hesitate to find mentors.

Find one's own niche and excel in it, not to impress others or compete but to compete with yourself, with the person you were yesterday.

Find the mountain and scale it. Life is not meant to be a smooth ride, then we might as well enjoy the adventure by learning to be problem solvers and not be part of the problem.

Sentiments and emotions can become strengths as in the case of emotional intelligence. And when in doubt and if there is something that you need to improve on then swallow the ego, roll up the sleeves and learn what is new.

What is important is to be relevant and continue to enjoy the journey.

While enjoying the journey, let's be good neighbours and help others grow with us. So no one is left behind.

And no one is lonely.

Islamic Scholar and Life Coach, late Shaikh Khalfan al Esry used to always say, "Become extraordinary," because there are too many ordinary people in the world. I think to become extraordinary one does not have to invest too much of capital, it requires determination and dedication. You might be doing exactly what others are doing, but your knowledge that can come from self learning and practice might just bring about the change that is required to excel and achieve the status of being extraordinary.

While speaking to an ace photographer about his profession, he said, "It is not about having the best camera and lens that make good photography, but having the talent to create the right frame, composition and ideas. It could even be a mobile phone."

Can everyone become extraordinary?

Why not? Because each tiger on earth has a distinct marking and each of our finger print is unique, then why couldn't each one of us be extraordinary? We can be extraordinarily contributing to the family, to the nation and to the world.

One might be executing an ordinary job but in an extraordinary way so much so that your absence could be like the best of food without salt.

Be extraordinary, add flavour to the world.

BLACK EAGLES IN THE AIR!



Members of South Korea's 'Black Eagle' aerobatics team perform a display at the Seoul International Aerospace and Defence Exhibition in Seongnam, south of Seoul on Monday. – AFP

Donald Trump puts courts in 'bind'

Donald Trump's attacks on the US justice system face a fresh test next week when the federal prosecutor

trying the former US president on charges involving his efforts to undo his 2020 election loss asks a judge to rein in "inflammatory" comments.

The US special counsel bringing that case, Jack Smith, on Monday will try to persuade US District Judge Tanya Chutkan to impose new limits on public comments about the case by Trump, a request his attorneys have called a "desperate effort at censorship."

It is a problem that five US state and federal judges are wrestling with as Trump faces four upcoming criminal trials and a civil fraud case. Trump, the frontrunner for the Republican nomination to face Democratic President Joe Biden in the 2024 US election, has denied wrongdoing and has called the cases politically motivated.

New York state Justice Arthur Engoron already has faced off with Trump on the issue. The judge on October 3 issued a gag order barring Trump from speaking about court staff after the businessman-turned-politician lashed out on social media at the judge's law clerk.



Andrew Goudsward

The writer is a breaking news reporter for Reuters covering major events in Monmouth and Ocean counties

THE JUDGE ISSUED A GAG ORDER BARRING TRUMP FROM SPEAKING ABOUT COURT STAFF AFTER HE LASHED OUT ON SOCIAL MEDIA AT THE JUDGE'S LAW CLERK

"Public statements about my staff are unacceptable and inappropriate, and I will not tolerate them under any circumstances," Engoron, presiding over the civil fraud trial against Trump and his family business, said in issuing the order. Trump's broadsides have put courts in a bind. Allowing them to continue risks undermining the judicial process, according to legal experts, but any efforts to constrain Trump could fuel his claims that the justice system has been "weaponised" against him.

"We've never had a criminal defendant with such a megaphone," said Georgetown University law professor Michael Frisch, who studies legal ethics.

Trump has called Engoron, who found that he and his family business committed fraud, "deranged." Trump has cast doubt on Chutkan's ability to give him a fair trial and called her "highly partisan."

Ahead of his civil fraud trial, Trump, without providing evidence, accused the US Justice Department of coordinating with New York state Attorney General Letitia James to damage his presidential campaign.

"They're all corrupt people," Trump told reporters in the Manhattan courthouse.

Trump has castigated his adversaries in the cases against him, calling Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg an "animal," Smith a "thug" and James a "monster."

"I will not be bullied," James responded.

Smith's team argued that Trump's recent comments are part of the same pattern of menacing conduct that Trump showed after the 2020 election, including in the run-up to the January 6, 2021, US

Capitol attack by his supporters.

Lawrence Stengel, a former chief federal trial judge in Pennsylvania, said it would be difficult to balance Trump's free speech rights against the need for a fair legal process.

"Are we going to allow a high-profile defendant with a soap box and an audience to consistently undermine and downplay the importance of the system that we all operate under?" Stengel asked. "That's a real concern, but I'm not sure that it can be remedied with a gag order."

Smith's office is seeking

an order barring Trump and others involved in the case from speaking publicly about prospective witnesses or making intimidating remarks about attorneys, court staff and potential jurors. Smith cited Trump's "established practice of issuing inflammatory public statements targeted at individuals or institutions that present an obstacle or challenge to him."

Trump's lawyers have said their client is making "entirely valid criticisms" of the cases against him, which they said are protected by his free speech rights under the US Constitution's First Amendment.

"The prosecution would silence President Trump, amid a political campaign where his right to criticise the government is at its zenith, all to avoid a public rebuke of this prosecution," Trump's lawyers wrote in a court filing.

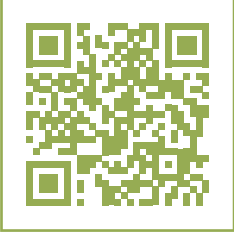
A spokesperson for Trump did respond to a request for comment. A spokesperson for Smith's office declined to comment. One notable exception to Trump's criticism is the judge presiding over the classified documents criminal case in Florida.



Donald Trump waves at the Club 47 USA event in West Palm Beach, Florida. – Reuters file photo

sport

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The heads of the GCC National Olympic Committees during the 35th meeting in Muscat on Monday.

Joint GCC action sought for sports development

Oman chairs 35th meeting of GCC National Olympic Committees’ heads

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 16

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), chaired the 35th meeting of GCC National Olympic Committees (NOCs) Heads which was held in Muscat on Monday. The meeting started with a speech delivered by the OOC chairman, Khalid bin Mohammed al Zubair, as he began with thanks to all the GCC members for their sincere efforts made to enhance the development of sports field.

“This is a great opportunity for all of us to be proud of the distinguished achievements that Gulf sports athletes have achieved regionally and globally. Our meeting came inline to the consultative approach that the Gulf Cooperation Council have always followed as a clear and efficient working methodology to coordinate policies and take

appropriate decisions in the sports field. Also, to support the set plans for preparing the talented athletes by further development in various existing cooperation programmes, diversifying Gulf sports tournaments and meetings, and raising their organisational and technical levels to serve as important stations for preparing for competitions and achieving achievements in major international sporting events,” he said.

The chairman of existing term of GCC NOCs Heads meeting affirmed that the meeting will result in positive outcomes that will represent a new starting point towards strengthening joint Gulf action plan in various sports fields. “This is an appropriate opportunity to emphasise the necessity of increasing the activation of cooperation programmes, fruitful exchange of experiences, transferring



The Oman delegation at the meeting.

successful experiences, and mutual benefits from the available sports facilities, investing all of this in providing and implementing purposeful programmes and activities approved by the strategy for developing joint Gulf action in the sports field 2020 – 2028, which will contribute to shape the gulf youth athletes to climb the podiums in the most prestigious

and essential continental and international sports events,” he concluded.

Later, Major General (Pilot) Issa Rashid al Mohannadi, Assistant GCC Secretary-General for Military Affairs, at the General Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council delivered a speech and he appreciated all the efforts made towards the registered accomplishments.

“The GCC countries have become a preferable destinations to hold many sporting tournaments and events at international and regional levels due to the availability of international standards of sporting facilities and well constructed infrastructures. Kuwait hosted in the previous year the Gulf Games with participation of more than 1,900 athletes representing different sports. The UAE will host inaugural edition of Youth Gulf Sports Games in Dubai city in April 2024 besides many other sporting events to take place soon in different Gulf cities,” he added.

Issa al Mohannadi thanked all the members for their collaboration in developing the sports field and for the executive office members for their hard work to prepare for the meeting.

During the meeting, the GCC NOCs Heads reviewed

and approved many raised proposals by the executive office on their meeting on Sunday. The GCC NOCs Heads agreed on continuing the efforts towards following up on executing the strategic plan.

Moreover, the General Secretariat of the GCC is coordinating with the National Olympic Committees in order to invite them to take the initiative to submit requests to host the Gulf Sports Championships to the NOCs.

These requests will be referred to the dedicated committees to programme and recommend the schedule of tournaments and events. The GCC NOCs Heads approved the requested recommendation.

Also, they agreed on the raised proposals during the second meeting of the Advisory Committee for Sports of the Women’s Committee in the GCC countries.

Saudi bid for 2034 Fifa World Cup receives ‘huge support’

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 16

Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki al Faisal, Saudi Arabia’s Minister of Sports and Chairman of the Saudi Olympic and Paralympic Committee, affirmed that Saudi Arabia’s bid for hosting the 2034 Fifa World Cup got a huge support from all the Gulf, Arab and Asian countries.

“Definitely, the purpose of the bid for hosting world Cup in Saudi Arabia is to develop the football in the region and in Asian continent. We really appreciate all the efforts made by the Asian Football Confederation to support Saudi’s bid. I am thanking all the countries for their support. I am confident that everyone will benefit from the

success of the Saudi bid. We are looking forward that the dreams of world-class tournament to happen soon by hosting this mega event of the World Cup in Saudi Arabia,” he added in his remarks to the reporters following the end of GCC NOCs Heads meeting in Muscat on Monday.

Commenting on Omani-Saudi collaboration in the sports field, Prince Abdulaziz al Faisal said: “There is continuous collaboration between Oman Olympic Committee and Saudi Olympic Committee. I appreciate the efforts and hard work made by the OOC towards the success of these GCC Olympic Committees meeting in Muscat. With regards to Omani-Saudi collaboration, there are joint programmes on developing



Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki al Faisal of Saudi Arabia attends the GCC NOCs Heads meeting in Muscat on Monday.

the junior athletes, exchanging experience in improvement of the infrastructure and hosting the mega events. Both parties are working hard for the development of sports in the region and in their own countries,” he concluded.

Recently, Saudi Arabia have officially declared its intention to host 2034 Fifa World Cup following Fifa extended an invitation to the Asian and Oceania regions countries to submit their bids. Later, Saudi Arabia announced on their second step to bid for 2034 World Cup by submitting a letter of intent to host the event to world soccer governing body Fifa last week.

Saudi Arabia is the host of the Asian Cup football in 2027.

Ahli Sidab secure thrilling victory against Dhofar



Action during Ahli Sidab-Dhofar match at the Oman Basketball League.

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 16

Ahli Sidab Club emerged victorious in an exhilarating match against Dhofar Club with a final score of 51-46 in the Oman Basketball League for the 2023-2024 season. The match, held at the secondary hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, showcased outstanding performances from both teams.

In a closely contested game, Ahli Sidab took the lead in the first three quarters, displaying prowess and control over the game. However, Dhofar made a remarkable comeback in the final quarter, displaying superior gameplay and scoring abilities.

The match began with Ahli Sidab aggressively attacking in the first quarter with Khalid al Hashmi managing a three-point shot. Dhofar missed several opportunities before Abdullah al Siyabi scored their first point from a mistake. The attacks continued from both teams, and Ahli Sidab's



A Dhofar player takes a free throw at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex.

Mohammed al Batashi scored two points with a shot from under the basket. The game continued with more attacks, during which Ahli Sidab added 8 points, while Dhofar added 7 points. The first quarter ended with Ahli Sidab leading 13-9.

In the second quarter, Ahli

Sidab maintained their offensive momentum, efficiently converting opportunities into points. Notable contributions from Khalid al Hashmi, Hamiar al Hasani, Mohammed al Batashi and Mubarak al Wahibi extended their lead. Dhofar, though resilient, trailed Ahli Sdab, and the first-

half ended at 24-16 in favour of Ahli Sidab.

The third quarter witnessed Ahli Sidab's continued offensive dominance, adding 12 new points through Khalid al Hashmi and Ahmed al Hasani. Despite Dhofar's efforts, Ahli Sidab maintained their lead, closing the quarter at 35-23.

In the fourth quarter, Dhofar showcased a strong resurgence, capitalising on Ahli Sidab's momentarily reduced performance. Dhofar players displayed impressive teamwork, narrowing the gap and securing 23 points. However, Ahli Sidab held their ground and scored 16 points, ultimately clinching the victory with a final score of 51-46.

The match was officiated by international referees, with Rashid al Musharfi as the head referee, Mazen al Hilali as the second referee and Taha al Ameri as the third referee. Maryam al Zadjali, Musa al Siyabi, and Fatima al Harithy were present at the table, ensuring a smooth and fair game.

Cricket to feature at 2028 Los Angeles Olympics

MUMBAI: Cricket will feature as one of five new sports at the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles after being approved on Monday in a vote of the International Olympic Committee's session.

The IOC's executive board last week accepted a proposal by LA organisers for cricket's Twenty20 format, together with baseball/softball, flag football, squash and lacrosse, to be included.

But the final choice still had to be voted on Monday at the IOC session in Mumbai, one of the global centres for cricket, as India hosts the men's 50-over Cricket World Cup.

Only two delegates at the session voted against the new sports.

Organisers have proposed a six-team event, in both men's and women's Twenty20 cricket, the shortest form of the game.

Cricket last featured at the 1900 Paris Olympics, when a team from Britain beat a side representing France.

India won both men's and women's cricket gold medals at the recent multi-sport Asian Games in China.

Meanwhile, Major League Cricket, a professional Twenty20 League, was launched in the United States in July, with the US a co-host of next year's men's T20 World Cup together with territories in the West Indies.

"It's a win-win situation," International Cricket Council chairman Greg Barclay told reporters in Mumbai, of cricket's inclusion in the LA 2028 programme. "We've got a global sport, what I think is the fastest-growing global sport, but getting onto the biggest sporting stage in the world, the Olympics, is a massive shot in the arm for the game," the New Zealander added.

'2.5 BILLION RABID FANS'

Explaining the push for cricket's inclusion, Los Angeles 2028 chairman Casey Wasserman, said: "We think the opportunity to bring a sport that has 2.5 billion rabid fans to what we think is the greatest sport city in the world, it's a really powerful combination."

Jay Shah, secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, welcomed cricket's return to the Olympics by saying:



Chairman of LA 2028 Olympic Games, Casey Wasserman speaks during the second day of the 141st International Olympic Committee session in Mumbai. — AFP

"We are thrilled to witness this momentous occasion, which marks a significant milestone for the sport."

He added cricket's place in the LA 2028 programme "aligns" with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announcing on Saturday that India would bid to stage the 2036 Olympics.

"Moreover, we anticipate that this decision will yield significant financial dividends and have a profound positive impact on our sport's eco-system," Shah added.

But IOC president Thomas Bach, speaking after Monday's IOC session, said any financial boost would be a "consequence".

"The first argument and the most important argument is we have seen the growing international importance of cricket and the Olympic Games want to incorporate the most popular sports worldwide," said Bach. "This sport (cricket) also has a growing importance in the United States."

Among the newly included US sports is flag football — a limited-contact form of American football.

Monday's vote also saw the racquet sport of squash finally make it onto an Olympic programme after several failed attempts. Zena Wooldridge, president of the World Squash Federation, said the game is an "amazingly dynamic, diverse and demanding sport that is perfectly suited for the Olympic Games".

Meanwhile the IOC said on Monday the status of boxing at the 2028 Games remains "on hold" after it stripped the International Boxing Association (IBA) of its recognition following a dispute over how the sport is governed. — AFP

Vanderlande, ABL Task, Waves Engg, Peace post wins

MUSCAT: Vanderlande dominated AER claiming victory by 108 runs in the A Division League 2023-24 powered by Khimji Ramdas LLC.

Vanderlande's Imran Ilyas Raghu 59 (55b) and Balamurugan Balsamy 56 (42b) notched half-centuries along with contribution from Aiyappan B 43 (49b) and Abhishek Madan 40 (56b) helped them post a total of 260 on the board. Akbar Ali of AER bagged 3 wickets. In response, AER crumbled to 152 with only Rubel Sattar 57 (58b) able to contribute a major score. Aiyappan B bagged a five-wicket haul to seal the victory for Vanderlande.

ABL Task beat Douglas Al Jadidi by 108 runs in the B Division League 2023-24 powered by Al Ansari Group of Companies

ABL Task posted 205 courtesy Nishanth Meethalveedu's 61 (56b)



Aiyappan B of Vanderlande

along with Vijay Anand's 45 (27b). Abdul Rauf bagged 4 wickets for Douglas Al Jadidi. In response, ABL Task were bundled down on a paltry 97 as Aneermon A took 4 wickets and Nidhin M claimed 3 wickets.

In the E Division League powered by Credit Oman, Waves Engineering beat Team Coorg by 49 runs.



Imran Ilyas of Vanderlande

In the E Division League powered by Credit Oman, Peace Players – FOS Energy beat OCT Mabela by 14 runs.

BRIEF SCORES

Vanderlande 260 all out in 47.3 overs (Imran Ilyas Raghu 59 (55b, 3x4, 1x6); Akbar Ali 3-42) beat AER 152 all out in 31.5 overs (Rubel Sattar 57 (58b, 8x4); Aiyappan B 5-27) by 108 runs.



(L-R) Aneermon, Nishanth, Nidhin and Vijay of ABL TASK

ABL Task 205 all out in 29.2 overs (Nishanth M 61 (56b, 8x4); Abdul Rauf 4-44) beat Douglas Al Jadidi 97 all out in 24 overs (Dharvesh Asath 20 (20b, 3x4); Aneermon A 4-20) by 108 runs.

Waves Engineering 219-6 in 20 overs (Mohd Wasim Ali 66 (35b, 10x4); Fajes MP 2-28) beat Team Coorg 170 all out in 19.5 overs (Thimmanna CS 65 (44b, 5x4, 2x6); Mohd Wasim Ali 2-29) by 49 runs.

Peace Players 171-6 in 20 overs (Tejash Shetty 54 (43b, 3x4); Sharif Balushi 2-24) beat OCT Mabela 157-9 in 20 overs (Yasir Dur Mohd 64 (42b, 9x4, 1x6); Muhd Abrar 3-28) by 14 runs.

Zampa helps steer Aussies past Sri Lanka

LUCKNOW: Leg-spinner Adam Zampa returned figures of 4-47 while Mitchell Marsh and Josh Inglis hit fifties to help Australia down Sri Lanka by five wickets for their first win at the 2023 Cricket World Cup on Monday.

Five-time winners Australia bundled out Sri Lanka for 209, a total they overhauled in 35.2 overs at a windswept Ekana Stadium.

The drama on the field may have been limited but that was not the case in the stands.

After rain interrupted Sri Lanka's batting, strong winds brought scaffolding and hoardings crashing down onto the seats below.

With only around 3,000 people inside the 50,000-capacity ground, spectators managed to escape injury.

However, Australia's reply was delayed when the umpires felt it unsafe to restart the match with high winds still a danger.

Once the game resumed, opener Marsh smashed 52 and wicketkeeper-batsman Inglis made 58 as Australia registered their first win in three matches.

Former champions Sri Lanka slipped to a third loss in as many games. Marsh led the chase after Australia lost two early wickets of David Warner, for 11, and Steve Smith, for a duck, to slip to 24-2.

Marsh reached his first fifty in a World Cup off 39 balls but was soon run out after attempting a second run with Marnus Labuschagne, who hit 40.

SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA
P Nissanka c Warner b Cummins -----61
K Perera b Cummins -----78
K Mendis c Warner b Zampa -----9
S Samarawickrama lbw Zampa -----8
C Asalanka c Labuschagne b Maxwell -----25
D de Silva b Starc -----7
D Wellalage run out (Cummins) -----2
C Karunaratne lbw Zampa -----2
M Theekshana lbw Zampa -----0
L Kumara b Starc -----4
D Madushanka not out -----0
Extras (b2, lb2, w9) -----13
Total (all out, 43.3 overs) -----209
Fall of wickets: 1-125, 2-157, 3-165, 4-166, 5-178, 6-184, 7-196, 8-199, 9-204
Bowling: Starc 10-0-43-2, Hazlewood 7-1-36-0, Maxwell 9-3-0-36-1, Cummins 7-0-32-2, Zampa 8-1-47-4, Stoinis 2-0-11-0

AUSTRALIA (TARGET 210)
M Marsh run out -----52
D Warner lbw Madushanka -----11
S Smith lbw Madushanka -----0
M Labuschagne c Karunaratne b Madushanka 40
J Inglis c Theekshana b Wellalage -----58
G Maxwell not out -----31
M Stoinis not out -----20
Extras (w3) -----3
Total (5 wickets, 35.2 overs) -----215
Fall of wickets: 1-24, 2-24, 3-81, 4-158, 5-192
Bowling: Kumara 4-0-47-0, Madushanka 9-2-38-3, Theekshana 7-0-49-0, Wellalage 9-2-0-53-1, Karunaratne 3-0-15-0, De Silva 3-0-13-0
Result: Australia won by 5 wickets

Labuschagne and Inglis put on a key stand of 77 to deny the thin crowd of any late drama.

Left-arm quick Dilshan Madushanka broke the partnership to send back Labuschagne for his third wicket and spinner Dunith Wellalage got Inglis.

But Glenn Maxwell, who hit a 21-ball 31, took the team home with Marcus Stoinis, who made 20, for company.

Madushanka had raised early hopes of a fightback after he

trapped Warner and Smith — both lbw — in the same over.

The left-handed Warner reviewed his decision but the tracker showed the ball would have kissed leg stump and the batsman returned to the stands fuming.

Earlier Sri Lanka elected to bat first and started with a 125-run opening stand between Pathum Nissanka (61) and Kusal Perera (78) before the opposition bowlers hit back to end the innings in 43.3 overs.

Perera reached his fifty with a boundary off Stoinis amid applause from the dressing room and a few Sri Lankan fans.

Nissanka soon claimed his second successive half-century as Sri Lanka charged ahead.

Skipper Pat Cummins dismissed Nissanka through a good outfield catch by Warner and then bowled Perera.

Zampa sent back skipper Kusal Mendis and Sadeera Samarawickrama on consecutive balls between overs to be on hat-trick avoided by Dhananjaya de Silva.

Rain interrupted play for about 25 minutes and the break only gave Australia more power to return with wickets as left-arm quick Mitchell Starc bowled De Silva.

Sri Lanka kept losing wickets and Zampa grabbed two more including Chamika Karunaratne, who was only called up to replace injured captain Dasun Shanaka at the weekend. — AFP

WORLD CUP STANDINGS

CRICKET WORLD CUP STANDINGS AFTER FRIDAY'S MATCH

Team	Played	Won	Lost	Tied	No Result	Points	NRR
India	3	3	0	0	0	6	1.821
New Zealand	3	3	0	0	0	6	1.604
South Africa	2	2	0	0	0	4	2.360
Pakistan	3	2	1	0	0	4	-0.137
England	3	1	2	0	0	2	-0.084
Afghanistan	3	1	2	0	0	2	-0.652
Bangladesh	3	1	2	0	0	2	-0.699
Australia	3	1	2	0	0	2	-0.734
Sri Lanka	3	0	3	0	0	0	-1.532
Netherlands	2	0	2	0	0	0	-1.800

NOTE: Top four teams qualify for the semifinals

England, Australia might miss semifinal qualification

BOTH England and Australia who were favourites going into this World cup have lost two games from their first three games and face an uphill task to qualify for the knockout stage even though both still have six games to play further. These teams have their work cut out as top three teams India, New Zealand and South Africa have looked good with three and two wins from their games.

Defending champions England who had lost their first game to New Zealand were also upset by Afghanistan and now face an uphill



ANIS SAJAN



task and cannot expect another slip up. Their remaining games are against South Africa, India, Pakistan, Australia and the Netherlands and need to win at least five which will take them to 12 points and ensure that they win big to get their net run rate better as it's -0.084 as of now.

Against Afghanistan, England's batting was found wanting against spin losing their 8 wickets to the Afghan spinners. They will have to get their act right quickly against Asian teams Like India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and even South Africa look good in the spin department with Keshav Maharaj difficult to get away. Similarly, they will

hope their batters Jonny Bairstow, Liam Livingstone and captain Jos Buttler find form as they are all power hitters and can score big.

Similarly, their bowling too has not hit the right strap with almost all their bowlers going for plenty.

BIGGEST RIVALS

England's biggest rivals Australia too looked out of sorts in their first two games against India and Australia. Australia earned a welcome win against Sri Lanka on Monday to make their NRR -0.734 but occupy eighth spot in the table. Their next six games are against Pakistan, Afghanistan,

Bangladesh, Netherlands, England and New Zealand and have to win five of them to be in hunt for a chance in the semifinals.

Australia's biggest concern is their batting and in their first two games, the team scored 199 and 177 with no batsman showing good form. David Warner and Steven Smith who are their most experienced batsmen have failed which is hurting to lay a foundation for the rest of their batters to follow.

At the beginning of the World Cup most of the pundits had England and Australia in the top four for the semifinals and currently it seems both might miss the boat for the knockout.



Adam
Zampa

SRI LANKA

OVERS

8

MAIDENS

1

RUNS

47

WICKETS

4



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Pacts signed for 6 major projects at Duqm SEZ

QASIM AL MAASHANI
DUQM, OCT 16

His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, presided over the opening of the 1st Duqm Economic Forum at the Special Economic Zone at Duqm on Monday.

More than 300 local and international figures, representing over 90 companies that are investors and stakeholders in the SEZ, are taking part in the two-day forum. Discussions will highlight the pivotal role of Duqm in achieving Oman's net-zero carbon neutrality goals by 2050, and supporting the nation's aspirations set out in Oman Vision 2040

The highlight of the opening day was the signing of a number of investment agreements and memorandums of understanding linked to six green industry related projects planned for implemented in the SEZ. The projects are as follows:



HH Sayyid Theyazin with Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy at the first Duqm Economic Forum.

RAS MARKAZ ROAD PROJECT

A testament to the growing bilateral relationship between Oman and Saudi Arabia, this road project will be funded by the Saudi Fund for Development

at a cost of RO 57.6 million. The 51km stretch starts from the Duqm Airport roundabout and extends to Ras Markaz, connecting important projects and areas earmarked for renewable energy development. The project will also

be implemented by an Omani-Saudi joint venture, represented by Strabag Oman and Al-Rozan Contracting Company of Saudi Arabia. It is the first project to be implemented in the Duqm based on the collaborative model

instituted by the two countries

Signing the contract were Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ); and Hamid bin Abdulqawi al Yafei, Executive Director of Strabag Oman. Also present was Eng Bandar bin Abdullah al Obaid, Director General of Arab Countries Operations at the Saudi Fund for Development. The project is expected to be completed in the second half of 2025.

DUQM HYPOT USUFRUCT AGREEMENT:

Usufruct agreements were signed with Hypot Duqm, a consortium that includes OQ Alternative Energy Company and DEME Concessions of Belgium, covering the allocation of 150 km2 of land in the SEZ. The consortium will invest in solar and wind capacity to generate 250-500 MW of renewable electricity for the production of hydrogen derivatives such as ammonia and other by-products.

Signing the agreements were Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman — OPAZ; Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Hydrom; Najla al Jamali, CEO — OQ Alternative Energy; and Guiseppe Stefani, General Manager — DEME Hypot Energy. Planned for development in two phases, the renewable energy capacity is envisaged at 1.3 gigawatts (GW) in the first phase, rising to over 2.7 GW in the second phase.

Ghaleb bin Said al Maamari, Vice President of OQ Alternative Energy, said: "We are pleased to sign the two usufruct agreements for the Hypot Duqm project, which will enable us to continue developing the project at the allocated site in the SEZ. This project reflects OQ Group's commitment to implement its decarbonisation plans. It is an embodiment of the energy transformation strategy adopted by OQ to contribute to achieving zero carbon neutrality by 2050."

Forum on investment climate development held in Dhofar



Investment Climate Development Forum

BUSINESS REPORTER
SALALAH, OCT 16

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion organised an Investment Climate Development Forum in Salalah on Monday.

The event was held under the patronage of His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Culture and Entertainment Complex in Salalah.

The primary goal of this forum was to bolster the investment environment in Dhofar Governorate, with a particular focus on attracting quality investments to the region.

During the forum, the

Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion delivered a visual presentation on the National Programme for Investment and Export Development, known as "Nizdihar." It also showcased the "Invest in Oman" platform, which serves as a unified gateway to investors and highlights investment opportunities exceeding RO 1 million.

The forum was conducted in collaboration with relevant government and private entities.

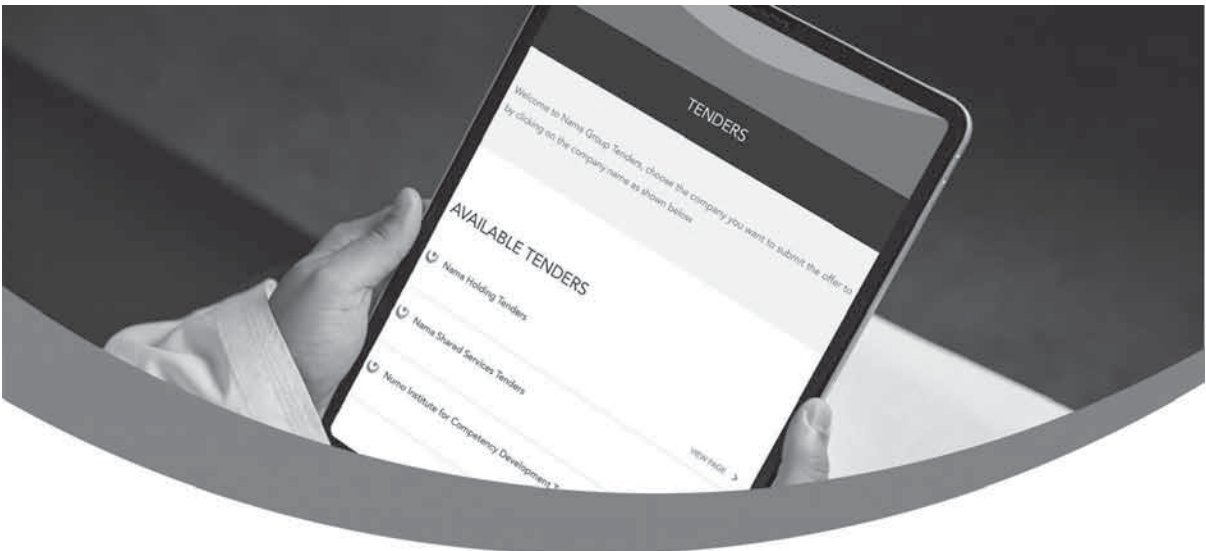
The Ministry's Director-General in Dhofar Governorate underscored the ministry's commitment to shedding light on the collective government efforts aimed at creating an investment-friendly environment, diversifying

income sources, and attracting capital.

There were also presentations by representatives of other government bodies, including the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and the Dhofar Municipality.

The Investment Climate Development Forum served as a platform to review the roles played by various entities in the investment sector, highlight key investment opportunities, discuss plans for enhancing the investment environment in the governorate, and showcase the joint efforts in promoting investment.

This event contributed to fostering a more conducive investment climate in Dhofar.



TENDER

Nama Holding invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their best offers for the tender below:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR)
EHC/2023/21	Medical Insurance Services for Nama Group	24-Oct-2023	6-Nov-2023	2500 (Plus, VAT amount: 125 OMR)

- Interested party may purchase the tender through the company website (www.nama.om). Supplier user guide is available to be downloaded at the same page.
- Payment of the tender fees to be done online through the link available in website. The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 12.00 pm.
- Bids shall be submitted online through I-supplier portal before 3.00 pm the Sultanate time on Monday 6-Nov-2023.
- Each bid should be accompanied with a temporary insurance, in the form of a bank guarantee from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate, for an amount of 3,000/- OMR and valid for a period of (90) days from the last date for submission of offers. Tenders that do not include the required temporary insurance will not be considered. The original hard copy of the bid bond should be dropped in the tender box at Nama Holding reception.
- NH is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.



Nama Holding
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TO ENSURE A SMOOTH OPERATION, UPDATE YOUR DETAILS

Chery launches 2023 global user summit, promotes green future for sustainability

JOMAR MENDOZA
WUHU, CHINA, OCT 16

In an effort to address the urgent need for sustainable development and green travel, Chery, a renowned Chinese automotive brand, launched on Sunday the highly anticipated 2023 Chery International User Summit.

The event, which takes place from October 15 to 20 in Wuhu, Anhui province, China, brought together 800+ global stakeholders, including Chery's overseas users, influential bloggers, and mainstream media, from more than 50 countries, to collaborate and drive positive change.

Delegates from the Sultanate of Oman included the General Manager of Chery Oman, Ahmad Salaheldin.

With the theme 'New Journey New Life' the summit focuses on new energy. The first day of the summit, Chery Merchandise Display, showcases Chery's brand concept of 'Green, Technology, Family, Companionship.' Intelligent lifestyle companions and Chery's range of green and environmentally-friendly new energy vehicle (NEV) models were



Delegates pose for a photo during the opening ceremony of the 2023 Chery International User Summit in Wuhu, China.

featured, highlighting a vibrant and eco-friendly lifestyle.

Included were car models of Exeed and Omoda and Jaecoo (O&J) which cater to customers who are part of the 'fashion elite' and 'modern lifestyle of health and sustainability.'

Day one activities include robotics showroom tour, meeting with Chery Middle East officials

who discussed about network and NEV technology plan in Oman, including hybrid (HEV), plug-in hybrid (PHEV), battery electric vehicle (BEV) and range extender electric vehicle (REEV) setups.

Members of the media from the Middle East and North Africa region also conducted an interview with officials of Chery International led by Guibing Zhang, President

of Chery International and Vice-President of Chery Group.

One of the major highlights of the summit will be the implementation of the '8023' Plan and the Green Public Welfare Fund, which was unveiled earlier this year. Chery plans to sign agreements with reputable organisations such as the United Nations International Children's

Emergency Fund (Unicef) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The aim is to provide assistance in crucial areas such as food, clean water, health, and education for children in impoverished countries and regions.

Additionally, Chery will offer nature-based solutions to protect global forests, oceans, wetlands, and wildlife.

This initiative signifies Chery's commitment to global green sustainable development and its dedication to corporate social responsibility.

As part of its commitment to environmental protection, Chery will also collaborate with various stakeholders in Wuhu to co-build an 'Ecological City.'

With over 26 years of experience in green manufacturing, Chery has become a leader in pollution prevention, energy conservation, and clean production.

By leveraging advanced green technologies, Chery aims to support the economic development of Wuhu — the birth city of Chery — while improving the ecological environment. The company's vision is to create a

harmonious and sustainable city that serves as a model for other cities worldwide.

In a bid to showcase the benefits of green living and inspire global cooperation, the summit will include a Mass Ride Event.

Chery's overseas users, influential bloggers, and mainstream media will come together to participate in this public service event that aims to capture the world's attention.

Chery's efforts to contribute to global sustainable development have garnered positive attention, as the brand resonates with consumers both nationally and globally.

By organising the 2023 Chery International User Summit, the company demonstrates warmth, responsibility, and a genuine commitment to shaping a greener future.

The event underscores Chery's role as an industry pioneer in providing users with innovative green travel experiences while actively engaging in corporate social responsibility on a global scale.

In Oman, Chery will soon be launched by Saud Bahwan Group.

Taageer Finance's Chief Executive named 'CEO of the Year'

MUSCAT: Premier finance and leasing company (FLC) - Taageer Finance - is pleased to announce that its distinguished CEO, Shahin bin Mohammed al Balushi is awarded the prestigious 'CEO of the Year' accolade amongst Finance and Leasing companies, at the Alam Al-Iktisaad Awards.

The award stands as a testament to his outstanding leadership and accomplishments in the financial sector. Al Balushi, a luminary in Oman's financial landscape, holds the distinction of being the most experienced CEO in the nation's financial industry.

His impressive career spans leadership roles in three prominent finance companies within the Sultanate of Oman, solidifying his



position as the foremost Omani executive in the finance sector at the C-suite level.

Over the span of his illustrious career, Shahin bin Mohammed al Balushi has displayed versatility by contributing across various functions in the finance and leasing

business and beyond.

His comprehensive understanding of the industry has been instrumental in steering Taageer Finance towards sustained growth and success.

Sharing his thoughts on receiving the 'CEO of the Year' Award, Balushi stated: "I am honoured to receive this prestigious award; which is a testament to the dedication and hard-work of the entire team at Taageer Finance. I believe in the potential of Oman's finance sector, and am committed to contribute to its growth and development.

This recognition further fuels my passion to continue innovating and driving positive change in the industry." Under Shahin bin

Mohammed al Balushi's visionary leadership, Taageer Finance has spearheaded numerous digital initiatives, resulting in the company's recent recognition with the "Pioneers in Digital Evolution (NBFC sector)" Award at the DX Oman Digital Transformation Awards.

These initiatives have not only modernised the company's operations but also positioned Taageer Finance as an industry leader in embracing digital transformation.

One of Mr. Balushi's noteworthy achievements has been in reducing employee turnover through strategic initiatives, with a specific focus on the development of national talent.



Moosa Abdulrahman, VanLife collaborate to develop caravanning pickup truck

MUSCAT: In line with supporting SME development and national entrepreneurs, Moosa Abdulrahman Hassan Company has entered into a strategic partnership with VanLife, a renowned manufacturer of luxury vehicles and mobile homes.

Together, they have announced an exciting collaboration aimed at designing a pickup truck tailored specifically for caravan enthusiasts and adventurous tourists seeking unparalleled travel experiences. Said bin Darwish al Balushi, CEO of Moosa Abdulrahman Hassan & Cos LLC, expressed his enthusiasm for this partnership, stating, "Our strategic collaboration exemplifies our strong commitment to promoting SMEs and nurturing local manufacturing with an ICV focus, all while delivering the best to our valued customers.

We are dedicated to introducing innovative vehicles that excel in both performance and comfort, perfectly meeting the needs of travellers and caravan enthusiasts."

Mohammed al Rashdi, General Manager of VanLife, also shared his excitement about this joint venture, remarking, "We are thrilled about this partnership and believe it will unlock new possibilities within the mobile home industry.

It offers a unique solution for travel and exploration enthusiasts, setting the stage for extraordinary adventures."

This strategic partnership aligns seamlessly with Moosa Abdulrahman Hassan's ongoing commitment to providing innovative and distinctive products to its customers.

The primary objective is to offer a versatile and comfortable mode of travel catering to adventurers and caravan enthusiasts.

The pickup truck will be meticulously designed to meet the specific requirements of caravanners, providing a travel experience characterised by exceptional performance and unparalleled comfort.

The very first of these caravanning pickup trucks, developed through this collaborative endeavour, is expected to make its debut in the coming months.

This partnership signifies a substantial leap forward in the progression of the mobile home industry, introducing innovative choices for travellers and adventure seekers.

It represents a unique opportunity for caravanning enthusiasts to acquire a travel vehicle that seamlessly integrates performance, comfort, and flexibility, enabling them to explore the world like never before.

Lynk & Co showcases 4 models at Geneva International Motor Show

MUSCAT At the Geneva International Motor Show held in Doha, Qatar, Lynk & Co determined to provide an unforgettable moment for car enthusiasts and those seeking a stylish lifestyle.

CO: STORE showcases four Lynk & Co models in the exhibition space: Lynk & Co 01, Lynk & Co 03+, Lynk & Co 05, Lynk & Co 09.

Exclusive Lynk & Co branded products are available for purchase here. This exhibition space is not just a place to display cars; it is a gathering point that sets the tone for the future of automotive culture and lifestyle.

The Lynk & Co exhibition area is located in the D5-E7 of the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center (DECC). Within this 644-square-meter space, visitors can enjoy a range of exciting interactive and entertainment experiences across four main themed zones.

Lynk & Co 01 area features a vinyl record player and a camping

setup, creating a cozy and relaxed atmosphere reminiscent of family vacations.

Lynk & Co 03+ area is equipped with racing simulators, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in the excitement and prestige of a racing club-like environment.

Lynk & Co 05 offers VR driving equipment designed to blend the aesthetics of Mega-city Contrast with driving innovation. In Lynk & Co 09's opulent lounge area, visitors will be enchanted by the luxurious, comfortable sofas and the generous space available.

It's designed to provide a lavish seating experience and ample room for relaxation, allowing you to unwind and indulge in a tranquil environment.

Each of the four exhibition areas is equipped with music experience installations and Harman Kardon audio systems, providing a delightful music experience.

The CO:FFEE offers customised beverages tailored to the car models, as well as delicious



The Geneva International Motor Show held in Doha

desserts, coffee, signature cocktails, and meals. Lynk & Co has officially unveiled its presence in Qatar on October 6th at the Geneva International Motor Show Qatar. This launch is facilitated by Auto Class Cars, the official distributor for Lynk & Co under the NBK Group, which will take full responsibility for Lynk & Co's sales and services in Qatar.

Nasser Bin Khaled Group,

abbreviated as NBK, was founded in 1950. In the automotive sector, it serves as the official agent for several renowned brands in Qatar, including Mercedes-Benz, Mitsubishi, MG (Morris Garages), Maxus (SAIC), FUSO, Harley-Davidson, Michelin Tires, and Bosch.

In addition, NBK also operates across construction, real estate, and tourism.



Corporates shun low-carbon biodiesel in Oman

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 16

Omani startup Wakud, which operates the country's first commercial-scale biodiesel plant using waste cooking oil as feedstock, has bemoaned the appallingly low uptake of its low-carbon biodiesel by energy companies and other large corporates operating in the Sultanate of Oman.

Wakud CEO and Co-Founder Maher bin Mohammed al Habsi revealed that despite strenuous efforts by the company to find commercial buyers for its indigenously produced biodiesel, few if any organisations have stepped forward to patronise its sustainable fuel.

"No one is using our biodiesel today; I don't know why companies or the private sector are not supporting us," Al Habsi, a pioneer among Oman's waste recycling entrepreneurs, lamented during a presentation at the 'Forum on Sustainable Aviation Fuels', organised by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)



Maher al Habsi, CEO – Wakud, speaking the CAA Forum on Sustainable Aviation Fuels

last week.

In particular, Al Habsi faulted the government subsidy on motor fuels for the lacklustre uptake of his biodiesel commodity despite the environmental benefits associated with biodiesel usage. Biodiesel produced from used cooking oil (UCO) results in CO2 emissions of around 0.1 kg/per litre, compared with 3.2 kg per litre of normal diesel.

With a 93 per cent lower CO2 emission rate, biodiesel offers the "fastest and cheapest solution"

to the decarbonisation of the automotive sector, he noted.

With diesel currently being sold at the pump at a subsidised rate of 258 baisas per litre, there are inevitably few takers among large corporates for Wakud's biodiesel that currently sells for around 600 baisas a litre, according to Maher.

The comparatively high cost of biodiesel, he explained, is driven by two main factors: first, very little of the edible oil imported into the country is currently captured before it ends up either in drainage systems or in landfills – a practice deemed environmentally unsafe.

Second, biodiesel refineries like Wakud find themselves at the mercy of a small number of well-entrenched UCO collectors who charge as much as 400 bz/litre for the commodity.

These collectors are also known to ship their volumes to neighbouring countries where a better price awaits them.

"So I'm forced to buy the used cooking oil for 400 baisas, plus I add another 200 bz/litre towards the running costs of the factory.

Thus, while on the one hand, I cannot survive for anything less than 600 bz/litre on my biodiesel, on the other, no one will buy my biodiesel at that price," Al Habsi protested.

One solution out of this dilemma, according to the entrepreneur, is for the government to consider either subsidising biodiesel distribution or mandating sales as a blend with conventional diesel — a practice that is adopted widely in many countries around the world.

Depending upon customer requirements, biodiesel can be blended as, for example, B1, B5, B10 and so on, up to B100. B5, for example, is made up of 5 per cent biodiesel mixed with 95 per cent diesel.

Despite the dismal local uptake of biodiesel, the entrepreneur has vowed to remain in operation and even expand its footprint with an eye of foreign export markets for his climate-friendly fuel.

He also plans to diversify his feedstock base to include fish waste and oil-rich agri-crops, among other waste resources.



Several agreements were signed on the first day of the Duqm Economic Forum.

Major projects at Duqm SEZ

FROM PAGE 13

OPAZ, along with the Port of Duqm Company, signed an MoU with Shell Development Oman (Oman Shell) for the establishment of a Blue Hydrogen and Ammonia project at Duqm together with a carbon capture component. As part of the MoU, a master plan will be prepare to identify possible investment areas in the energy sector in the Duqm SEZ, to help support Oman's Net -Zero strategy.

Signing the MoU were Eng Ahmed bin Ali Akaak, Acting CEO of Duqm SEZ; Reggy Vermeulen, CEO – Port of Duqm, and Walid Hadi, Senior Vice -President and Country Chair of Oman Shell. Per the MoU, Oman Shell will conduct studies on energy supply and demand, infrastructure development needs, the impact of the carbon footprint, and decarbonisation strategies.

Walid Hadi, Senior Vice -President and Country Chair, Oman Shell, said: "We are excited to cooperate in developing decarbonisation opportunities in Duqm through dormant oil reservoirs, and since we are the main developer of the Green Energy Oman (GEO) project and the low-carbon Blue Hydrogen project; We see the areas of blue and green hydrogen as important pillars that reinforce each other, contribute to supporting low-carbon investment in the Sultanate of Oman, and pave the way towards diversifying the energy economy."

OPAZ signed an MoU with BP Alternative Energy Investments for the establishment of a green hydrogen derivatives project at

the SEZ. Powered by 3.3 GW of renewable electricity, the project will produce and export around 150,000 tonnes of green hydrogen derivatives annually.

Eng Ahmed bin Ali Akaak, Acting CEO of Duqm SEZ, signed the MoU With Eng Yousef al Ojaili, Chairman of BP Oman.

OPAZ signed an MoU with the POSCO-ENGIE consortium, which includes a number of Korean companies, for the establishment of a project at the SEZ to produce green ammonia and green hydrogen derivatives. The consortium had previously signed an agreement with the Oman Hydrogen Company (Hydrom) for a project powered by 5.2 GW of renewable energy to produce 1.2 million tonnes of green ammonia project annually.

Ahmed bin Ali Akaak, Acting CEO of Duqm SEZ, signed the MoU with senior executives of POSCO and ENGIE.

A total of three agreements linked to the Vulcan Green Steel project at Duqm SEZ were signed as well. An affiliate of India's Jindal Shaded Group, Vulcan Green Steel plans to set up a plant with a capacity of 5 million tonnes per year of green steel at a cost of \$3 billion. The agreements were linked to: the Build, Operate and Transfer of the Marine Infrastructure; Sub-usufruct agreement for the Green Steel project; and Sub-usufruct agreement for marine infrastructure. Signing the agreements were Eng Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, Vice-Chairman of OPAZ; Reggy Vermeulen, CEO — Port of Duqm; and Mark Bula, CEO — Vulcan Green Steel.

Pictures by Hussain al Maqbali and ONA



Panel discussion in progress at the Duqm Economic Forum.

Pact signed to transport raw limestone to UAE

ABU DHABI: Oman and Etihad Rail Company (OER), the developer and operator of the Sultanate of Oman and United Arab Emirates (AUE) Rail Network, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Emirates Steel Arkan, the UAE's largest steel and building materials manufacturer, to facilitate the export of raw materials from Oman to the UAE.

Under this agreement, OER will provide logistics solutions to manage the transportation of raw limestone, which Emirates Steel Arkan plans to import from Oman to its cement factories in Al Ain, UAE. The MoU was signed by Eng. Ahmed Al Musawa al Hashemi, CEO of OER, and Eng. Said bin Khalfan al Ghafri, CEO of Emirates Steel, an Emirates Steel Arkan company.

Commenting on the MoU, Eng. Ahmed Al Musawa al Hashemi said: "We are proud to work with leading construction materials manufacturers such as Emirates Steel Arkan and further strengthening our strategic partnerships.



Eng Ahmed Al Musawa al Hashemi, CEO of OER, and Eng Said bin Khalfan al Ghafri, CEO of Emirates Steel, an Emirates Steel Arkan company

This agreement represents the vision for this project, which was launched to link the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates and aims to enhance cross-border trade between the two countries, linking centres of manufacturing and production, and connecting import/export points.

As a result, this will create promising and sustainable business opportunities for the mining industry and construction materials production sector in Oman and the UAE."

Eng. Said bin Khalfan al Ghafri remarked, "Our collaboration with OER enhances our supply

chain capabilities by leveraging the railway network that connects both countries.

This agreement paves the way for integrated logistics solutions for the transportation of raw materials to and from our cement plant in Al Ain, boosting our operational efficiency and cost-effectiveness, and reducing environmental impact. Furthermore, this enhances our transport infrastructure and reinforces cross-border supply chains."

Oman and Etihad Rail will provide logistics solutions for Emirates Steel Arkan through

annual transportation of 4 to 6 million tonnes of high-quality raw materials to Al Ain.

This ensures Emirates Steel Arkan can produce and export 2-3 million tonnes of finished goods to regional markets each year. The collaboration between OER and Emirates Steel Arkan creates several benefits, most importantly driving the revenues of the mining industry and increasing investments in Omani quarries.

By connecting ports and manufacturing hubs, the railway network will provide quarrying companies in Oman with direct shipping solutions to export their products to regional markets.

This contributes to achieving the Oman Vision 2040, which aims for a diversified, competitive, and sustainable economy that features unified, modern frameworks.

As the joint railway network will reduce dependence on cars and trucks, it will also drive transformation towards a low-carbon future, supporting both countries' objectives to achieve net neutrality by 2050. — ONA

Young Omani scientist is first GCC national to be employed by top UK research centre

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 16

In a significant milestone for the Gulf, a 19-year-old Omani student has become the first GCC national to be chosen by UK Research & Innovation (UKRI), the top public sector R&D funding agency of the UK government, to study at a prestigious research institution in Britain.

Aziza bint Saif al Mughairiyah (pictured), who is currently in the third year of her four-year

BSc studies at Cardiff University, will take part in particle physics research at ISIS Neutron & Muon Source, a world-leading centre for research at the STFC Rutherford Appleton Laboratory in Oxfordshire.

Aziza's role at the ISIS Neutron & Muon Source primarily involves the development of scientific training for Neutron and Muon experiments.

Her contributions in this capacity promise to be instrumental in advancing and



Aziza al Mughairi

strengthening the understanding of scientific research, spanning

diverse fields including theoretical and experimental particle physics.

Aziza's outstanding accomplishment not only underscores her exceptional talent but also showcases UKRI's progressive stance in fostering diversity within the scientific community.

A non-departmental body of the UK government, UKRI is the largest funder of research in the UK.

Its funding support also covers the Science and Technology

Facilities Council (STFC), under whose auspices the Rutherford Appleton Laboratories or Harwell Innovation Campus operate. As one of the youngest scientists in the Gulf, Aziza's pioneering journey stands as a beacon of hope for future generations, emphasising the profound importance of her presence in a discipline historically underrepresented by Arabs.

"My long-term goals is to support the development of research councils that, working in alignment with Oman Vision

2040, will help boost research and education as well as help diversify the Omani economy," says Aziza.

"Given Oman's advantageous strategic location midway between Europe, Asia and Africa, there is much potential in positioning the country as global innovation hub that will attract visiting scientists, researchers and even students.

This collaboration will not only pull in more investors into Oman, but also help strengthen human capital development and job creation."

Leaders meet for smaller, greener Belt and Road summit

When China launched its Belt and Road Initiative 10 years ago, it touted huge infrastructure spending linking it with Western Europe, which as recently as 2019, Britain's then-finance minister said had "tremendous potential to spread prosperity and sustainable development".

Ten years on, the most senior EU leader expected to attend the third Belt and Road (BRI) Summit this week is Hungary's populist Viktor Orban, who will join guests including Russia's Vladimir Putin and a minister of the Afghan Taliban.

Western scepticism of the cornerstone of President Xi Jinping's ambition to extend China's global influence stems from China's failure to assuage concern over its intentions, and



JOE CASH

The writer is the Economics Correspondent, China

TEN YEARS ON, SCHEME HAS FAILED TO ATTRACT WESTERN PARTICIPATION AS BRI SHIFTING FROM LARGE INFRASTRUCTURE TO GREEN TECH

whether there is in fact a gap this infrastructure would be filling, compounded by concern over a lack of transparency, analysts say.

Such Western doubts have coincided with Xi's assertive leadership and a deterioration in ties over trade, human rights, Covid-19 and Taiwan.

Italy, the only Group of 7 nation to sign on to the scheme, is now looking for a way out.

"Go back to 2013 - China was absolutely ascendant - Xi Jinping was forecasting a windfall from Chinese firms expanding throughout the world, but a number of serious shocks really affected the reach and breadth of the BRI," said Matthew Erie of the University of Oxford.

The shocks include a trade war with the United States, Russia's attack of Ukraine, and the pandemic, said Erie. Other analysts say economic slowdown both in China and globally, and

rising commodity prices, have also cast a pall over the initiative. Facing such headwinds, Xi is pushing to make the BRI smaller and greener, and to move from big-ticket projects like dams to high-tech ones such as digital finance and e-commerce platforms.

The aim is to aid a broader push for a world order that is multipolar and gives the global south more agency, rather than one dominated by Washington and its allies, analysts say.

China has at times bristled at criticism of the BRI, saying it carries anti-Chinese prejudice and a wish to contain its rise, while overlooking what it says are genuine good intentions.

China says more than 130 countries will attend this week, notably from Latin America and Africa, although, unlike in previous years, many more are

sending ministers rather than heads of state.

On Monday, a hotel in downtown Beijing hosting delegations from Russia, Kazakhstan and Congo was buzzing with activity, its lobby decorated with displays of BRI goods and guarded by metal detectors at entrances.

'INSURMOUNTABLE PROBLEMS'

More than \$90 billion worth of Chinese commercial investment in BRI projects has faced "insurmountable problems", according to data from the American Enterprise Institute think tank.

The issues range from outright cancellation to indefinite delays, "mainly from political requirements and errors by Chinese firms".

"From the Chinese perspective, the biggest problem

is that they've realised now that they're carrying an awful lot of debt in developing countries which are going to struggle to really pay it back," said Raffaello Pantucci from the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore.

This is one reason the initiative has shrunk and is focused more on quality than quantity, say analysts.

But the BRI is also more focused on issues like peace, climate change, energy crises and artificial intelligence, among many other areas, according to a Chinese government white paper released last week.

Ruby Osman, a China expert at the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, said the summit would give China a chance to showcase some of the global initiatives that Xi has launched over the past two years.

— Reuters

The Bank of Japan's seductive widow-maker trade

Could Japan become the world's next great growth story? Billionaire and legendary investor Warren Buffett seems to think so. And the International Monetary Fund expects the Japanese economy to grow by 1.4 per cent in 2023 - an impressive figure for a country whose population has steadily declined for the past 14 years.

But the Japanese economy could also be a ticking time bomb. Its labour market is tight, inflation remains stubbornly high despite the introduction of gasoline subsidies, and the yen's real exchange rate has reached a three-decade low.

After decades of maintaining near-zero interest rates, it is unclear whether the Bank of Japan can raise them without sparking a systemic financial crisis.

While the BOJ's new governor, Kazuo Ueda, has said that the Bank will maintain its ultra-loose monetary policy, he also acknowledged the global economy's "very high uncertainty."

Given the forces driving up inflation and interest rates worldwide, it is increasingly clear that Japanese monetary policy can no longer be conducted in isolation.

Over the years, many investors have bet against the BOJ, shorting Japanese bonds on the assumption that the zero-interest-rate policy could not last. Time and again, the speculators were crushed. Now, however, the "widow-maker trade" might actually pay off.

The BOJ's reluctance to increase its short-term policy rates is understandable, given that Japan's gross government debt currently stands at 260 per cent of GDP, or 235 per cent of GDP after netting out \$1.25 trillion in foreign-exchange reserves.

Should the Bank be compelled to raise its short-term policy interest rates by 3 per cent - about half as much as the US Federal Reserve has - the government's debt-servicing costs would explode.

Moreover, a sharp interest-rate increase would put



KENNETH ROGOFF

The writer is a professor of Economics and Public Policy at Harvard University and recipient of the 2011 Deutsche Bank Prize in Financial Economics, was the chief economist of the International Monetary Fund from 2001 to 2003

AFTER HAVING MAINTAINED NEAR-ZERO INTEREST RATES FOR DECADES, THE JAPANESE CENTRAL BANK MAY BE FORCED TO HIKE RATES IF INFLATION REMAINS PERSISTENTLY HIGH. BUT JAPAN'S ENORMOUS GOVERNMENT DEBT AND VULNERABLE BANKING SECTOR MEAN THAT DOING SO COULD TRIGGER A SYSTEMIC FINANCIAL CRISIS



The Japanese national flag is seen at the Bank of Japan (BoJ) headquarters in Tokyo. — AFP

enormous pressure on the Japanese banking sector, particularly if long-term rates were to rise as well.

This is precisely what happened in the United States in March when the Fed's monetary tightening triggered a chain reaction that led to the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and several other financial institutions.

Hiking interest rates in an environment of near-zero interest rates, when investors expect rates to remain ultra-low forever, will be challenging, no matter how the BOJ frames its actions. But if inflation remains persistently high, policymakers will be forced to act.

After all, markets will inevitably push up rates across the yield curve. Over the past two years, as real interest rates have soared worldwide, they have declined in Japan, despite the rise in inflation.

This is not sustainable in the long run, given the country's deep integration into global financial markets. As one of the first industrialised countries to



Kazuo Ueda, BOJ's new governor

grapple with population decline and a systemic financial crisis, Japan has served as the world's macroeconomic laboratory for more than two decades. While some pundits cite Japan as evidence that enormous government debts do not matter, the fact is that they do.

Like other highly indebted countries such as Greece and Italy, Japan has experienced extremely low average growth over the past three decades. In the early 1990s, Japanese GDP per capita reached 75 per cent of US levels; it has since declined to less than 60 per cent, even though the US experienced only modest growth during this period. In addition to its debt problems, Japan's

economy is caught in the middle of the escalating rivalry between the US and China. Over the past few decades, as Ulrike Schaefer notes in her insightful book The Business Reinvention of Japan, Japanese firms have found a high-value niche within the Asian supply chain.

While the country's most profitable companies may not be household names, primarily because many of them provide intermediate products to businesses rather than final products to consumers, they operate in high-tech sectors with huge markups.

But much of this economic reinvention has been based on taking advantage of China's rapid growth. Now that the Chinese growth engine is sputtering, and with heightened geopolitical tensions threatening to make things worse, it is unclear whether this unique strategy can last.

At the same time, much like Europe, Japan faces the urgent need to boost defence spending.

Alarmed by China's growing assertiveness, especially in light

of Russia's attack of Ukraine, the Japanese government has unveiled plans to double military spending to 2 per cent of GDP in the next five years.

With such spending likely to increase further in the long term, Japan will no longer be able to maintain low taxes by free-riding on the US defence budget.

To be sure, as the world's third-largest economy (after the US and China), Japan has many tools to tackle its demographic and economic challenges. For example, it could confront outdated corporate social norms that discourage women from having children.

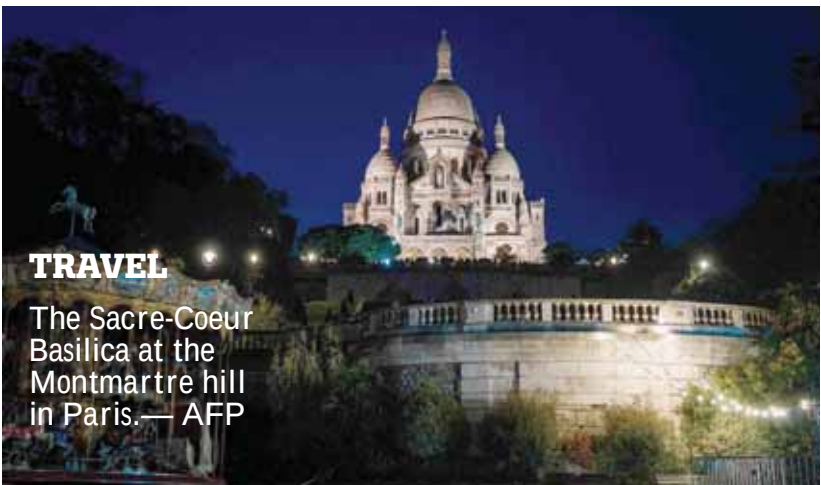
It could also use public-policy tools, such as welcoming more immigrants.

But policies to stem decline will only bring forward the need for interest-rate normalisation.

The most severe financial crises often happen where they are least expected. A resurgent Japan is good for the global economy, but resurgent Japanese interest rates could be a major risk. ©Project Syndicate 2023

Classifieds

ACCOUNTANT
(male), MBA Finance
and a Certified SAP
FICO Consultant with
7 years work experience
from Oman in Finance
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TRAVEL
The Sacre-Coeur Basilica at the Montmartre hill in Paris. — AFP



FOOD
An Afghan vendor selling pomegranate waits for customers along the roadside in Kabul. — AFP



MUSIC
French hip hop artist Woodsdad performs on stage of “Le Chapiteau” during the 50th anniversary of the Nancy Jazz Pulsations (NJP) festival, in Nancy, northeastern France. — AFP



LIFESTYLE
An Afghan Hazara girl carries a bucket of dishes on her head in Shahidan district of Bamiyan province. — AFP



FILM
British co-director Daniel Kaluuya speaks with members of the media on the red carpet upon arrival to attend the world Premiere of the film “The Kitchen” during the 2023 BFI London Film Festival in London. — AFP

art & life

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Omani Women's Day: Celebrating empowerment and equality

ASEELA AL KIYOUMI

Omani Women's Day, an annual celebration in the Sultanate of Oman on October 17, stands as a testament to the nation's profound recognition of the invaluable contributions made by Omani women in the nation's development and progress. It is an occasion celebrated with great fervour, uniting all segments of society to showcase Oman's unity and strength. The women of Oman are not passive spectators but active agents of progress, propelling the wheels of development and enhancing Oman's stature in various fields, both scientifically and practically. Omani Women's Day is an opportunity to highlight the remarkable achievements of Omani women across diverse domains. At its core lies the principle of gender equality enshrined in the nation's fundamental laws, granting Omani women access to edu-

cation, healthcare, employment, political participation, decision-making, all while caring for their families and communities. This day serves as a unique platform to recognise and celebrate the accomplishments of these exceptional women in society. On this day, numerous official and community events unfold, including insightful lectures and seminars on women's rights and issues. It also involves the acknowledgment of women who have made extraordinary contributions to their communities. Notably, Omani women have gained recognition at both local and international levels. Figures such as Sumaya al Siyabi, leading a project aimed at eradicating biological micro-plastics and nanotechnology, and Hiba al Kiyoumi, an entrepreneur and Chamber of Commerce member, have earned acclaim for their outstanding achievements. Hiba al Kiyoumi, a



recipient of prestigious awards like “Most Promising Woman” and “Best Entrepreneur in the Youth Category” in 2021, holds a Master's degree in management and is deeply involved in cosmetic medicine. Other inspiring and accom-



plished women include Amal Suhail Bahwan, a prominent member and vice-chairman of the Board of Directors of Suhail Bahwan Holding Group, and Honourable Lujaina Mohsin Darwish, overseeing the infrastructure, technology, industry, and consumer

solutions departments at the Mohsin Haider Darwish Foundation. These women exemplify the immense talent and expertise that Omani women bring to the forefront. The Omani Women's Day celebrations embody the principles of gender equality and

reflect the nation's deep respect and appreciation for the pivotal role of women in its development. Omani women have played an integral part in municipal councils and the Council of Oman, actively contributing to the formulation of Oman Vision 2040 under royal patronage. Their contributions have garnered the trust and support of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, who consistently emphasises the enhancement of women's roles across various development sectors. Omani Women's Day reminds us of the importance of supporting and empowering Omani women and providing them with equal opportunities in all areas. It underscores the spirit of solidarity and appreciation within Omani society and plays a crucial role in shaping a more advanced and prosperous nation that fully harnesses the talents and potential of all its citizens.



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INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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Fashion Week hits Kenya's biggest urban slum

TOWERING MODELS PARADE down a three-metre (10-foot) high catwalk overlooking the rusting tin roofs of Kibera, the Kenyan capital's biggest urban slum.

It's the second edition of Kibera Fashion Week in the heart of the sprawling area and the place is packed.

For six hours, interspersed with pop music performances, hundreds of spectators from Kibera and across the city, watch the diverse collections float by on Saturday.

"Kibera is full of style," says designer Avido, who launched the first show last year.

Avido was born and bred in Kibera, population about 250,000, where he works.

His creations have attracted global stars from Bruno Mars to Beyonce.

Boasting a range of partnerships from the Goethe Institute to the European Union, Nairobi Design and the Masai Mbili group, the show has brought together 11 projects from 376 candidates with a wide variety of styles using cotton, jute, wool, pearls and even metal.

EMPTY POCKETS

Designer Pius Ochieng, who is not related to Avido, chose a "Mad Max" post-apocalyptic approach.

The 26-year-old harvested computer mother-

boards, spark plugs, LED lighting, chains, springs and other metal bits from dumps and the streets.

Back home he sewed them into clothes and produced a 15-square-metre



piece lit up with rose, green and blue neons that was installed in one of the backstreets of Kibera.

Helen Wanjiru grew up in Nairobi's far from wealthy Kawangware district and has covered her clothing with broad pockets, from the back to front, including the legs.

"The pockets are big but they are empty," said the 26-year-old, who moved

into fashion after working in data processing.

"It is an analogy — a lot of youths in Kenya, they have education, they have ideas but they don't get jobs because there is no opportunity."

The Fashion Week is quite distinct from often stuffy Western shows. The audience, mostly young, loudly acclaims the models and reserves a noisy welcome for designers who

come out on to the catwalk.

- 'NOT JUST ABOUT PARIS AND MILAN' -

The extravaganza also offers a chance for local fashionistas to show themselves, often in extraordinary outfits.

But in a country used to wearing second-hand goods and a market dominated by expensive foreign imports, the haute-couture fashion world remains



remote.

Avido wants to change that.

"Many people here have only seen fashion shows on TV," he said. "We want to show the people what fashion is."

"People like our parents used to think that fashion and design was not an art ... They used to think that if you were involved in fashion and design, you were like a tailor

Project manager Violet Omulo said she attended the show, "to chill, have fun and discover upcoming designers."

"African fashion is special and it's coming up."

"We need to promote it with such events so that people know that we can be creative ... that it's not just about Paris or Milan."

"Kenya, also in Africa in general, has talented designers," she said. — **AFP**

SCIENCES

Japanese Moon Base Project Navigates Lunar Construction Challenges with Advanced Technology

JAPAN IS MAKING significant strides toward the development of a moon base, with plans to establish it as early as around 2030. To achieve this ambitious goal, Japan is harnessing remote-control technology used in various applications, including disaster relief efforts. For example, working on the development of a lightweight hydraulic excavator designed to drill the lunar surface. Challenges include the high cost of trans-



porting cargo to the moon and the effect of its lower gravity on machinery operation. However, the moon's potential as a base for further space exploration, access to water, and the global interest in lunar development are driving these efforts. Japan is participating in the Artemis programme alongside 29 other countries, aiming to establish a presence on the moon. Technologies for remote-controlled or automatic construc-

tion are crucial for lunar development, drawing from Japan's experience with remote-controlled machines developed after the 1991 eruption of Mt. Unzen's Fugendake peak. Japan is investing in projects to enable unmanned construction in outer space and aims to verify project feasibility and other issues by 2025. The establishment of a lunar base could lead to future lunar settlements.

—**ONA**

ANIMAL

Young frogs may camouflage selves as animal poo

THE YOUNG OFFSPRING of a frog native to Southeast Asia display an "unusual colour pattern", probably to camouflage themselves "as animal droppings" to escape predators, according to a study.

A team of researchers studying juvenile Wallace's flying frogs — which are bright red with small white dots — made the findings thanks to an experiment at Vienna's Schoenbrunn Zoo, the zoo said on Thursday.

"The young frogs probably count on the fact that they will be seen but considered something inedible," University of Vienna researcher Susanne Stueckler

said.

She and several others recently published their findings in the journal Behavioural Ecology and Sociobiology.

To test their hypothesis that the frogs were trying to escape predators, the researchers created differently coloured wax frog models and placed them in the zoo's rainforest house.

The house "contains a diverse community of avian predators that are well known to use colour vision to detect frogs as prey", the study notes.

It found that the attack rate was significantly greater for red than for green but was reduced by half when red models had white spots.

"We show that the unusual colour pattern of juveniles likely functions as a masquerade of animal droppings," the researchers said.

"(It may) function as anti-pred-



ator strategy... so that predators misidentified them as inedible objects," they added.

"To our knowledge, this is the first experimental exploration of a vertebrate masquerading as animal droppings."

The frogs' spots disappear after one year, "when individuals mature into adults and develop their iconic emerald green colour".

Wallace's flying frogs can glide 16 metres (52 feet) from tree to tree thanks to skins between their toes and appendages on their arms and legs. —**AFP**



FASHION

Najma al Balushi's journey of Omani elegance and empowerment

SIHAM AL SAIDI

IN OMAN, TRADITIONAL fashion has long been intertwined with the country's cultural and religious values. Women's roles have evolved, reflecting a balance between tradition and modernity. Omani women traditionally wore the "abaya," a loose, full-length black robe, along with a headscarf or "hijab." These symbolised modesty and Islamic principles. However, there has been a shift towards more colourful and fashionable abayas in recent years, reflecting a desire for self-expression within cultural bounds.



Omani women have played significant societal roles, from managing households to pursuing education and careers. Their roles have evolved, with more women entering the workforce, especially in fields like education, healthcare, government and fashion. Najma al Balushi, a talented fashion designer, became famous for blending Oman's history with modern fashion. She started her journey in Muscat, where her love for traditional Omani textiles and vibrant colours began to reach all over the country, where her brand "Aljasmine" became an iconic fashion boutique, proving that women can make a change and lead to success life. Najma's unique style mixed old Omani designs with modern fashion. Her studio in Muscat became her creative space, where she combined her Omani



NAJMA AL BALUSHI

heritage with new ideas. She gained recognition by showcasing her designs at Muscat Fashion exhibitions and was featured in fashion magazines. Her clothing

designs were inspired by Oman's rich heritage and gained attention for their one-of-a-kind look. Najma's passion for fashion and textiles and the wonderful mixture of designs with materials and colours resulted from a deep understanding of society's needs and our community traditions, which were reflected in the Abaya and the customs. Najma studied fashion and business, which was a plus one point for her to be one of the best fashion designers in Oman. Not only that, but she is always alert to modern ideas, materials and designs around the world, making her collection unique. Najma's dedication was rewarded with the Omani National Heritage Awards from different fashion events, recognising her commitment to preserving Omani traditions. This made her a fashion icon in Oman and beyond.

It was breathtaking that her collections led her to be shown on the cover pages of such famous fashion magazines and shared nationally abroad. What makes Najma's collections unique is the wonderful mixture of her remarkable branding derived from the birds and flowers touches using Ostrich's Colours and designs. The branding itself is called "Jasmine", which is a name for a nice type of flower. She specialises with traditional customers and Arabian abayas. What makes Najma really pleased is that every day, new people are coming for her asking for special designs and special collections and to see the happiness and eagerness to see their pieces in their eyes was impressive. Najma's dream was to make Omani textiles famous around the world. She presented her collections in different fashion events like Anaqti magazine Cheak magazine, attracting attention from fashion lovers and critics. Her unique designs brought Omani fashion into the global spotlight. Najma said "It is something ambitious for me to be invited from fashion magazines to present my collections." Najma al Balushi's journey shows how women's participation is vital for a country. Her success not only celebrated Oman's culture but also proved that women can excel in any field. She is an inspiration, highlighting the importance of women's contributions in a nation's progress and global recognition.



Van Gogh Museum scraps Pokemon cards over safety concerns



THE VINCENT VAN GOGH Museum in Amsterdam said on Saturday it would no longer hand out a prized Pokemon card after the giveaway sparked crushes by "scalpers" reselling it for exorbitant prices. Launched with great fanfare last month to mark the museum's 50th anniversary, the collaboration with Pokemon aimed to inspire younger visitors and included exhibitions on the artist's links with Japan. But it also attracted die-hard Pokemon fans keen to get their hands on a limited edition "Pika-portrait" card. "Pikachu with Grey Felt Hat" showed the yellow character in a pose inspired by a famous Van Gogh self-portrait and was available after completing a "quest" around the museum. "Recently, a small group of individuals has created an undesirable situation that has led us to take the difficult decision to remove the Pikachu with Grey Felt Hat promo card from the museum," the Amsterdam institution said in a statement. This was done to allow visitors to explore the exhibits in a "safe and enjoyable manner" and was taken with the "safety and security" of staff in mind, the museum added. Several visitors posted videos on social media showing unruly scenes at the museum as fans pushed and shoved to get their hands on prized Pikachu merchandise. Because the cards are limited-edition, collectors hoping to "catch them all" are prepared to pay huge prices to get them. So-called "scalpers" obtain as many as they can to resell them on trading websites. "Pikachu with Grey Felt Hat" has been changing hands for hundreds of dollars, with one going on eBay for an ambitious \$6,969. Fans from Britain, the United States and Canada will soon get another chance to pick up the rare card via the "Pokemon Center", the museum said, with retailers in the Netherlands selling them again early next year. But "it will not be available via the Van Gogh Museum," the statement stressed. —AFP