

The Ministry of Interior has said that the period for revoking candidacy to the membership of Municipal Councils' Third-Term Elections (2022) ends on Thursday (October 27). The ministry advises candidates wishing to withdraw their applications to do that through the elections' website "elections.om". Applications received beyond the deadline or routed otherwise shall not be entertained, the ministry affirmed. – **ONA**



P10

DORTMUND, CHELSEA AND PSG IN LAST 16



P13

OMAN SEES LOWEST INFLATION RATE IN GCC



P20

WORLD HIP HOP DANCE CHAMPIONSHIP TO BE LAUNCHED



MUSCAT

HM SENDS CABLE OF GREETINGS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Dame Susan Dougan, Governor General of St Vincent and the Grenadines on her country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to Governor General Dougan. His Majesty also wished the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines further progress and prosperity. — **ONA**

HM GREET'S PRESIDENT OF TURKMENISTAN

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Dr Serdar Berdimuhamedow of Turkmenistan, on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Berdimuhamedow. His Majesty also wished the people of Turkmenistan further progress and prosperity. — **ONA**

YOUTH GREATEST PILLAR OF OMAN VISION 2040

Youth feted on Omani Youth Day

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, Oct 26

The Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday marked Omani Youth Day in recognition of their leading role in serving the nation and in appreciation of their continued innovations.

HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, presided over the celebration, which included the opening of the Youth Centre spaces. The Youth Centre includes integrated halls and facilities that provide various services for the youth.

The celebration also witnessed the announcement of the winners



of the Youth Excellence Contest overseen by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

HH Sayyid Theyazin launched the logo of the Youth Centre, and its visual identity that bears the themes of authenticity, roots and extension.

The logo is inspired by employing the legacy of the forefathers to build the future.

Earlier, HH Sayyid Theyazin

described youth as the most important pillar of Oman Vision 2040, which aims at realising sustainability and prosperity for the generation of present-day Oman and future generations.

On the occasion of Oman Youth Day, HH Sayyid Theyazin said, "We are pleased to greet the youth of Sultanate of Oman on their day's anniversary — the 26th of October. We would like to commend the tangible role of youth in the elevation of their country's status. We hereby reaffirm the well-deserved attention accorded to youth — to motivate them to carry forward the banner of resourceful action."

TURN TO P2

Worley Oman has been awarded the Zallaf Atshan Field Development Project



Worley Oman has been awarded the basic engineering and front-end engineering design (FEED) contract for the Zallaf Atshan Field development. Atshan Field is located at the South-West part of Libya, approximately 250 km South of the Al-Wafa Facility, 160 km northwest of the El-Sharara Oil Facility. The objective of Atshan field development project is to develop the Atshan field to supply a maximum of 200 MMSCFD dry gas to Ubari Power Plant located 250 km

southeast Atshan Plant. Worley's scope includes designing well pads, gathering systems, central processing facility, 250 km pipeline and the field infrastructure.

Patrick Tranter, Vice President Oman:

"We are extremely proud to be delivering our ICV strategy of assigning our talented Omani engineers to international customers by importing work into Oman. Worley have shown their commitment to ICV by choosing to

Worley
energy | chemicals | resources

bring this work in to Oman instead of having it executed by one of our other global offices. This gives our world class Omani engineers the opportunity to demonstrate their skills at the international level. Our ambition is to continue to drive this ICV initiative and

deliver future international projects from Oman."

Juland Al Saidi, Director Project Delivery Oman:

"We are pleased Zallaf has selected Worley for this prestigious project and look forward to continuing to support Zallaf on their journey to become a leading oil and gas producer. This is one of the projects that will allow our Omani engineers and designers to gain the international experience required

to position Worley Oman as one of the leading engineering offices in the world."

About Zallaf:

Zallaf is an exploration and production oil and gas entity founded in 2013. Zallaf was given permission by the National Oil Corporation (NOC) that led to its establishment in 2017. It is a 100% subsidiary company of the NOC to develop fields that have been discovered and appraised but not yet produced, increase oil and gas production.



Saudi launches regional investment firm in Oman

MUSCAT: Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) has established five regional investment companies in Oman, Jordan, Bahrain, Sudan and Iraq, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announced on Wednesday. The PIF made a similar move in August when it launched the Saudi Egyptian Investment Co (SEIC) in Egypt.

The six companies will target investments of up to SAR 90 billion (\$24 billion), in various sectors which include infrastructure, real estate development, mining, healthcare, financial services, food and agriculture and telecommunications and technology.

This was unveiled during the second day of the Investment Future initiative's 6th round attended by Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince, Prime Minister and Chairman of the Council of Economic Affairs in Saudi Arabia, who is also the Board Chairman of the Public Investment Fund.

The announcement of the new companies keeps pace with the Public Investment Fund's strategy for exploring investment opportunities in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The strategy eyes long-term economic ventures hoped to achieve sustainable returns. This will help augment the assets of the fund and diversify sources of Saudi income in line with the country's Vision 2030. — ONA

Al Harthy appointed as MEDRC Chairman

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister on Tuesday chaired a meeting of the Executive Council of the Middle East Desalination Research Centre (MEDRC).

During the meeting, following a consensus among the member states, Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali Al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, was appointed as Chairman of the Executive Council of the Centre. Germany's joining the membership of the Centre was also endorsed.

The meeting reviewed MEDRC actions, activities, plans, research and training programmes. The Centre's programme and budgets for 2023 was also approved.

Representatives of the participating countries commended the role and efforts made by Sayyid Badr al Busaidy, Foreign Minister during the past 25 years as Chairman of the Executive Council. They also the constant support provided by the Sultanate of Oman by hosting the MEDRC headquarters in Muscat, as well as Oman's endeavours backing peace and cooperation to achieve the Centre's goals. — ONA



Youth feted on Omani Youth Day

FROM PAGE 1

HH Sayyid Theyazin pointed out that His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik accords his attention to Omani youth, and this is evidenced by his Royal directives to give top priority to the needs of young people. This unique approach to study the ambitious requirements of youth has placed Oman in the sphere of advanced nations, he added.

In line with this auspicious approach and, in implementation of all that Oman Vision 2040 seeks to achieve, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth continues to exert efforts to empower young Omani talents and Omani innovators, utilising the instruments of the modern era of technology. Accordingly, the Omani Youth Centre has been established to offer wide scope for innovation and creative thinking among youth, HH Sayyid Theyazin said.

"Hence, we are moving forward to support creativity, empower talented people and take care of constructive minds. We value the roles



that they undertake to generate benefits to their peers and to the country at large," HH Sayyid Theyazin added.

HH Sayyid Theyazin pointed out that "the contribution of young people towards the goals of Oman Vision 2040 constitutes a cornerstone for the aspiration of the Sultanate of Oman in present and future. They are the hands that build and the minds that plan. This prime cannot be attained without constant commitment to the national fundamentals. It requires hard work, sincerity and determination. Thus, we reiterate our call to you, passionate youth, to be a model and an honourable example to be followed, regionally and internationally."

(With ONA inputs)

New technologies to create higher growth, more new jobs

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 26

The National Employment Programme, in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy, organised a virtual workshop on future skills in light of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (FIR).

This event is part of the joint cooperation programmes organised by the General-Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

It aims to review a number of initiatives that contribute to the development of future skills, and to enhance cooperation among specialists of future skills.

During the seminar, three main topics were discussed: capacity building, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, economic development and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and hobbies and talents in light of the FIR.

Dr Nasser bin Rashid al Maawali, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Economy, stressed that the digital technologies enable individuals, manufacturers, suppliers and consumers to interact in easily and significantly improve productivity.

"Technological achievements led to new job opportunities that completely compensated for the loss of jobs as a result of technological progress. The World Economic Forum estimates the number of job tasks expected to be extinct as a result of the Fourth Industrial

The digital technologies enable individuals, manufacturers, suppliers and consumers to interact in easily and significantly improve productivity

DR NASSER BIN RASHID AL MAAWALI
Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Economy

Revolution at about 75 million jobs by the end of 2022 , while it is expected that 133 million new jobs will emerge in return".

He explained that the Sultanate of Oman seeks, within the Oman Vision 2040, to raise the contribution of the digital economy to 10 per cent of GDP.

He also pointed out that "We look at the Fourth Industrial Revolution with passion and positivity, to provide us all with broader horizons and broader opportunities to achieve high growth rates of development and prosperity."

Dr Bader al Kharousi, Head of the Development Track at the National Employment Programme, spoke about future skills, in which he explained the importance of this national framework, its objectives, methodology, scientific and practical paths, programmes, projects and national initiatives in this aspect.



Youths constitute 19.4 per cent of Omani population

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 26

The nation celebrated Omani Youth Day on Wednesday, which falls on October 26 of each year. According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information, 19 per cent of Omani population is constituted by youths aged between 18 and 29 years.

13,452 Omani youths owned housing units during 2021.

According to SME development Authority, around 572 out of 25,057 people registered in its database are youths who own small and medium enterprises, including about 13,474 who hold an entrepreneurship card.

268 of youth are registered in the Suppliers and Business Opportunities Registration Programme for Small and Medium Enterprises. In addition, there are 4,687 young craftsmen.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik emphasised the

importance of youth when he said: "Youth are the wealth of a nation, its inexhaustible resource and the arms that build it. They are its present and future. We will always listen to them, and sense their needs, interests and aspirations which will definitely be accorded the attention that they deserve. We stand today with firm invincible will on the threshold of a vital stage of development and nation building. It is a stage in which you all have participated in drawing out its prospects in Oman Vision 2040, and contributed to devising its economic, social and cultural goals, in a manner that embodies a clear-cut vision, great expectation towards a more prosperous future. We are all aware of the challenges imposed by the current global conditions, and their implications to the region and to us, since we are part of this world, influencing it and are influenced by it. We will also accord full attention and support



Oman Vision 2040 is a national roadmap aimed at activating the role of Omani youth to achieve economic and social growth of the country and to support their role in science, literature and sports

to develop a comprehensive national framework of recruitment, considering it one of the fundamental pillars of the national economy."

The Omani Youth Day is a belief in the great role of youth in the advancement of nations and to celebrate their contributions to the country.

The Omani youth have proven their efficiency in many fields by bagging many international achievements and awards.

Oman Vision 2040 is a national roadmap aimed at activating the role of Omani youth to achieve economic and social growth of the country and to support their role in science, literature and sports.

In October, Oman celebrates two glorious days: Omani Women's Day and Omani Youth Day. It has spared no effort to create a culture to encourage young people to learn, work, educate and tap their energies to make their dreams come true.



Shura Office reviews ministerial reports

MUSCAT: The Office of Majlis Ash'shura held its 17th regular meeting under the chairmanship of Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, on Tuesday.

During the meeting, the Office discussed the plans of standing committees of Majlis Ash'shura for the fourth annual session of the ninth term and the axes of the ministerial statements proposed by the committees. They include topics of discussion with the Minister of Labour proposed by the Youth and Human Resources Committee, topics of discussion with the Minister of Information proposed by the Media and Culture Committee and topics of discussion with the Minister of Health proposed by the Health and Environment Committee.

The Office reviewed letters of the Council of Ministers regarding the annual ministerial reports of the year 2021 including the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology,



the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

In addition, the Office reviewed the reply of the Youth and Human Resources Committee to the annual report of the Ministry of Labour for the year 2021 and the report of the Food and Water Security Committee to the annual report of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for the year 2021.

The Office of Majlis Ash'shura also reviewed a number of ministerial reports including from the Minister of Finance regarding the privatisation contracts and



the public-private partnership in education.

The Office decided to refer a number of briefing requests presented by the council members to the Minister of Finance concerning the construction of

76 public schools in different governorates and a briefing request to the Minister of Social Development regarding exclusion of compensation of vehicles affected by Cyclone Shaheen.

The Office approved a request

for discussion to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources on the state of food security in the Sultanate of Oman in light of the economic and geopolitical developments currently affecting the world.

Forum discusses investment in innovative technologies

MUSCAT: The 2nd Omani Entrepreneurs Forum explored means of supporting and empowering investments in innovative technologies and services in the field of communications. It also reviewed means of grooming a competent national workforce.

The forum, organised by the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), covered several topics, namely the TRA's approach towards, approving new telecommunication equipment that support 4G technologies (at minimum), cloud service offered in Oman, as well as email and delivery services, among other topics.

— ONA

■ MOUNTAIN WARRIOR 2022 BEGINS



AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR: The joint Omani-French military exercise Mountain Warrior 2022 began at the training zones in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar on Wednesday. The Royal Army of Oman (RAO), represented by the Mountain Regiment at the 23rd Infantry Brigade, is taking part in the drill, which will conclude on November 3. The drill comes within the framework of the annual training plans carried out by RAO jointly with the brotherly and sisterly countries. It aims to boost relations and exchange expertise in various training fields as well as benefit from the joint operations that target to upgrade the skills of the Omani and the French soldiers to be prepared to effectively carry out various military tasks assigned to them. — ONA

'Stay away from unlicensed herbal mixtures'

AFRAH AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT, OCT 26

People must exercise caution before using herbal mixtures and medicines, which often go viral as miracle drugs in social media, warned the Ministry of Health's General Directorate of Pharmacy and Drug Control. Contrary to claims, the so-called medicines may not be tested or cleared for the treatment of asthma, blood pressure, diabetes and infertility.

The Directorate said the use of these mixtures may pose significant health risks as they are sold without proper testing. These mixtures,

which are advertised as effective treatment for incurable diseases, mislead people without information of ingredients or caution about side effects.

The Directorate warned that these mixtures are likely to contain toxic chemicals and metals like lead, arsenic and mercury that may damage organs.

Some of these concoctions are made using impure water in unhygienic conditions without proper storage, which may expose users to fungal or microbial infections.

The Directorate said companies

that sell herbal mixtures are subjected to rules and laws that aim to regulate alternative medicine medicines.

According to Article 1 of Ministerial Resolution No 113/2020 on the Executive Regulations of the Law Regulating the Practice of the Profession of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Institutions, "Herbal medicine is a substance of plant origin manufactured in a pharmaceutical form, used for the prevention of diseases or treatment or both, and its use is limited to topical use or administration through oral, rectal, or inhalation."

Freelancers to play bigger role in economy

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

MUSCAT, OCT 26

A seminar on freelancing will be launched at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Sunday under the auspices of Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy. Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour and Chairman of the Supervisory Committee of the National Employment Programme, business people, craftsmen and those interested in the freelancing will take part in the discussions.

Azhar bin Ahmed al Kindi, Technical Director of the National Employment Programme, said that this initiative aims to enhance growth opportunities for gig workers.

Talking to the Observer, Al Kindi mentioned that the initiative targets individual employers and professionals who are not linked to a specific office or a shop. "The National Employment Programme found that there is an increasing percentage of graduates from some disciplines who prefer freelancing due to the nature of their skills and the demand for them," he said.

According to Al Kindi, the national programme seeks to provide the possibilities, incentives and protection that make freelancing attractive to those who desire it. He said,



The National Employment Programme found that there is an increasing percentage of graduates from some disciplines who prefer freelancing due to the nature of their skills and the demand for them

AZHAR BIN AHMED AL KINDI

Technical Director

"The programme will digitally link them with companies that implement government projects as well as with other opportunities, as part of the added value."

Major challenges of Vision 2040 to be addressed

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

Major initiatives to address the challenges of Oman Vision 2040 are underway and a number of remedial measures are expected to come out of the concluding session of the labs and workshops at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Thursday.

Ahmed al Harthy, Head of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water

Resources, said that as many as 102 projects have been identified towards Vision 2040 and various subcommittees are working on it.

"We started these clinics in September, 2021 and resulted in 102 projects worth RO 1.2 billion," he said on the sidelines of the workshops.

"One of the major challenges that we face is with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning in terms of locating the right land for the right crop to grow," Al Harthy said.



Ahmed al Harthy

He said that these challenges are different as some are related to landscaping while others are related to funding utilities like roads, water and electricity.

"We started to fix them last year one by one with different authorities and later we decided to initiate these clinics so that we can bring them all to these platforms. The apex committee has classified all the challenges for various ministries. They have been part of the journey discussing the issues, and by Thursday, the committees

will come out with the solutions, which will be submitted to the authorities," he said. "We are going to escalate those issues, which cannot be solved by the lower committees, to the ministries' attention so that a suitable solution can be found." Additionally, as far as the crops are concerned, it is very difficult to grow in some areas like Al Batinah due to lack of space.

The Implementation Follow-up Unit for the Oman Vision 2040 was established by Royal Decree No 100/2020 on August 18, 2020.

This unit follows the Council of Ministers and follows up the work carried out by governmental and semi-governmental agencies and the roles of various sectors of the state with regard to the implementation of vision programmes. This is in addition to the provision of the necessary support and appropriate solutions to the challenges it faces, while ensuring compatibility between all parties, in an effort to ensure the realisation of the Oman 2040 vision.



CLAMPING DOWN PLASTIC MENACE



AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 26

Eliminating the use of plastic bags is one of the major challenges the authorities around the world are confronted with. Plastic bags represent a great burden on the environment because they are non-degradable in nature. Plastic products and bags do not rust. They remain in the environment and soil for long periods, perhaps hundreds of years. They also stunts plant growth by blocking the sun and air and harms both wild and domestic animals by blocking the digestive tract or respiratory system. In addition, its use in carrying hot foodstuffs produces carcinogenic dioxin, and burning plastics pollutes the air with toxic gases and fumes.

Oman too is working towards reducing its dependency on single-use plastics that are responsible for thousands of marine animals getting killed each year by ingesting plastic or getting tangled in it.

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has recently issued a ministerial decision banning the import of plastic bags, effective from January 1, 2023.

The decision will not affect local plastic bag factories, rather it will be an opportunity for them to increase their production capacity to cover the domestic market shortfall, increase

BAN ON
IMPORT OF
HARMFUL
SINGLE-USE
PLASTIC
BAGS TO
COME INTO
EFFECT
FROM JAN 1

their sales and income, and limit the unfair competition from imported products that do not meet the environmental standards and the Omani specifications for single-use bags.

With this ban, the MoCIIP, through its cooperation with the Environment Authority, aims to move from the current plastic-intensive industries to environmentally friendly industries in the future.

Engineer Sami bin Salem al Sahib, General Director of Industry at the MoCIIP, said the decision to ban the import of plastic bags comes within the ministry's plans to organise the market with regard to importing materials and goods that harm the Omani environment and is part of the comprehensive plan agreed upon by the ministry with the Environment Authority.

Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Omari, Head of the Environment Authority, confirmed that the earlier decision to ban plastic bags has not been reversed, adding that, several steps have been taken to support that decision, including, issuance of a standard for single-use plastic, which gives local factories a chance to stay in business and meet their financial obligations.

The MoCIIP seeks, through the implementation of this decision to ban the import of plastic bags, to protect the environment and the wildlife that abounds in the Sultanate of Oman.



Inspirational Forum held in Sur school

STAFF REPORTER
SUR, OCT 26

Hay Al Sharooq International School in the Wilayat of Sur organised Inspirational Forum recently. The event aimed to introduce the importance of community dialogue between its students and successful people with diverse professions and jobs who provided great services to the Omani society.

The International School, which is part of Oman LNG, seeks to motivate its students towards academic excellence dialogue with important professions and jobs to chart their future professional future and contribute its outputs to the process of construction and comprehensive development that the Sultanate of Oman is moving forward in the era of renewed renaissance.

The forum featured speakers like Hatim al Tai, member of the State Council and chief-in-editor of Al Roya newspaper; capitan Laith al Bilal, pilot commander of the Airbus 330 fleet; Balqis al Hasani, chairman of Knowledge Oman; Rudaina al Hajri, member of the Economic Council and the social worker at the United Nations; Dr Yahya al Masroori, of Sur Hospital; Talal Khalfan, the former



Oman national football player; Aisha al Farsi, author; and Haitham al Farsi, ace photographer.

The speakers presented their academic experiences, the path of their arduous practical journey, their challenges and the efforts taken towards the development of their levels to ensure their excellence in their professions and jobs to achieve rising indicators that guarantee them and their institutions success. They assured students that academic achievement is the first step in expected professional success.

The speakers held meaningful dialogue and discussions with the students who expressed their admiration and passion for some professions and jobs, and revealed their future aspirations, expressing their happiness with the effectiveness and their closeness to the owners of those professions without barriers, describing it as enjoyable.

Blocks in Duqm, Thamrait identified for green hydrogen

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

A slew of incentives are available for investors in green hydrogen in Oman.

While the land has been identified in cooperation with the ministries of Defence, Housing and UUrban Planning, and Environment Authority, the Sultanate of Oman will be offering investors in hydrogen projects incentives such as minimum land fees, and waiving of land fees during developing stages.

The initial two blocks offered to investors will be in Duqm outside the free zone and the remaining four will be offered in Thamrait.

For phase 1, the first projects are to be awarded by Q1, 2023 and developers will be expected to deliver integrated projects, but common infrastructure will be tendered separately.

Once completed, Oman expects to be a key importer of green hydrogen to countries in Western Europe and Japan.

Najla al Jamali, CEO, Alternative Energy, OQ, said, "Oman's energy mix is undergoing a stimulus shift as the country forges ahead in its drive to build a hydrogen-centric economy that will support Vision 2040 diversification efforts. As an Omani integrated energy group, OQ, represented by OQ Alternative Energy, is well poised to enable the collective efforts to achieve our national economic goals and reach net zero by 2050. Working closely with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, and the Oman



Sustainability Centre, OQ AE is chartering a clear pathway for decarbonisation and carbon neutrality. In addition to acting responsibly, we believe that the partnerships we are forging and projects that we are developing will place Oman on the global map for green hydrogen."

It may be noted that the government has set target to achieve Net Zero Emissions in 2050, in line with the Paris Agreement's objectives of limiting global warming to 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial levels. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik recently mandated the creation of Oman Sustainability Centre, which will be a nodal

agency to supervise and follow up plans for carbon neutrality.

Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, said, "Oman is committed to decarbonising and helping the world decarbonise.

The pathway to net zero is an opportunity for Oman to create economic value, increase industrial competitiveness and attract investments to help diversify and strengthen the country's economy. The Sultanate of Oman is blessed with abundant renewable resources positioning it as one of the most attractive nations to produce green hydrogen competitively and at large scale."

National Real Estate Development and Investments Co. (SAOG)

P.O. Box 84, Muscat-100, Sultanate of Oman - Phone: 24702133/24701454, Fax: 24703826, C.R. No. 1/02478/7

DIRECTOR'S REPORT FOR THE NINE MONTH ENDED 30th SEPTEMBER 2022

Respected shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I present herewith the result of National Real Estate Development and Investments Co. (SAOG) for the first Six-month period ended 30th September 2022.

Operational Result

The Company recorded an un-audited net loss of RO. 12,808 up to the 3rd quarter ended Sep 2022 versus (2021: RO. 14,249 loss). There was no revenue and no volume up to 30th September 2022.

Finally, on behalf of the shareholders and the Board I wish to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tareq Bin Taimour for his wise leadership and guidance.

For the Board of Directors
Chairman.

NOTE: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder on request either in Arabic or English within 7 days of receipt of the request.

UNAUDITED & PROVISIONAL BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30th SEPTEMBER 2022

	2022 RO	2021 RO
EMPLOYMENT OF FUNDS:		
Non Current Asset	8,500,000	7,200,000
Current Assets	104,523	185,817
Current Liabilities	1,025	809
Net Current Assets	103,498	185,009
	<u>8,603,497</u>	<u>7,385,009</u>
FUNDS EMPLOYED:		
Share Capital	1,762,500	1,762,500
Legal reserve	587,500	507,274
Revaluation reserve	7,637,254	7,637,254
Retained earnings	(2,657,665)	(3,600,924)
	<u>7,329,589</u>	<u>6,306,104</u>
Non-current liabilities	<u>1,273,908</u>	<u>1,078,905</u>
	<u>8,603,497</u>	<u>7,385,009</u>

UNAUDITED & PROVISIONAL PROFIT & LOSS ACCOUNT FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY TO 30th SEPTEMBER 2022

	2022 RO	2021 RO
Sales	-	-
Cost of Sales	-	-
Gross Profit	-	-
Other Operating Income	2,129	1,674
Expenses before Depreciation	(14,937)	(15,923)
Profit before Depreciation	<u>(12,808)</u>	<u>(14,249)</u>
Depreciation	-	-
Net profit/(loss) after Depreciation	<u>(12,808)</u>	<u>(14,249)</u>

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flat and
furniture?
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BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

We are pleased to present the Board of Directors' Report of Dhofar Generating Company SAOG (the "Company" or "DGC") for the nine months ended 30 September 2022.

Overview

Your Company is very proud to announce that it has achieved two million man hours without LT in September 2022. Managing safety is never an easy task, and unless you have a fully committed team it is not possible to achieve such excellent results. During the past 7 years, the business has faced many challenges the latest including abnormally heavy rainfall coupled with the pandemic coronavirus. The team has never given safety a day off, always remaining proactively vigilant. The entire team under the guidance of the Board has worked hard to maintain the Company's safety principles and ambitions.

The plant performance indicators continue to be excellent with almost perfect reliability factors which is essential for the financial health of the business. The business achieved excellent commercial availability factors of 99.92% and 99.45% during the period for the 273MW and 445MW power plants respectively. From a financial perspective, the contractual revenue is highly seasonal during the calendar year, with higher revenue in the summer period compared to the winter period. Summer months include April, May, June, September and October. The financial results are reflective of the business's contractual arrangement and are in line with expectations. All COVID related restrictions are relaxed and plant resumed normal operation with all staff working from office. The Company continues to work closely with all stakeholders and is following the guidance issued by regulatory authorities to manage the risks faced by this pandemic virus.

Plant performance during the period

	273MW		445MW	
	2022	2021	2022	2021
30 September				
Reliability Factor	99.92%	99.77%	99.45%	99.70%
Load Factor	13.6%	9.8%	43.0%	36.7%
Energy Exported (GWh)	244	169	1,247	1,065

273MW CCGT Power Plant

The team has managed to deliver a very low forced outage factor of 0.08% during the first nine months of 2022 (2021: 0.23%). The load factor of the plant was higher than the corresponding period of 2021 which is as per grid demand and grid security.

445MW CCGT Power Plant

The team has managed to deliver a very low forced outage factor of 0.55% during the first nine months of 2022 (2021: 0.30%). The load factor of the plant was higher than the corresponding period of 2021 which is as per grid demand and grid security.

Plant performance is a direct result of the operator's proficient approach towards operations, maintenance and HSE principles.

Maintenance activities during the period

The third quarter of the year includes two winter months and one summer month. The team kept its focus on preventive and predictive activities during the quarter to ensure high availability of equipment. These activities included various initiatives such as fire protection system inspections, housekeeping initiatives and awareness trainings for team members and contractors. The operator has ensured that all required permits were valid during the period.

All activities were routine in nature and there was no major maintenance during the period.

Financial highlights

Income Statement in OMR '000		Nine Months Ended	
		30-Sep-22	30-Sep-21
Total revenues		35,594	31,007
Operating costs		(27,171)	(22,171)
Gross profit		8,423	8,835
Other costs		(6,341)	(5,921)
Profit after tax		2,082	2,914
Earnings per share - Bzshare		9	13

Revenues

The revenue for the nine months period has increased by OMR 4.6m due to higher fuel revenue on account of higher load compared to the corresponding period in 2021 and finance lease amortization.

Operating Costs

Operating cost has increased by OMR 5.0m mainly due to higher fuel cost on higher load compared to the corresponding period in 2021 and higher indexation for USA cost.

Other Costs

Other costs are higher by OMR 0.42m mainly due to higher deferred tax expense by OMR 0.69m off-set by lower general admin and finance expense by OMR 0.27m.

Net profit after Tax

Net profit is reflective of the variances noted above.

Balance Sheet OMR Mn		Period Ended	
		30-Sep-2022	Year Ended 2021
Total assets		207.2	220.7
Net shareholder's equity		52.4	42.6
Paid up capital		22.2	22.2
Cash		4.4	4.4
Current ratio		1.2	0.98
Gearing ratio		2.4	3.2
Net assets per share - OMR		0.236	0.192

Cash flows and Dividends

The Company has met its obligations to the lenders by the timely debt service of OMR 14.6m during the period. Interest payments are on a quarterly basis while principal payments are due in July and January of each year.

The Cash Sweep Mechanism under the financing agreements commenced from 31 July 2021 impacted the ability of the Company to make any future dividend distributions including the dividend distributions of September 2021 and March 2022 proposed at the Annual General Meeting held on 9th March 2021.

The Cash Sweep Mechanism will remain effective until the balloon amount is fully prepaid, which is expected to continue for the remaining term of Power Purchase Agreement (i.e. expiring on 1 January 2033).

In view of the above, the Company will not be able to make future dividend distributions unless the Cash Sweep Mechanism is reversed, which is subject to (1) arrangement of acceptable Backstop DSRA LC and (2) unanimous approval of project lenders.



شركة ظفار لتوليد الكهرباء
Dhofar Generating Company SAOG

PO Box: 1571, PC: 211, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman.
www.dgcoman.com

Future outlook

Two months of the upcoming quarter fall in the winter period and one month will be included in the summer period under the Power Purchase Agreement ("PPA"). The Company and operator will continue their proactive approach towards plant operations to ensure a high reliability factor which is of paramount importance for all stakeholders.

Acknowledgement

The Board would like to thank the entire team for its diligent efforts which has resulted in the excellent performance. Finally, the Board of Directors would like to conclude by expressing their immense gratitude for the privilege of the vision, guidance, wisdom and crucial support of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and His Government.

Ahmed Syahrani Sulaiman
Chairman

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2022

	30-Sep-22 RO	31-Dec-21 RO
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	143,342,754	146,323,203
Finance lease receivable	38,646,356	40,691,033
Right-of-use assets	1,741,183	1,707,905
Major maintenance accrued revenue	1,594,334	2,033,125
Fair value of the cash flow hedge	1,635,118	-
Prepaid connection charges	663,227	573,452
Total non-current assets	<u>187,622,972</u>	<u>191,409,728</u>
Current assets		
Inventories	5,546,675	5,690,349
Finance lease receivable	2,690,859	2,530,967
Major maintenance accrued revenue	638,773	431,724
Trade and other receivables	5,254,124	15,717,962
Advances and prepayments	143,437	447,644
Fair value of the cash flow hedge	842,333	-
Cash and cash equivalents	4,410,915	4,439,759
Total current assets	<u>19,527,116</u>	<u>29,300,405</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>207,150,088</u>	<u>220,710,133</u>
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
EQUITY		
Share capital	22,224,000	22,224,000
Legal reserve	723,584	723,584
Retained earnings	27,302,652	25,220,568
Cash flow hedge reserve	2,105,832	(5,561,527)
Net equity	<u>52,355,068</u>	<u>42,606,625</u>
Non-current liabilities		
Long term loan	120,038,653	127,221,502
Fair value of the cash flow hedge	-	4,841,799
Provision for decommissioning costs	5,144,768	4,950,813
End of service benefits	97,019	116,797
Lease liabilities	1,839,081	1,801,501
Deferred tax	11,085,125	9,323,996
Total non-current liabilities	<u>138,204,646</u>	<u>148,344,408</u>
Current liabilities		
Long term loan	7,534,375	10,130,225
Short term borrowings	1,000,000	-
Fair value of the cash flow hedge	-	1,701,173
Lease liabilities	138,139	152,716
Trade and other payables	7,913,867	17,779,993
Income tax payable	2,993	2,993
Total current liabilities	<u>16,589,374</u>	<u>29,767,100</u>
Total liabilities	<u>154,794,020</u>	<u>178,111,508</u>
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	<u>207,150,088</u>	<u>220,710,133</u>
Net assets per share	<u>0.236</u>	<u>0.192</u>

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME For the nine months period ended 30 September 2022

	Quarter ended 30-Sep-22 RO	9 months ended 30-Sep-22 RO	Quarter ended 30-Sep-21 RO	9 months ended 30-Sep-21 RO
Revenue	11,802,148	35,593,939	11,291,320	31,006,774
Operating costs	(9,510,472)	(27,171,198)	(8,663,765)	(22,171,356)
Gross profit	<u>2,291,676</u>	<u>8,422,741</u>	<u>2,627,555</u>	<u>8,835,418</u>
General and administrative expenses	(305,164)	(894,126)	(280,394)	(941,041)
Finance cost	(1,716,369)	(5,186,490)	(1,830,512)	(5,439,706)
Finance income	48,339	148,022	52,517	166,416
Other income	-	-	12,476	12,476
Profit before tax	<u>318,482</u>	<u>2,490,147</u>	<u>573,642</u>	<u>2,632,763</u>
Income tax expense	(241,605)	(408,063)	(305,245)	281,160
Net profit for the period	<u>76,877</u>	<u>2,082,084</u>	<u>188,397</u>	<u>2,913,923</u>
Other comprehensive income				
Items that may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss				
Fair value gain arising during the period on cash flow hedge - net of tax	2,128,452	7,667,359	337,542	3,194,234
Total comprehensive income for the period	<u>2,205,329</u>	<u>9,749,443</u>	<u>525,939</u>	<u>6,108,157</u>
Basic and diluted earnings per share	-	<u>0.009</u>	<u>0.001</u>	<u>0.013</u>

The financial statements were approved by a resolution of the Board of Directors on 25 October 2022.

SULTANATE OF OMAN MINISTRY OF HEALTH

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health (Al Buraimi Hospital) invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tender:

Tender Ref:	Description	Last date for collection of tender document	Last date for submission of tenders	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non Refundable)	Bidding Method
2790/2022	Providing gardening and agricultural services and maintenance of the irrigation system for the garden in Buraimi Hospital	Before 12 PM On 15/11/2022	Before 12 PM On 11/12/2022	Small and medium enterprises registered with the Tender Board	R.O 25 Per set	Electronically via the Esnad system for electronic bidding

Please note the following:

- Companies wishing to participate in the tender can purchase the tender documents electronically through the website (etendering.tenderboard.gov.om), provided that they are registered in the system.
- Companies must submit their bids electronically via the above-mentioned website, provided that an electronic copy of the bank guarantee or a check certified by one of the banks operating in the Sultanate of 1% of the bid value is attached, provided that it is valid for a period of (90) days from the date of submission Bids are addressed to the head of the Tender Committee, and bids received without the required guarantee will not be considered.
- The concerned entity is not obligated to accept the lowest bid or any other bid.
- For inquiries related to the above tender, please contact the following:
 - Through the website of the Esnad system for electronic tendering: (etendering.tenderboard.gov.om).
 - By e-mail: (said.alnaaimi@moh.gov.om).
 - Through the following contact numbers: 97875606 / 95772335 time of call: 8:00am to 12:00pm.



Japanese Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Takeo Mori, US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, and South Korea's First Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Cho Hyun-dong, pose prior to their trilateral meeting in Tokyo. – Reuters

US, Japan and South Korea warn of response if N Korea holds nuclear test

TOKYO: The United States, Japan and South Korea warned on Wednesday that an “unparalleled” scale of response would be warranted if North Korea conducts a seventh nuclear bomb test.

Washington and its allies believe North Korea could be about to resume nuclear bomb testing for the first time since 2017.

“We agreed that an unparalleled scale of response would be necessary if North Korea pushes ahead with a seventh nuclear test,” South Korean First Vice-Foreign Minister Cho Hyun-dong told a news conference in Tokyo.

Cho was speaking alongside his Japanese and US counterparts, Vice-Foreign Minister Takeo

The United States and its allies have offered few details on what new measures they might take, and observers say they have few good options for preventing a new test

Mori and Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman.

The United States and its allies have offered few details on what new measures they might take, and observers say they have few good options for preventing a new test. For the first time since North Korea began testing nuclear weapons in 2006,

China and Russia this year vetoed a US-led push for additional United Nations Security Council sanctions, and stepped-up allied military drills have only been met by more North Korean tests.

“We urge (North Korea) to refrain from further provocations,” Sherman said, calling them “reckless and deeply destabilising for the region.”

“Anything that happens here, such as a North Korean nuclear test... has implications for the security of the entire world,” she said, sending a thinly veiled message to Pyongyang’s supporters, China and Russia, in the UN Security Council.

“We hope indeed that everyone on the Security Council would understand that any use of a nuclear weapon will change the

world in incredible ways.”

When asked about the comments out of Tokyo, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin called on all the countries to acknowledge “the root causes of the long-standing impasse” and take steps to enhance mutual trust and address the concerns of all parties in a balanced manner.

North Korea has been carrying out weapons tests at an unprecedented pace this year, firing more than two dozen ballistic missiles, including one that flew over Japan. Angered by South Korea’s military activities, Pyongyang last week fired hundreds of artillery shells off its coasts in what it called a grave warning to its neighbour to the south. — Reuters

Nato chief to visit Turkey over Finland, Sweden membership

BRUSSELS: Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg said on Wednesday he would go to Turkey “in the near future” to discuss Finland and Sweden’s nearly completed process to join the military alliance.

The trip to meet President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will be a sensitive one, as Turkey is, along with Hungary, the last of Nato’s 30 countries to ratify the accession protocol that would make Finland and Sweden new members.

The process needs to be unanimous.

But Erdogan in early October warned his country would not ratify the two countries’ memberships until “the promises” they made were kept.

The two Nordic nations earlier this year ditched their longstanding policies of non-alignment, asking to join Nato because of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and how it reshuffled Europe’s security.

In June, Turkey, Sweden and Finland struck a deal which included provisions on extraditions and sharing of information.

It addressed Erdogan’s main demands that Finland and Sweden cease hosting Kurdish militants outlawed in Turkey which he regards as “terrorists”, and hand over Kurds wanted by Ankara.

Stoltenberg, speaking at a media conference after welcoming Romania’s prime minister to Nato headquarters, hailed the “close contact” Stockholm and Helsinki now had with Ankara “at all levels”.



Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg attends a joint news conference at the Alliance’s headquarters in Brussels. – Reuters

He said: “I will go to... Istanbul to meet with President Erdogan in the near future myself”.

Stoltenberg also said Hungary “has made it clear” that its parliament would vote on ratification of the accession protocols for Finland and Sweden in the next month or so.

“I’m confident that all allies will ratify the accession protocol,” he said.

The Nato chief added, in a veiled warning to Russia, that security guarantees extended to Finland and Sweden pending their membership process continued to apply.

“If there were any kind of pressure against Finland and Sweden, it is inconceivable that the Nato allies should just stand idly by and not react. So we will react if there is any kind of pressure against Finland and Sweden,” he said. — AFP

Lebanon returns group of Syria refugees in latest scheme

ARSAL: A first batch of Syrian refugees left Lebanon on Wednesday for their home country under a new repatriation plan slammed by rights groups, an AFP photographer said.

The latest repatriation effort, announced this month as a ‘voluntary’ scheme, follows earlier such exercises since 2017.

In the early hours of the morning, dozens of minibuses and trucks left Arsal in eastern Lebanon and drove towards the Syrian border.

The refugees took with them personal belongings and farm animals, the photographer said.



Syrians refugees prepare to leave Lebanon towards Syrian territory through the Wadi Hamid crossing in Arsal. – AFP

Lebanon’s General Security agency said around 750 refugees were expected to return to Syria on Wednesday from several regions.

Syria’s official SANA news agency said that “a group of Syrian exiles arrived from refugee camps in Lebanon through the Daboussiye border crossing in central Homs province to return to their safe and terror-free areas”.

Hundreds of thousands fled Syria for Lebanon in the early years of the country’s civil war, which began in 2011 with the brutal suppression of anti-regime protests. Around two million Syrian refugees are in Lebanon, nearly

830,000 of whom are registered with the United Nations.

A total of 400,000 refugees have been sent back to Syria in earlier repatriation schemes since 2017, according to the Lebanese security agency.

But human rights groups have categorised the returns as forced, rather than voluntary.

“It is well established that Syrian refugees in Lebanon are not in a position to take a free and informed decision about their return,” Amnesty’s acting deputy director for the Middle East and North Africa, Diana Semaan, said on October 14. — AFP

SEOUL

South Korean marines stage amphibious exercise

South Korean marines in amphibious armoured vehicles waded ashore under the guns of patrolling warships as part of large-scale military exercises that organisers say are necessary to prepare for any North Korean threats.

The amphibious landing practice, held near Pohang on South Korea’s east coast, is part of the 12-day Hoguk 22 field exercises, which have included some drills with US troops. “Our goal is to be equipped with



immediate response capabilities, regardless of time, location and circumstances if we are tasked with a mission,” South Korean Marine Corps Colonel Kim Tae-won told reporters. — Reuters

DHAKA

Cyclone lashes Bangladesh coast killing 15

A cyclone roared into the Bangladesh coast on Tuesday, killing at least 15 people, destroying houses, uprooting trees and disrupting road, power and communication links, officials said.

Mass evacuations before Cyclone Sitrang made landfall on the west coast helped save lives, but the full extent of the casualties and damage would only be known after communications were fully restored, they said.

“It was terrible. It looked like



the sea was coming to grab us,” Mizanur Rahman, a resident of Bhola district, said after communications were restored in his neighbourhood.

— Reuters

NAYPYIDAW

Asean chair alarmed over Myanmar violence

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) is gravely concerned about an escalation of violence in Myanmar and is calling for restraint and an immediate cessation of fighting, the bloc’s chair Cambodia said yesterday.

Myanmar has been trapped in a cycle of violence since the army ousted Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi’s elected government in February 2021, detaining her and thousands of activists and launching a brutal



crackdown that has given rise to armed resistance movements.

Recent weeks have seen some of the bloodiest incidents, with dozens killed.

— Reuters



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In brief

■ LAGOS



NIGERIAN PRESIDENTIAL CONTENDER CALLS FOR RELIEF FUND

Nigeria's main opposition presidential contender called on the government to immediately set up a flood disaster fund similar to one created to fight the coronavirus pandemic, to help victims hit by the worst floods in a decade.

The government has blamed the floods on heavy rain and water release from a dam in neighbouring Cameroon.

Atiku Abubakar said after a trip to oil-producing Bayelsa state, one of the worst hit, that the floods were a reminder of the impact of climate change and urged the government to immediately launch a Flood Disaster Relief Fund. — Reuters

■ MADRID



3 KILLED IN SHOOTING AFTER QUARREL IN CENTRAL SPAIN

Three people were killed and two injured after armed police intervened in a shootout sparked by an argument between a man and his father in central Spain, police said.

The gunman, his neighbour and a policeman were shot dead at a house on a road between the villages of Argamasilla de Calatrava and Villamayor de Calatrava near Ciudad Real, about 230 km south of Madrid, a police spokesperson said.

The incident stemmed from a domestic dispute between the 50-year-old shooter and his father, 81.

When the neighbour tried to intervene, the gunman began shooting. — Reuters

■ ROME



ITALIAN COASTGUARD RESCUES OVER 1,000 MIGRANTS

Italy's coastguard said it had rescued more than 1,000 migrants from two fishing boats in the Mediterranean overnight, while two bodies had been recovered.

The two 'complex' operations off the coast of Syracuse in Sicily, involving boats from Libya, followed an alert on Tuesday from Alarm Phone, a group running a hotline for migrants needing rescue.

From the first boat, about 35 miles from the Sicilian coast, an Italian coastguard ship rescued 416 migrants while a Spanish patrol vessel working with EU border force Frontex rescued another 78. — AFP

Putin oversees nuclear response drills

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday surveyed drills carried out by his nuclear-capable forces as Moscow pressed unfounded claims to India and China that Ukraine was developing a "dirty bomb."

The drills are the latest in a series of escalatory comments from Moscow and Putin — who observed the drills from a control room — that the eight-month conflict in Ukraine could turn nuclear.

"Under the leadership of... Vladimir Putin, a training session was held with ground, sea and air strategic deterrence forces, during which practical launches of ballistic and cruise missiles took place," the Kremlin said in a statement.

Russian state-run media ran footage of a submarine crew preparing the launch of a Sineva ballistic missile from the Barents Sea in the Arctic.

The drills also included launching test missiles from the Kamchatka peninsula in

The drills also included launching test missiles from the Kamchatka peninsula in the Russian Far East

the Russian Far East. Footage of the drills across state media came after Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu pressed ahead with telephone calls to his counterparts globally, claiming that Ukraine was developing a "dirty bomb". Shoigu, who has made these claims in recent days to counterparts from Nato countries, reiterated them to Chinese counterpart Wei Fenghe on Wednesday.

Shoigu also voiced the same "concerns" in a phone with India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh earlier on Wednesday, Moscow said.

Ukraine has dismissed the allegations as "absurd" and "dangerous," suggesting the claims could be cover for Russia's

own plans on the battlefield, as have its western allies, including Britain, France and the United States.

A dirty bomb is a conventional bomb laced with radioactive, biological or chemical materials which are disseminated in an explosion.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters earlier on Wednesday that Russia had information pertaining to the "existing threat" of Ukraine using a "dirty bomb" and that Kyiv was "preparing for such a terrorist act of sabotage".

He added: "We will continue vigorously bringing our point of view to the world community to encourage them to take active steps to prevent such irresponsible behaviour."

Nuclear rhetoric from Russia began building in September, when Moscow said it was annexing four regions of Ukraine over which its forces have partial control. Putin warned Russia could use nuclear weapons to defend them. — AFP



Russia's Tu-95MS strategic bomber landing during exercises held by the country's strategic nuclear forces at an unknown location. — Reuters

Sunak reinstates fracking ban

LONDON: Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Wednesday reinstated a ban on fracking in England, dropping a previous pledge to permit the practice that his predecessor Liz Truss enacted during her short tenure.

The ruling Tories had introduced a moratorium on controversial gas fracking in England after committing to a ban in a 2019 manifesto that saw them elected with an 80-seat majority.

However, after ex-prime minister Boris Johnson announced his imminent departure in July, Truss and Sunak battled to replace him.

Both said they would allow fracking — drilling into the ground to extract oil and gas from shale rock — where there was local consent.

Truss in particular argued it would diversify and strengthen the UK's energy supplies, as she also unveiled plans to accelerate North Sea offshore oil and gas exploitation.

Following her election



Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak poses alongside Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt (centre right) at the first cabinet meeting under the new Prime Minister in 10 Downing Street in central London. — AFP

by Conservative members early last month, she lifted the moratorium — despite huge opposition from environmentalists and others, including some members of her parliamentary party.

But after her tax-slashing mini-budget sparked an economic crisis and led to her ousting from office after just 49 days, Sunak took over in Downing Street and reversed course on the proposals and

his prior stance. "I stand by the manifesto on that," he told MPs when asked about allowing fracking at his first "Prime Minister's Questions" in parliament.

"We will deliver on what we said because we care deeply about passing our children an environment in a better state than we found it ourselves," he added, referring to last year's COP26 climate summit hosted in Scotland. — AFP



France's President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz wave at the presidential Elysee Palace in Paris. — AFP

Macron, Scholz tackle tensions in useful meeting

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron hosted German Chancellor Olaf Scholz for lunch on Wednesday, with both sides saying they made progress towards easing differences on energy and defence dogging the European Union's vital double act.

The two leaders were "of one mind on the major directions" of policy, a German diplomatic source said after the meeting, while a source in the French presidency called it "very constructive".

"Today was a very good and important conversation on European energy supply, rising prices and joint arms projects," Scholz tweeted.

"Germany and France stand close together and are tackling challenges jointly".

Macron and Scholz were at pains to put on a show of friendliness as Scholz climbed out of his black Mercedes on arrival, with both smiling and shaking hands.

The German source said they discussed issues including "European energy policy, national energy policies, economic development, defence, space and foreign policy".

Meanwhile, the French presidency said the talks were "in a spirit of very close cooperation for the medium- and long-term".

But Macron and Scholz did not appear before journalists to

announce any joint decisions or take questions.

Recent weeks had seen growing signs of discord between Berlin and Paris, under pressure from Russia's war of Ukraine and its knock-on effects especially on energy markets.

Berlin's move to spend up to 200 billion euros subsidising soaring gas prices and refusal to consider an EU-wide energy price cap nettled Paris and other European capitals, who fear the effect on their energy costs.

On defence, France is rattled by German plans for a shared missile shield with other Nato nations using American equipment, while longer-term projects to jointly develop new fighter jets and tanks appear stalled.

A big-spending "new era" of German defence policy announced by Scholz following the Russian attack has not translated into major contracts within Europe, especially for French firms as Macron hoped.

Wednesday's meeting came instead of a postponed joint cabinet meeting between Paris and Berlin, which would have been Scholz's first as chancellor.

So far, the German leader — in office for less than a year — has not developed the same warmth with Macron as his predecessor Angela Merkel, who "texted every day", one French diplomatic source said ahead of the talks. — AFP

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR PROVISION OF EXHIBITION DESIGN AND INSTALLATION SERVICES FOR OPWP SUSTAINABILITY CAMPAIGN (DAYMAH) FOR SMEs WITH VALID RIYADA CARD



The Oman Power and Water Procurement Company SAOC (OPWP), a member of Nama Group, is responsible for procuring new capacity for power and water in the Sultanate of Oman in accordance with the requirements of the law for the regulation and privatization of the electricity and related water sector promulgated by Royal Decree 78/2004 as amended and the OPWP license.

Tender Description	OPWP is looking to hire a company to design and implement an exhibition relating to OPWP's sustainability campaign (referred to as Daymah). The purpose of the Daymah campaign is to build public awareness about renewable energy, sustainability, and the role OPWP in leading the future of renewables in Oman.
Tender Number	OPWP/2022/26
Tender Purchase Period	25 October 2022 till 1 November 2022
Tender Fee	25 OMR
Submission date	17 November 12pm (GST)
Collection & Payment Methods	The tender documents are available for purchase in an electronic format through OPWP website (https://www.omanpwp.om/new/Default.aspx). The payment is done electronically through OPWP website. In case of any queries, please send an email to: procurement.officer@Omanpwp.nama.om .
Bank Guarantee	SMEs holding valid Riyada card are exempted



Oman Power and Water Procurement Company SAOC (OPWP)
5th Floor, Building 5, Muscat Grand Mall, Tilal Complex (Office)
Tel.: +968 24508400 | Fax: +968 24399946 | www.omanpwp.com

A way out of ESG recession



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The writer is an entrepreneur and innovation adviser

We are about to witness a global Economic, Social and Governance, or ESG, recession, brought to you by a legacy of a pandemic, global conflicts and rising cost of living. I believe this is good news within the midst of all of this for all of us. This is because for almost 100 years our nations have been measuring what matters to us using only economic tools, such as Gross Domestic Product or GDP. So, our nations are being gagged based on how much we consume, invest and export, but does measuring these tell you about how well we are doing? Therefore, the question today is do we want to continue focusing on similar economic tools to measure what matters to us? I would argue

that the legacy of the modern global triple health, economic and political crises is a good message for us to come up with more useful, innovative ways to measure and later improve and make real progress. Globally since 2011, around 169 nations around the world became familiar with the Social Progress Index, or SPI, issued by the Social Progress Imperative, to reflect progress on three main aspects that matter: Basic Human Needs, Foundations of well-being, and Opportunity. While many international reports and indices face criticism for being unclear definitions, or even of being biased, these indices such as these three indicators below of SPI, still the most useful way for societies to

ACCESS TO ADVANCED EDUCATION, INCLUSIVENESS, PERSONAL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS GUARANTEE THAT EACH MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY CAN SUSTAIN THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT LIFE OFFERS THEM

measure, improve and innovate in their overall performance. Basic Human Needs If there is one thing we learned during the almost 2 years global lockdown it is that nothing in this world matters more than personal safety, shelter, nutrition, medical care, water and sanitation, and this

is exactly what SPI's Basic Human Needs indicators measure. Foundations of Well-being After securing basic human needs, the best way forward is to guarantee for everyone in the society access to tools where they learn about life and how to make the best of what it has to offer. In SPI, this is measured through access to basic knowledge, information, communications, health and environmental quality. Opportunity A fair chance and a governance leveled playing field to guarantee a decent life is an elusive human ambition. In SPI, access to advanced education, inclusiveness, personal rights and freedoms guarantee that each member of the society can

sustain the opportunities life offers them. In his book StrengthsFinder 2.0, the author Tom Rath argues that we must develop our strengths by focusing on our untapped talents. For the Sultanate of Oman for example, we are one of the top nations in the world in access to communications and this could help innovate in finding a way to overcome the coming ESG recession. Knowing that we rank 80 out of 169 nations overall in the Social Progress Index, due to a number of challenges facing education and environmental quality, can spark a roadmap towards greater economic, social and governance progress.

Hunger forces hard choices in conflict-hit Nigeria's northeast

CAMILLE MALPLAT

Ten years ago, the threat of violence forced Falmata Mustapha to abandon the fertile land that her family had cultivated for generations outside the village of Gonglugong, in northeastern Nigeria's Borno state. Her only option was to work a plot of land that was far less fertile but at least was relatively safe, for it lay within the village's secure perimeter. Nigeria's insurgency has shifted and evolved since it began in 2009, with Boko Haram fighters losing ground to military offensives and forced to battle rivals linked to the IS group. But for farmers like Mustapha, the grinding war remains a constant menace that keeps her from her land, like many of the more than two million people displaced due to the conflict. "This plot does not give much, but where we are here, at least Boko Haram will not come and kill you," said the 60-year-old farmer. Past the military checkpoints that surround and protect Gongulong, the fields have become tantalisingly lush from the rainy season, but remain off limits. Much of the northeast's food-producing land remains at the mercy of insurgents. The battle to create an caliphate in the region has left more than 40,000 dead and created one of the worst humanitarian crises of the 21st century. "Again this morning, Boko Haram attacked several farmers. Thank God they didn't kill them and just took their money," Mustapha said, raising her hands to the sky. Two years have passed, but the grandmother has not forgotten the day in December 2020 when fighters slaughtered 43 farmers on a rice field in the neighbouring village of Koshebe. Since that massacre, only a few people go beyond the army's barricades and protective trenches to work the land "with fear in (their) stomach," she said. Doing so also means taking the risk of being accused by the army of collaborating with fighters and of being arrested. "It's a dilemma for the farmers, who have to choose between struggling to feed their children or putting themselves in danger to bring back food by going to the other side of the trenches," said the head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Nigeria, Trond Jensen. Mustapha can't remember the last time she had enough money to eat meat, or when her children could still eat three full meals a day. But, she said, she's "lucky" because at least she has access to some land. —AFP

Why is Russia suddenly talking about 'Dirty Bombs'?



John Ismay

The writer is a Pentagon correspondent in the Washington bureau

Western officials quickly rejected Russia's claim over the weekend that Ukraine was planning to use a so-called dirty bomb in its own territory. The United States and its allies have issued a series of statements accusing leaders in Moscow of making "transparently false allegations" to create a pretext for escalating the war. But the intense exchanges in recent days have renewed attention on the concept of the dirty bomb itself. It is a type of weapon that was thought of and tested more than three-quarters of a century ago, in the early years of the Atomic Age, but never fielded by a military force. In the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks, government officials occasionally warned that terrorists could build one with radioactive materials used in many commercial industries, and dirty bombs became a boogeyman in the public consciousness, an object of fear. The more formal name of the bombs — radiological dispersal devices, or RDD — offers a fairly straightforward description of what these weapons are and how they work. Essentially, they are improvised bombs that use conventional high explosives to spread radioactive material into the surrounding area. But the fact that no military is known to have fielded one in its arsenal is a good indicator that they are not useful on the battlefield. The most commonly imagined version is small enough to fit in a backpack and contains perhaps 20 pounds or less of explosives, with a smaller mass of radioactive material placed on top. That's about the extent of it, although such a weapon potentially could be made much larger. There are, however, some inherent issues with this concept that limit a bomb maker's chances of success. First, the size of the main charge: Use too much explosive material and the radioactive substance could be largely consumed by the intense heat as the bomb detonates. Use too little and the device would not spread the radioactive material very far.



Members of the Ukrainian military training in Kyiv.

THE MORE FORMAL NAME OF THE BOMBS — RADIOLOGICAL DISPERSAL DEVICES, OR RDD — OFFERS A FAIRLY STRAIGHTFORWARD DESCRIPTION OF WHAT THESE WEAPONS ARE AND HOW THEY WORK

Another consideration is that only a few radioisotopes, which are commonly used for medical purposes or power generation, are suitable for use in this kind of device. A radiological dispersal device is not a "nuclear weapon" in the classical sense, as there is no fission, no fusion, no massive release of energy nor city-cratering destruction. If everything works correctly — and as an improvised bomb there are many potential failure points — a dirty bomb blasts radioactive material into tiny bits and sends it into the surrounding air. It produces a localised contamination problem, not a global one. People who inhale or ingest

radioactive dust could be injured or killed, and contaminated buildings would have to be bulldozed and sent to a landfill. Excavators would likely dig up radiated soil a yard deep and tear down nearby trees — all of which would be sent to landfills as well. But a lot of the effects would depend on atmospheric conditions. Temperature gradients would affect how high the plume of radioactive material could rise up into the air, and the speed and direction of the wind would determine how far it could spread from the blast. An academic paper published in a US military magazine on the topic in 2004 noted that "economic and psycho-social effects are likely to be the most serious damage mechanisms from any use of an RDD." "The fear of ionizing radiation is a deep-seated and frequently irrational carry-over from the Cold War," the report said. And while an attack with this kind of device "is unlikely to cause mass deaths," it has the potential to "cause great panic and enormous economic losses." There is significant risk to the bomb maker while building this kind of weapon. For the weapon's radiation to be lethal, the radioisotope used would have to have a strong enough intensity to harm people. — *New York Times*

The fun nights of karaoke in town

The number of karaoke venues and performances in Muscat is mushrooming.

On some weeknights, there are gigs in more than one place. With the coming of cooler weather, and clear and starry skies, fans prefer outdoor performances.

An enthusiastic ‘KJ’ host keeps spirits and energy high, and the vibes supportive.

The best parts of karaoke are watching people smile, sing along, and tap their feet — or maybe even coming out in front of the crowd to see who is singing.

It is OK to make mistakes in karaoke because it is about solidarity, friendship, and wish fulfilment. It can be a lot of fun or intimidating.

It all began in Japan. Daisuke Inoue, a Japanese musician, saw a need for a product that would encourage people to interact with popular music.

As a result, in 1971, he invented the first karaoke machine, the Juke 8.

The United States had its first karaoke venue opened in 1982, in Los Angeles. Having been imported from India, Karaoke was brought to Oman 13 years ago.

It didn’t take long for it to establish itself as a new kind of entertainment with a local flavour.

Being a star, even for a single song, or for a few hours, at home, among friends, clubs, or restaurants, is a popular pastime that had its first world championship in Finland in 2003.

Since then, the championships have expanded to include dozens of countries.

Due to the Covid pandemic, the 2020 and 2021 finals were online events.

Norway hosted the in-person 2022 final competition, and Panama will host the 2023 event. And perhaps, in the future, Oman can host it too.

Singing is an important part of many cultures, particularly in Japan and the Philippines. Some people enjoy singing while showering, driving, or doing chores. Singing makes a person happy. “He who sings frightens away



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THE BEST PARTS OF KARAOKE ARE WATCHING PEOPLE SMILE, SING ALONG, AND TAP THEIR FEET - OR MAYBE EVEN COMING OUT IN FRONT OF THE CROWD TO SEE WHO IS SINGING

his ills,” Miguel de Cervantes said in Don Quixote. The literature says that singing may boost the immune system.

And voilà, it may improve snoring and lung function — because singing involves deep breathing and controlled use of muscles in the respiratory system.

Its practice is primarily an electronic activity. It involves singing along to a soundtrack and reading the lyrics running on the screen in front of a live audience.

Like with many other innovations, technological development has resulted in more advanced ways of playing karaoke through the use of smart devices, apps, and all-in-one mics.

From high notes to duets, or group singing, every type of music is covered.

There are songs for parties, songs to impress, fun songs, and tunes for female or male singers. Meaning, there is a niche for anyone to perform, and be a star — if only for an ephemeral experience.

Karaoke is a culture unto itself. The audience is not separate from the message, and it is liberating, in the sense that there is nothing to lose except one’s inhibitions. It is a safe space in which to learn about risk-taking. It all adds up to a fun evening.

Song choice plays a large role in karaoke. People are drawn in by the emotional connection they have to the songs. Sweet Caroline, It’s my life, Summer of 69, and Hotel California are all-time favourites among karaoke fans in Muscat.

Most venues in the capital have regular powerhouses, which is often the result of a strong bond between the ‘KJ’ host, the atmosphere, the fans, and the offers provided by the venues’ organisers.

Some goers, however, may hop from venue to venue for the love of singing, regardless of the perks.

As the local karaoke scene expands, hosts are flexing their creativity to attract talent and crowds.

Let’s sing. Out of tune, who cares?

HALLOWEEN SEASON



A child is seen among pumpkins and squashes at The Pop up Farm ahead of Halloween, in Flamstead, St Albans, Britain, on Wednesday. – Reuters

Why forests are key to the climate and not just to absorb carbon

JACK GRAHAM

From the Amazon rainforest to the boreal forests of the northern hemisphere, forests play a crucial role in absorbing planet-warming carbon dioxide (CO2) as the world faces a race against time to avert the worst impacts of climate change.

Forests are the largest carbon sinks on land, removing approximately 7.6 billion metric tonnes of CO2 each year from the atmosphere, which is around one-and-a-half times the average annual emissions of the United States.

Governments are taking action to protect these natural stores of CO2, with more than 140 countries pledging at last year’s UN COP26 talks to halt and reverse forest loss by 2030, although a recent analysis found they are not on track.

The Forest Declaration Assessment found that deforestation worldwide slowed by 6.3 per cent in 2021 compared to the 10 per cent annual reduction needed.

But protecting forests doesn’t just protect their crucial carbon-absorbing abilities. Forests also are vital for the climate and nature in myriad other ways, providing benefits that scientists are increasingly able to quantify.

So what else can forests do for the planet and its people?

FORESTS ARE THE LARGEST CARBON SINKS ON LAND, REMOVING APPROXIMATELY 7.6 BILLION METRIC TONNES OF CO2 EACH YEAR FROM THE ATMOSPHERE

The cooling impact of forests goes beyond their ability to absorb planet-heating CO2 emissions.

Keeping tropical forests standing provides a 50 per cent greater impact on lowering global temperatures than can be accounted for simply through their carbon-absorbing abilities, according to a new report by the World Resources Institute (WRI), a think tank.

“Forests are even more important than we thought for stabilising the climate,” said Frances Seymour, a WRI senior fellow who co-authored the report.

Stands of trees, for instance, provide “evapotranspiration” - the process by which water is released from the soil into the atmosphere to fall as rain. Such additional cooling impacts must be integrated into governments’ climate policies to fully reflect what forests do for the planet, the report said.

Forests help to maintain stable rainfall patterns and local temperatures, which are vital for food and water security, according to the WRI report.

Michael Wolosin, a report

co-author from the non-profit Conservation International, said the disruption to the world’s food system caused by Russia’s war on Ukraine underlines the need to protect global forests.

Deforestation risks disrupting rainfall patterns that support agriculture, a threat that “is very real, and is something that we need to address through global negotiations,” he said.

The Brazilian Amazon, for example, the report said, helps to maintain vital rainfall in several other countries, affecting agricultural production as far as Argentina. As deforestation turns parts of the world’s largest tropical

rainforest into dry savannah, scientists are concerned that the Amazon is edging towards a tipping point beyond which it might never recover.

Another benefit that forests provide is their ability to act as a buffer against natural disasters, which have become increasingly common due to climate change.

Tree canopies can intercept rainfall and slow it down in a storm, allowing up to 30 per cent of the water to evaporate into the atmosphere without reaching the ground, according to Britain’s Woodland Trust charity. Some cities are using urban forests to become more resilient

to flooding, as trees provide more permeable land to absorb rainwater. In Sierra Leone’s capital of Freetown, for example, after devastating landslides in 2017, the mayor’s recovery plan included training residents to plant 21,000 native trees.

Across the world’s equatorial regions, mangrove forests not only store significant carbon but provide a defence against coastal erosion and storm surges.

Another vital contribution of forests is their impact on biodiversity, with such ecosystems home to more than half of the world’s land-based animal and plant species. As well as protecting nature, forests can provide a range of benefits to people, from forest foods to medicines.

Especially in tropical regions, deforestation has been linked to increased outbreaks of infectious diseases, in particularly as animals come into closer contact with people.

According to a recent analysis by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the world’s wildlife populations have declined by more than two-thirds since 1970, with deforestation a major driver.

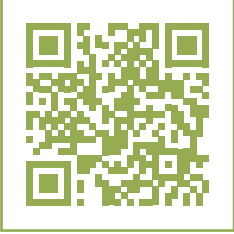
—Thomson Reuters Foundation



The Tronçais forest as the sun rises, in Saint Bonnet de Tronçais, France. – AFP

sport

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Juventus' Frederico Gatti in action with Benfica's Antonio Silva during Champions League Group H match at Estadio da Luz, Lisbon, Portugal. — Reuters

BERLIN: Italian giants Juventus are out of the Champions League after losing 4-3 at Benfica, with the Portuguese side joining Borussia Dortmund, Chelsea, Paris Saint-Germain among the teams to make it to the last 16 on Tuesday.

Benfica set up the pace with first half goals from Antonio Silva, Joao Mario and Rafa Silva, while Juve pulled one back thanks to Duan Vlahovic.

Rafa Silva sealed his brace in the 50th, while Arkadiusz Milik in the 77th and Weston McKennie two minutes later tried to keep the Italian hopes alive. Their efforts, however, were not enough to avoid the defeat and the elimination.

Dortmund played out a 0-0 draw with City, with keeper Gregor Kobel saving a penalty, but that was enough to advance. City had already advanced to the knock-outs and secured the group win.

“It was very important for us to take a point. We’re very happy that we qualified,” Kobel told broadcasters Amazon Prime Video.

The keeper said he was looking forward to seeing former teammate Erling Haaland taking the penalty “but unfortunately he was no longer on the pitch.”

Leipzig did their homework with a 3-2 win over Madrid but couldn’t celebrate just yet as Shakhtar Donetsk pulled out a 1-1 draw at Celtic and are also still in the fight.

Joko Gvardiol and Christopher Nkunku put Leipzig ahead before Vinicius Junior pulled one back for champions Madrid shortly before the break.

But a late effort from Timo Werner handed Madrid their first defeat of the season. Leipzig will advance if they avoid defeat at third-placed Shakhtar Donetsk next week.

“That’s exactly what we wanted, to have it (the qualification) in our hands,” Werner told broadcasters DAZN.

MESSI, MBAPPE HIT BRACES
PSG thrashed Maccabi Haifa 7-2, with both Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe scoring a brace each and Neymar also on target to help the French side book their place in the last 16.

Elsewhere, Milan were left on the brink of qualification thanks to a 4-0 triumph at Dinamo Zagreb.

Earlier on Tuesday, Chelsea also made it to the round of 16 after a 2-1 win at Red Bull Salzburg, while Sevilla refused to give up their chances with a 3-0 victory over Copenhagen.

Mateo Kovacic put Chelsea ahead as he skillfully guided the ball into the net in the 23rd minute, but Junior Adamu equalised for Salzburgright after the break with a first-time finish.

It was a stunner from Kai Havertz in the 64th minute that secured the English side in the knock-out stages.

“I am delighted. It was a fantastic performance, I thought the players showed real courage here because the atmosphere, they are so intense,” Chelsea coach Graham Potter said. — dpa



Paris St Germain's Neymar celebrates scoring their third goal with Lionel Messi. — Reuters

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2022-2023									
GROUP STAGE									
5 th matchday									
Tuesday October 25									
Group E		Group F		Group G		Group H			
	1		1		1		7		
	2		1		0		2		
	0		0		0		4		
	0		2		0		1		
Ranking		Ranking		Ranking		Ranking			
Pts	P	Pts	P	Pts	P	Pts	P		
1 Chelsea	10	5	3	1	1	8	3	5	
2 AC Milan	7	5	2	1	2	8	7	1	
3 Salzburg	6	5	1	3	1	5	5	0	
4 D. Zagreb	4	5	1	3	3	9	-6		
1 Real Madrid	10	5	3	1	1	10	5		
2 Leipzig	9	5	3	0	2	9	0		
3 S. Donetsk	6	5	1	3	1	8	6		
4 Celtic	2	5	0	2	3	3	10	-7	
1 Man City	11	5	3	2	0	11	1	10	
2 Dortmund	8	5	2	2	1	9	4	5	
3 Sevilla	5	5	1	2	2	5	9	-4	
4 Copenhagen	2	5	0	2	3	0	11	-11	
Wednesday October 26									
Group A		Group B		Group C		Group D			
Ranking		Ranking		Ranking		Ranking			
Pts	P	Pts	P	Pts	P	Pts	P		
1 Napoli	12	4	4	0	0	17	4	13	
2 Liverpool	9	4	3	0	1	12	6	6	
3 Ajax	3	4	1	0	3	8	12	-4	
4 Glasgow R.	0	4	0	0	4	1	16	-15	
1 Brugge	10	4	3	1	0	7	0	7	
2 Porto	6	4	2	0	2	6	6	0	
3 Atletico M.	4	4	1	1	2	2	5	-3	
4 Leverkusen	3	4	1	0	3	2	6	-4	
1 Bayern M.	12	4	4	0	0	13	2	11	
2 Inter Milan	7	4	2	1	1	6	5	1	
3 Barcelona	4	4	1	1	2	8	7	1	
4 V. Plzen	0	4	0	0	4	3	16	-13	
1 Tottenham	7	4	2	1	1	5	4	1	
2 Marseille	6	4	2	0	2	6	4	2	
3 Sporting L.	6	4	2	0	2	6	6	0	
4 Frankfurt	4	4	1	1	2	3	6	-3	



Oman drawn with South Korea, Tajikistan and Jordan

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 26

Oman will face Korea Republic, Tajikistan and Jordan in Group C after Wednesday's official draw of the AFC U20 Asian Cup Uzbekistan 2023. The prestigious Asian event will take place during March 1 to 18, 2023. Sixteen teams distributed into four groups will be vying for the title while the top two from each group to secure spot in the quarterfinals.

The hosts Uzbekistan were drawn in Group A which comprised of Indonesia, Iraq and Syria teams.

Group B featured Qatar, Australia, Vietnam and Iran. Defending champions Saudi Arabia will be vying for the quarterfinal berths in Group D which included Japan, China PR and Kyrgyz Republic.

The AFC U20 Asian Cup Uzbekistan 2023 will act as qualifiers for the Fifa U20 World Cup



2023 as top four in Asia will secure tickets in the top showpiece event. The event will be hosted in Asia in Indonesia from May 20 to June 11.

In last September, Oman hosted Asian Group G qualifiers in Salalah at Al Saada Stadium. Oman boys progressed to AFC U20 Asian Cup Uzbekistan 2023 finals after they had topped the group with six points.

The national team boys ended their qualifying campaign with two victories against the Philippines and Thailand and suffered a loss against Afghanistan 1-0. They scored four goals and conceded one.

The team, coached under supervision of Spaniard David Gordo, will look for a top display in the forthcoming Asian assignment. It is expected the national teams committee at OFA will announce soon the team's preparatory programme for the Asian event.

GROUPINGS

Group A: Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Iraq, Syria
Group B: Qatar, Australia, Vietnam, IR Iran
Group C: Korea Republic, Tajikistan, Jordan, Oman
Group D: Saudi Arabia, Japan, China PR, Kyrgyz Republic

Ooredoo offers World Cup match tickets for lucky winners

MUSCAT: As the official Middle East and Africa telecommunication operator for the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022, Ooredoo made dreams come true for lucky customers winning match tickets through a social media competition to experience the global spectacle soon to take place for the first time in the Arab world.

The competition gives football fans in Oman a great opportunity to be there and cheer on their favourite teams, while watching the game's mega stars take to the pitch and having unforgettable experience.

A host of exciting offers and activities were also announced by the company, including fan zones to watch the games, a new



raffle draw campaign for all Hala prepaid, Shahry postpaid and Home Internet customers and 'Roam like Home' plans in Qatar during the Fifa World Cup, as well

as a special edition SIM card (Fan SIM) with some exciting bundles.

This means fans travelling to Qatar for the tournament will be able to share plenty of magical

match moments and keep in touch with family and friends. It's all part of Ooredoo's drive to upgrade their customers' world.

And coming soon will be gamification on the Ooredoo App, with even more chances to win tickets!

The fun event at Muscat Grand Mall sparked football mania ahead of the anticipated start of Fifa World Cup.

The company has been running a range of promotions in the run up to kick-off day, with giveaway tickets to both consumer and business customers, the launch of their official Fifa World Cup song, so far clocking up over 20 million views. To learn more about Ooredoo's offers and plans visit www.ooredoo.om.

Nadal to return at Paris Masters, says coach

PARIS: Rafael Nadal will return to competition at next week's Paris Masters before taking his place at the season-ending ATP Finals, coach Carlos Moya said.

Nadal has struggled with injuries this year, capturing his 14th French Open title while playing with pain-killing injections to deal with a chronic foot injury and pulling out of Wimbledon due to an abdominal problem.

Following his defeat to Frances Tiafoe at the US Open in September, he said he needed to "fix things" and was unsure about when he would play again.

The Spaniard, who has won a men's record 22 Grand Slam

titles, partnered Roger Federer in a doubles match at the Laver Cup last month before pulling out of the tournament.

He also took time off for the birth of his first child with wife Mery Perello on October 8.

Moya confirmed that Nadal would use the Masters 1000 event in Bercy, which the world number two has never won, as part of his preparations for the ATP's finale in Turin from November 13-20.

"Before arriving in Turin, you have to play matches in Paris, which are similar," Moya told IB3 TV.

"Rafa is competitive wherever he is and we go with hope and illusion." — Reuters



I am not retired, says Serena

SAN FRANCISCO: Serena Williams on Monday said she has not retired from tennis and that the chances of her returning are "very high" after she previously indicated that she would step away from the sport after last month's US Open.

"I am not retired," Williams said at a conference in San Francisco while promoting her investment company, Serena Ventures.

"The chances (of a return) are very high. You can come to my house, I have a court."

Williams, 41, said she was "evolving away from tennis" in an essay in August and, while she did not confirm the US Open as her farewell event, she was given lavish tributes before each match in New York and

waved an emotional goodbye after losing in the third round.

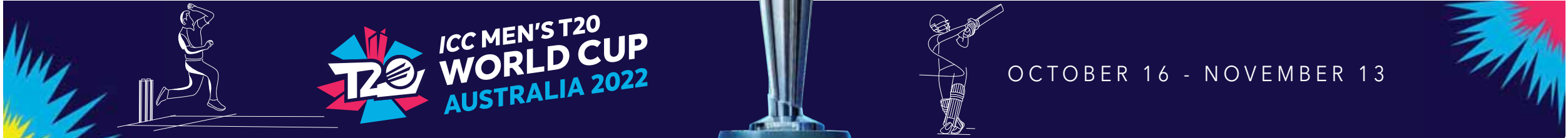
The 23-time Grand Slam champion, who took the tennis world by storm as a teenager and is considered by many the greatest of all time, said not preparing for a tournament after the US Open did not feel natural to her. "I still haven't really thought about (retirement)," Williams said.

"But I did wake up the other day and go on the court and (considered) for the first time in my life that I'm not playing for a competition, and it felt really weird.

"It was like the first day of the rest of my life and I'm enjoying it, but I'm still trying to find that balance."

— Reuters





NEW ZEALAND SUFFER WASHOUT AGAINST AFGHANISTAN



IRELAND SHOCK ENGLAND IN RAIN-HIT MATCH

MELBOURNE: Ireland and rain had a major impact on the T20 World Cup on Wednesday as England suffered a shock defeat and New Zealand were denied the chance to take advantage when their match with Afghanistan was washed out.

Captain Andy Balbirnie led the way for Ireland with 62 from 47 balls at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) to give England a 158-run target.

But England's much-vaunted batting line-up struggled to get going in the face of some disciplined Ireland swing bowling and were reduced to 29-3 off the first five overs.

A late Moeen Ali boundary flurry (24 off 12 balls) took England to 105-5 off 14.3 overs when the rain ended play.

England were five runs behind on the DLS scoring method, handing Ireland a famous victory.

"It's amazing, kind of emotional," said man-of-the-match Balbirnie.

"Our message was to just create chances and we know how this England team like to play, if we take every chance then we would

be in with a shot.

"This will do a lot to grow the game back home."

The rain stayed around for the rest of the night and, after several aborted attempts to start the second match of the MCG double-header, New Zealand and Afghanistan had to make do with a point each without a ball being bowled.

It leaves New Zealand top of a wide open Group 1 with three points after two rounds of matches.

Sri Lanka, England, Ireland and Australia are locked together on two points with Afghanistan bottom on one.

It was Ireland's second massive upset of the tournament after they beat the West Indies in the first round to send the two-time champions home.

England, who enjoyed an opening five-wicket win over Afghanistan, are among the title favourites and were heavily-fancied to beat the Irish.

Captain Jos Buttler had no excuses and said England needed to feel the pain of defeat after their dismal performance.



He demanded a reaction for their next clash — a blockbuster against hosts and defending champions Australia in

Melbourne on Friday.

LET IT HURT, SAYS BUTLER
"I think we should let it hurt,

to be honest," said Buttler, who is in charge of England for the first time at a major tournament following the retirement of Eoin Morgan this year.

"Days like today are really, really disappointing and you've got to feel that.

"We have got to reflect and we have to do it quickly with another game very soon, but today should hurt," said Buttler who was out for a duck off the second ball of England's innings.

"I expect a reaction from the team."

New Zealand won their tournament opener against Australia last week and next face Sri Lanka in Sydney on Saturday.

Black Caps coach Gary Stead said Ireland's win showed there was no room for complacency.

"They are making a habit when you look at world tournaments. It's not the first win they have had against a major nation," he said.

Ireland also hammered the West Indies by nine wickets in the first round last week to knock out the two-time former champions and famously beat England in the 2011 50-over World Cup when

they chased down a mammoth 328 to win.

"They are a dangerous team," said Stead, whose team face the Irish in their final Group 1 game on November 4. "It's great for world cricket."

'ITS ALL TO PLAY FOR'

Ireland face Afghanistan next on Friday at the MCG in the first match of another double-header before the Ashes foes go head-to-head later in the evening.

"It's all to play for," said Afghanistan coach and former England batsman Jonathan Trott.

Trott denied that his side had "dodged a bullet" by avoiding an in-form New Zealand side, who romped past Australia by 89 runs in their opening match.

"It would have been nice to play New Zealand and the guys to get the experience of playing at the MCG, and hopefully getting a win," said Trott.

"It would have been nice to have got those points, like Ireland. To be saying it's a bullet dodged is a bit of disservice to the guys in my changing room," the Afghanistan coach added. — AFP

With Pakistan opener in the books, India focus on Dutch



Bowling coach Paras Mhambrey was impressed with Arshdeep Singh's performance.

SYDNEY: India are able to breathe a bit easier after getting their T20 World Cup opener against Pakistan out of the way but bowling coach Paras Mhambrey says there is no danger of letting the intensity drop for their Super 12 match against the Netherlands.

The tournament's most anticipated match-up between arch-rivals India and Pakistan lived up to its billing on Sunday, delivering a thriller which India won thanks to the genius of Virat Kohli. Mhambrey told reporters India had turned the page on that victory and were focused

on Thursday's game against the Dutch, who they will meet for the first time in this format.

"We knew the hype around it. We knew it's always going to be a high intensity and big clash," he said on Wednesday.

"Having such games done and dusted in the first phase itself, it's good.

"Had it been the third or fourth game, it could have some effect on the following games.

"Having this game out of our group, it's good."

The Netherlands are not expected to present inaugural

champions India with as many problems as Pakistan did but Mhambrey said they would not take the minnows lightly.

"Every game from here is important," the former India bowler said.

"Every team that's part of the tournament has worked its way up, has done something good and that's the reason they are here, and we take it like that."

Kohli proved his class with one of the greatest T20 knocks on Sunday but Arshdeep Singh was the unsung hero, his 3-32 including the prized wickets of

Pakistan skipper Babar Azam and their batting lynchpin Mohammad Rizwan. Mhambrey was impressed by the left-arm seamer's ability to cope with the pressure of bowling in the powerplay and death overs.

"The composure he's shown, the clarity of thought process that he's shown, he's a great kid," Mhambrey said.

"(His) ability to handle pressure is phenomenal and I am not really surprised the way he has bowled in the first game.

"We have a lot of confidence in him, and he has a good future for us." — Reuters

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MAISARAH

Oman records lowest inflation rate in GCC

JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

The Sultanate of Oman recorded the lowest inflation rate in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries during September 2022. The inflation rate in Oman increased by 2.4 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) during September 2022, according to National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). Meanwhile, Kuwait witnessed an increase inflation rate of 4.1 per cent y-o-y mainly driven by education price index, followed by food and beverage price index. Inflation is expected to continue to slow down in Kuwait due to the decrease of the global food prices. Saudi Arabia's inflation rate recorded an increase of 3.1 per cent y-o-y in September 2022 — its highest monthly y-o-y rate change since June 2021. On the other hand, the UAE's Central Bank forecasted 5.6 per cent inflation rate rise for the Emirates during 2022 — the country's highest rate in six years. As a result of the rising cost of living attributed to inflation, the Emirati population have started to cut back on spending in certain necessities such as clothes and petrol.



Qatar's inflation rate hit the highest in nine months after it increased by 6 per cent y-o-y during September 2022. Qatar's inflation growth during the month was mainly driven by recreation and culture sector which registered a 35.6-per cent y-o-y rise as the country makes final preparations to host the Fifa World Cup. The inflation rate in Bahrain grew at the highest monthly rate in nearly ten years recording 4 per cent y-o-y increase during August 2022, as per latest report by Kamco Invest. The moderate growth of inflation rates in Oman is mainly due to the increase in prices of

major commodity categories. Prices in the education category increased by 5.1 per cent y-o-y, while prices of food and non-alcoholic beverages increased by 5 per cent during the same period. In addition, prices for the transportation category increased by 3.1 per cent during the month while the culture and entertainment group prices increased by only 1.6 per cent during September 2022. Despite the turmoil in global supply chains against the backdrop of the continued implementation of some measures related to the Covid-19 pandemic at an intermittent pace in some countries such as China, and other international crises such as the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which led to an increase in the prices of basic commodities such as foodstuffs, Oman succeeded in containing inflation in line with the target level of the five-year development plan set at 2.8 per cent. The Omani government has taken some proactive measures such as capping monthly fuel price hikes and ensuring direct supplies of food to curb inflation at acceptable levels during the year, the report added.

Oman to offer 47-year land concessions for green hydrogen projects

Key incentive: Land lease starts with a floor price of 20 baisas/sq metre, waivable during the project development phase

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 26

Developers of green hydrogen projects in the Sultanate of Oman will be eligible for land concessions spanning 47 years, among other incentives, a key official of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals has stated. Eng Abdulaziz al Shidhani (pictured), Director-General Renewable Energy and Hydrogen, noted that land allocations – covering blocks of around 320 sq kilometres apiece – will be based on a competitive bidding system, registrations for which opened earlier this week. “What are we providing for investors is a (concession) for a duration of 47 years from the signing of the project development agreement and sub-usufruct award,” said Eng Al Shidhani. “Land lease starts with a floor of 20 baisas per square metre, which ultimately will be based on



THE SCOPE OF GREEN HYDROGEN PROJECTS COVERS INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT ENCOMPASSING RENEWABLES GENERATION, GREEN HYDROGEN PRODUCTION, DERIVATIVES CONVERSION, AND OFFTAKE OF OUTPUT.

a competitive bidding process,” he stated, adding that the already reduced land fees will be further discounted during the development stages by up to 100 per cent. Speaking at a media briefing earlier this week, the official pointed out that the Omani government, for its part, will be entitled to receive base royalties (starting from 5 per cent in kind) and surplus royalties. In addition, a 20-per cent stake in the project must be offered to a government-owned entity – presently OQ, the state-owned

integrated global energy group. Furthermore, project developers have to bear applicable corporate taxes, he said. Significantly, the scope of green hydrogen projects covers integrated development encompassing renewables generation, green hydrogen production, derivatives conversion, and offtake of output. Common infrastructure, such as pipelines for water and hydrogen, will be tendered out separately. The government, for its part, is not committed to offtaking any

electricity output from the project, primarily because it has its own strategy to procure new renewables capacity to meet the country's energy requirements, he said. The official stressed that land allocations will only be made to serious developers. “Oman is looking for real investors; those who will not be utilising the allocated land within a specific timeframe for their intended project will have the land taken away from them.” While the Ministry of Energy and Minerals will play the role of regulator and policymaker for the new green hydrogen industry, its implementation will be closely orchestrated by Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom), the new state-owned entity established as a subsidiary of Energy Development Oman (EDO). “Hydrom will oversee the entire operation – managing the common infrastructure, the bidding process, and so on, while also coordinating the offtake between the investors. It will also oversee coordination between the investors and utilities, such as the existing electricity and water companies, the gas network, and the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones,” he added.

RO 18.2 million contract awarded for new Central Public Health Lab



QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 26

A contract award for the construction of a new Central Public Health Laboratory for the Ministry of Health has gone to well-known Omani contractor Galfar Engineering & Contracting SAOG. The latter announced in a filing to the Capital Market Authority (CMA) on Wednesday that it received the contract valued at RO 18.2 million. The facility will come up at Al Khoudh in the Wilayat of Seeb in Muscat Governorate. The project construction phase is about

24 months. As previously revealed by the Ministry of Health, the Central Public Health Laboratory will serve as an integrated complex of laboratories featuring the latest equipment and testing technologies. The new complex will be designed and equipped for a state-of-the-art Level 3 safety lab testing capabilities for tuberculosis and other highly infectious viral diseases, a genetic sequencing department, and other departments that will be developed as a neonatal screening department for metabolic diseases.

Bank Muscat offers internship opportunities to over 280 Omani students in 2022

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing support and commitment to the development of national human resources, Bank Muscat hosted over 280 students from various colleges and universities in the Sultanate of Oman as part of its internship programme in 2022.

During the internship period, the students worked closely with managers in different departments and branches of the bank. The training, which was designed in sync with the academic programmes pursued by students, was aimed at providing relevant work experience that will help them in their respective careers in the future.

The students were thus able to familiarise themselves with various topics including banking, finance, audit and IT as well as branch operations across the Sultanate of Oman. Thanks to the training, they were able to gain broad experience and a deeper understanding of Bank Muscat's operations and the financial services sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

Speaking about the importance of internships in the overall development of Oman's human resources, Said bin Salim al Aufi, General Manager — Human Resources and Administration,



Bank Muscat said: “The bank is pleased to provide relevant internship opportunities to a large number of students every year. By providing exposure to a dynamic corporate environment, the trainees are able to apply their theoretical knowledge to the real world of banking and finance. As Oman's leading financial

services provider, Bank Muscat is committed to the development of national human resources. We consider it a privilege to play a key role in the development of Omani talent, and are committed to investing in constantly improving the skills and expertise of national human resources.”

Reflecting on the training opportunities, a number of trainees spoke about the importance of such opportunities and the practical experience they gained along the way.

Adnan bin Khalfan al Shanfari, a trainee at Azaiba branch, said: “My training at Bank Muscat was very enriching at a personal level.

I interned in the role of a service ambassador where I welcomed customers coming to the branch and offered them assistance based on their needs and guided them to the right focal points based on the service they required after verifying all the required documents.

On a personal level, I learned from this experience how to serve customers and how to deal with them, professionally meet their needs, and also manage my time and efforts so as to serve them in the best possible manner.”

Raeda bint Hamoud al Busaidiyah, a trainee at Al Maabala branch, said: “The training experience I had at Bank Muscat was very helpful and enriching, as I was able to develop my abilities and skills when dealing with customers and providing service to them. This experience gave me an opportunity to identify my strong qualities and develop them through practice. This helped me to enhance my self-confidence when providing service to customers.” She added that the support and encouragement she received from branch employees made her internship experience unforgettable. To enable the development of

human resources in all functions and levels, Bank Muscat provides relevant on-the-job training and learning opportunities on a continuous basis to its employees.

The bank's Jadara Academy conducts a large number of learning and development programmes in association with leading training institutes and through academic links with top universities and leading business schools.

Since the very beginning, Bank Muscat has adopted many innovative strategies to equip talented Omani nationals to take up leadership positions. In fact, with over 3,800 employees and about 95 per cent Omanisation, the bank is a pioneer in developing Omani talent.

As a result of its strong HR processes and abundant learning and development opportunities for employees, most of its senior and middle management have been promoted from within the bank's ranks.

It must also be noted in this regard that as part of its strategic plan, the bank continually creates a pipeline of leaders not just for the bank, but also to contribute to the overall growth and development of the nation.

SOHAR hosts service provider meeting



SUHAR: SOHAR Port and Freezone recently brought together all port and marine service providers with their seafarers at the service jetty to show the port's gratitude for their 24/7 support to the Port operations and marine services.

Businesses were represented from a diverse range of roles including towage, linesmen, supply boats, diving, duty free shop etc. Batti al Shibli (pictured), Harbour Master of SOHAR Port, said, “Our Port and Marine Service Providers are vital to maintaining the high standards of day-to-day operation of the port and freezone. We are very pleased to take this opportunity to engage our stakeholders in the growth of SOHAR Port and Freezone.”

For more information about the opportunities and advantages available at SOHAR Port and Freezone, please visit soharporthandfreezone.com.

ICEM organises first graduation ceremony since 2019



MUSCAT: Amidst festive and joyful atmospheres, HH Sayyidah Meyyan bint Shihab al Said, sponsored the 17th annual graduation ceremony of International College of Engineering and Management (ICEM).

Three classes of future builders, being classes of 2019/2020, 2020/2021 and 2021/2022, graduated this time. Events of the ceremony were held in Madinat Al Erfan City Theatre at OMAN Convention and Exhibition Centre. During that ceremony, the sponsor Sayyidah, jointly with dean of the college, Dr Yingkui Zhao, delivered graduation certificates of the 420 male and female students who studied the various majors of ICEM, including bachelor, advanced diploma and university diploma certificates.

ICEM safeguards unique educational atmosphere for its students. It was renowned with its unique majors throughout the region. Such majors including engineering and management.

ICEM provides study of mechanical engineering in well excavation, fire safety engineering and management, and facilities management and building projects management.

Since 1998, ICEM has prepared its educational programmes in academic partnership with University of Central Lancashire. In 2019, ICEM has become member of Salamati Group, which is the first educational group in the Sultanate of Oman to be concerned with publishing and development of health and safety culture.

The ceremony was attended by their highnesses and excellencies, number of undersecretaries of state and heads of government authorities in the State, in addition to Haitham Makki, Chairman of Salamati Group and Affan al Akhzami, CEO of the Group, and ICEM members of the board of directors and board of trustees.

University of Central Lancashire was represented by Dr Michael Fernando, Dean

of the Faculty of Engineering and Dr Paul Rowe, Director of International Partnerships.

The speeches delivered during the ceremony included welcome note delivered by Professor Graham Badwin, Vice President of University of Central Lancashire, Dr Chao, Dean of ICEM, and another speech delivered by Dr Fernando. Student Shamsa al Maamari delivered the graduates speech. Student Thwiny al Khalidi delivered speech in the name of international students.

Most speeches focused on the solidity of graduates and praised their diligent work and brilliant achievements. At the end of the ceremony, Haitham Makki presented memorial shield to HH Sayyidah Meyyan bint Shihab al Said.

“ICEM adopts innovation in line with the knowledge-based research and studies to promote distinction in postgraduate and specialised studies in the Sultanate of Oman in line with Oman Vision 2040”, he said.

Bank Nizwa supports UTAS students for achieving academic excellence

MUSCAT: Furthering its commitment to effectively support and enhance the development of Omani education sector, Bank Nizwa, the leading and most trusted Islamic bank in the Sultanate of Oman, sponsored an event honouring student from the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (Nizwa) for achieving academic excellence and outstanding performance in the academic year (2021/2022).

The celebration was held under the auspices of Ali bin Mohamed al Busaidy, Wali of Wilayat Al Jabal Al Akhdhar at the university's headquarters to recognise the achievement of more than 200 outstanding students and encourage them to continue excellence and success.

HH Sayyidah Wisam bint Jaifer bin Salim al Said, Head of Marketing and Corporate Communications at Bank Nizwa, said: “Such event serves as an ideal



platform to meet and interact with the youth of Oman, while encouraging them toward achieving more progress and prosperity among the community. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate students of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences for achieving the outstanding performance and academic excellence, wishing them to achieve further success at the personal and academic grounds.

bp Oman, Outward Bound Oman launch ‘Build your Resilience’ programme

MUSCAT: In partnership with bp Oman, Outward Bound Oman held a ceremony to launch the ‘Build Your Resilience’ programme, under the auspices of HH Dr Mona bint Fahd al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University. The programme aims to support the mental wellbeing and resilience of 1,000 young Omanis aged 18 to 30 in areas affected by Cyclone Shaheen, primarily in North and South Al Batinah.

The programme includes 50 indoor courses for Omani youth which will be held at the Outward Bound Oman Muscat Centre. The courses will enhance participants' soft skills, interpersonal skills and capabilities. It also offers a safe environment to discuss mental wellbeing and share advice to achieving personal and professional success.



Mohamed al Zadjali, Chief Operating Officer at Outward Bound Oman, added: “Since the launch of bp Oman's social investment programme, bp Oman have recognised the importance of investing in youth, and as such have been a tremendous supporter of Outward Bound. Our partnership with them has already seen several hundred talented young Omanis undergo life-changing courses and we hope this programme will continue to do the same.”

Ibrahim al Hinai, bp Oman's Social Investment Specialist, commented: “Supporting the mental wellbeing of people and communities is so important to us at bp. Last year's cyclone impacted people's belongings and homes, which in turn, has affected the mental health of some people in the community. We are delighted to partner with Outward Bound Oman on this initiative to deliver on our aim of building resilience and a more positive mindset for affected youth.”



Key domain operators group meets in Muscat



QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 26

The Organisation of Asia Pacific Top Level Domains (APTLD) began its 82nd meeting in the Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday, October 26, 2022. The two-day meeting is being attended by a large number of specialists, academics and companies from different countries. Discussions include issues related to domain names and the Internet, technological and operational challenges for domain name registries, enhancement of skills, exchange of information among Member States, and topics that affect the stability of the Internet.

The meeting opened with a welcome address by Ai-Chen Lu, Chairperson of the Asia Pacific Top-Up Domain Operators Organization, to all attendees, who also thanked the authority for its active role in facilitating the implementation of the meeting.

Omar bin Abdullah al Qatbi, Executive Vice-President of the Telecommunications Regulatory Sector at the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), opened his speech by welcoming all attendees, stressing the importance of these meetings because of their impact on the process of transferring knowledge and exchanging experiences. He talked about the role of

the TRA in regulating the telecommunications and postal sectors and the sector's contribution to achieving the goals of Oman's Vision 2040.

The meeting included a review of the Sultanate of Oman's experience in managing and regulating Omani domain names, presented by Eng Saif bin Saeed al Ghafri, Director of the Internet Domain Names Department at the TRA.

It reviewed the latest developments in the organisation, the most important of which is the increase in the number of members, and knowledge transfer and training in the fields of Internet domain names.

Some member states presented their experiences in this field. They explored ways to update and develop the domain name systems of countries, and how to maintain the security of these systems and ensure their stability. The latest technology in the DNS backup system was also reviewed.

The meeting witnessed the participation of some private international organisations such as RIPE NCC and ICANN in presenting the latest updates related to their work in this field. The Organisation of Asia Pacific Top Level Domain Operators (APTLD) holds its meeting twice a year, with each meeting in a specific country.

Tejarah Talks explores economic impact of art and culture

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 26

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) will hold its sixth session of Tejarah Talks 7:30pm, on Wednesday, November 2. Entitled "Gen Z and the Creative Industries", the event will be held at the Omantel Headquarters in Airports Heights.

Organised in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sports & Youth, Oman Business Forum and generously supported by HSBC, SOHAR Port & Freezone, Omantel and Oman FM, the Tejarah Talks panel line-up includes HH Sayyid Dr Adham al Said, Founder & CEO, The Firm (Moderator); Dr Mona Ismail, Dean, Scientific College of Design; Dr Abdulaziz al Ghareebi, Assistant Professor, University of Technology & Applied Sciences; Samah al Ansari, Founder, Studio Sein; and Maryam al Kharbooshi, Director, Cultural Identity Department, Ministry of Culture, Sports & Youth.

Highlighting the part Gen Z and the creative industries already play in Oman's diversifying and ambitious economy and their potential to make a significant contribution to the goals of Oman Vision 2040, MoCIIP's OBF & PPP Director, Maymouna al Adawi commented: "It's often said art feeds the soul, but culture and the arts also fuel the economy.

The creative industries



— architecture, advertising, broadcasting, film, fashion, publishing, software, the performing arts and arts-related retail — play a key role in enhancing a country's profile and international reputation and its attractiveness to new business, residents, visitors and foreign investment."

She continued: "According to Unesco, the creative industries generate over \$2 trillion a year, 3 per cent of global GDP. They employ in excess of 30 million people – 1 per cent of the planet's active population. And incredible as it might seem, the sector's revenues exceed those of telecom services and employ more people than the car industry of Europe, Japan and the US combined — 30

million jobs versus 25 million."

The MoCIIP Director went on to point out that successful countries depend on a critical mass of creative professionals in areas such as the arts, IT and education, noting: "In fact, there's a growing body of evidence that suggests thoughtful investment in the creative industries generate significant economic benefits. The argument runs that if a country is vibrant culturally, then this will serve as a magnet to attract business, talent and investment.

In fact, if we want to be a nation of innovators and entrepreneurs – developing new products, changing how people shop and access public services and finding efficiencies in manufacturing – then we need to be creative.

I am sure this is something that will be covered during the Tejarah Talks discussions and deliberations along with a variety of other relevant issues." With a firm focus on Oman's current and future business, export and investment environment, Tejarah Talks is a series of informal, interactive evening discussions that brings together some of Oman's most inspirational and innovative thinkers to share their stories, insights and ideas with an enthusiastic crowd. It is a platform for positive interaction.

Tejarah Talks is free-of-charge and open to everyone. To reserve your seat at "Gen Z and the Creative Industries" email your name and mobile number to: TT@tejarah.gov.om

Tethys Oil produces 900,491 oil barrels in Q3

JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

Tethys Oil, a Swedish oil company which holds interests in the Sultanate of Oman's Blocks 3 and 4, Block 49, Block 56 and Block 58, announces that its share of production from Blocks 3&4 during the third quarter of 2022, before government take, amounted to 900,491 barrels of oil, corresponding to 9,788 barrels of oil per day (bpd).

The net entitlement, Tethys Oil's share of production after government take, amounted to 378,742 barrels of oil, corresponding to 42 per cent of the total production.

A total of 420,474 barrels of oil were sold in the quarter with an achieved oil price of \$107.2 per barrel. Net entitlement is the share of production available for sale by Tethys Oil and is calculated monthly in accordance with the terms of the Exploration and Production Sharing

Agreement (EPSA) for Blocks 3&4.

The net entitlement will vary depending upon the level of production, oil price and recoverable costs incurred during the period. The oil sales of 420,474 barrels in the third quarter 2022 reflects the July, August and September lifting nominations as well as the June nomination which was lifted in early July.

Consequently, the Q3 2022 achieved oil price reflects the Official Selling Price (OSP) of June, July, August and September 2022.

Competition heats up for Chamber elections



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

For the first time, three former presidents of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry have applied for membership in the chamber's board of directors for the period 2022-2026.

Adding to the electoral competition this time around is the presence of other well-known personalities in the business and other institutions and companies in the private sector.

It follows the announcement of the Supervising Elections Committee, opening of the door to candidates.

Officials at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, which is supervising the chamber's elections, report that a work plan for the electoral process has been drawn up after the publication of the preliminary list of registered voters.

During the upcoming period, the sub-committees for the elections will be formed to supervise their work, determine the electronic voting mechanism, and carry out all the necessary preparations for the electoral process.

The Chamber's upcoming elections this time are characterised by the fact that some conditions have been set for board membership. The applicant must be an Omani, hold a bachelor's degree, or have practical experience in doing business in the private sector for a period of not less than 10 years.

They should be not less than 30 years of age, and must have been a member of the Chamber for a period of not less than 5 years. A good CV and reputation is a must.

Additionally, candidates should not be employees of any units of the state's administrative

apparatus, or a paid worker in private sector institutions within Oman or abroad, with the exception of the CEOs of public shareholding companies who are candidates for membership of the Board.

The elections are also distinguished this time in that there will be 5 members representing the Governorate of Muscat, which is home to thousands of institutions and commercial companies registered with the Chamber.

In addition, 5 members will represent each of the Chamber's branches in the governorates. A further 5 members will represent public shareholding companies in the Muscat Stock Exchange, while another member will represent the foreign investor community.

The committee supervising the upcoming elections has called on all companies and commercial

establishments to speed up the updating of their data to ensure that voters exercise their right to select their candidates for council membership.

Everyone is keen to choose the most efficient representative who can achieve their commercial interests, thereby helping energise commercial and industrial activities, promote economic development, and achieve the goals of Oman's 2040 Vision, especially in the field of economic diversification.

Today, there are more than 300,000 commercial establishments registered, although perhaps half of them operate through the hidden trade phenomenon or do not have any commercial activity based on their specific registrations. The authorities have been working to address these issues given their potential to harm the Omani economy.

Oil prices stable as rising US crude stocks balance supply concerns

LONDON: Oil prices were broadly stable on Wednesday, moving in and out of negative territory after industry data showed US crude stockpiles rose more than expected last week, though supply concerns and a weaker dollar gave support.

Brent crude futures for December were up 12 cents, or 0.1 per cent, at \$93.64 a barrel. US West Texas Intermediate crude futures for December were up 37 cents, or 0.4 per cent, at \$85.69 a barrel. A weaker US dollar sent a bullish signal, making oil cheaper for holders of other currencies.

But US crude inventories rose by about 4.5 million barrels in the week ended October 21, according to market sources citing figures from the American Petroleum Institute, an industry group, above expectations from five analysts. — Reuters

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World Hip hop dance contest to be launched in Oman

Thinking of attempting such competition at the world level, was like a dream and reaching to the platform was like a dream come true," said Nadeem Al Balushi, the partner, Kings United Dance Academy, Muscat whose team went to take part in world HHI championship 2022 in August... **P20**

A Chinese American's tale of boom and bust

By Bayan al Hadhrami

'TYPICAL AMERICAN', first published in 1991 by the second generation Chinese American immigrant author Gish Jen, tells the story of a Chinese family that immigrated to the USA in the midst of communist intervention in China. The novel, based in the 1940s, illustrates the struggle Chinese Americans endured at the time, as the conflict intensified in China, the more persecuted and oppressed was the minority

group in the USA. Gish Jen through this novel introduces to her readers the harsh realities of immigration and assimilation. Through her characters, Ralph Chang, his wife Helen and sister Theresa, indulges the reader in a narrative of struggle, love, loss and cultural misunderstanding.

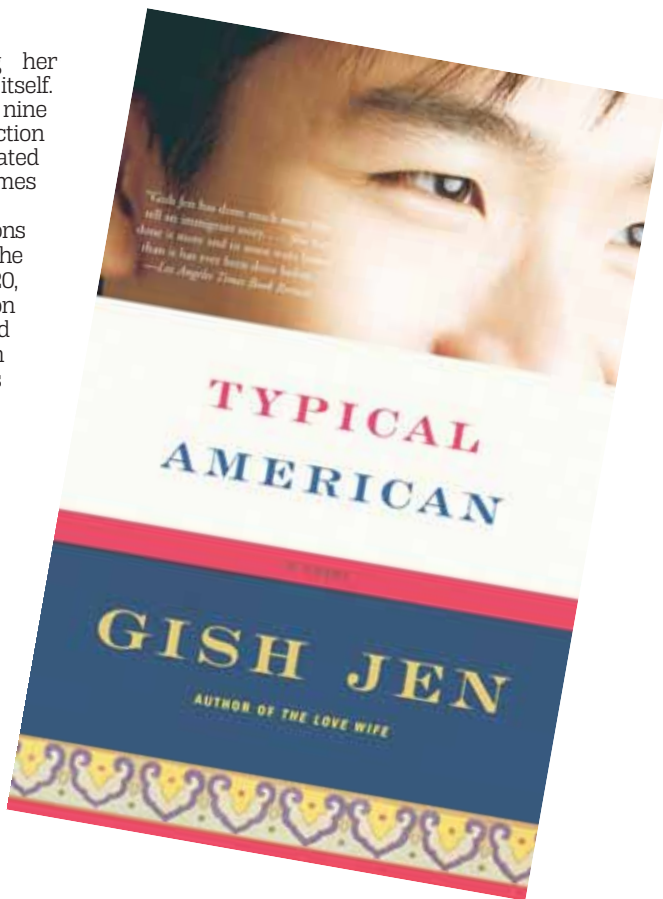
The Chang family, while initially struggling to fit in the American community, slowly navigates its way and shifts its mindset from a traditional Chinese to that of a typical American. While Ralph Chang's assimilation becomes evident in his chase of the American dream of wealth and success, his wife Helen gradually finds a voice of her

own and grows opinionated, and Theresa, in her search for love and acceptance, adopts new ideals and values. The author also paves the way through this novel to a discussion on the intergenerational dynamics of an immigrant household. As Ralph and Helen raise their two daughters, Callie and Mona, they discuss what language they should teach their daughters first and what cultural values they should raise their daughters upon. This narrative inspires Gish Jen's later novel 'Mona in the Promised Land', in which cultural identities clash, as Mona, a Chinese American, converts to Judaism. Despite Gish Jen's work representing such complex themes and issues, she fills her work with much irony, engaging her readers through thought-provoking humour. The comic personality of Ralph delivers much of the humour and irony in the novel 'Typical American' and alongside Jen's brilliant dialogues, descriptions and plot the work is thoroughly amusing and entertaining.

Additionally, 'Typical American', Jen's debut novel, was nominated for the National Book Critics' Circle Award, and marks the beginning of Jen's successful career as a writer. Gish Jen, through her writing, contributed immensely to her Chinese American community. By spreading awareness and overcoming misconceptions resulting in prejudice and

racism, Jen is helping her community stand up for itself. She had so far published nine works of fiction and non-fiction and had been nominated and awarded several times throughout her career.

Her latest publications include; the novel 'The Resisters', released 2020, and the short story collection 'Thank you, Nixon', published in 2022, both starring Asian American characters making their way through a life of prejudice and misconception, the latter particularly inspired by the Covid-19 pandemic. Gish Jen continues to speak on behalf of her Asian American community, shouldering the responsibility of raising awareness about her community's struggles that had stretched from WW2 to this day.

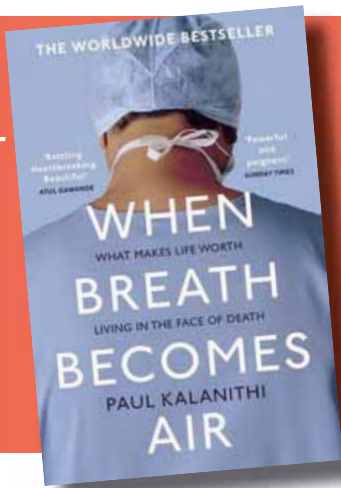


READ

WHEN BREATH BECOMES AIR

BY PAUL KALANITHI

An autobiographical account of his experience with Stage IV lung cancer. Part memoir, part guidebook, and part philosophical investigation, the book is the story of his life, his work,



LIFESTYLE

A worker sorts broken glass bangles to be reused at a bangle factory in Firozabad. The Indian industrial town of Firozabad has been making glass bangles for more than 200 years, supplying millions of the ornamental bands



WEATHER

A leaf covered with hoarfrost in the garden outside Moscow early morning, as the air temperatures in the Russian capital dropped below zero during the night.



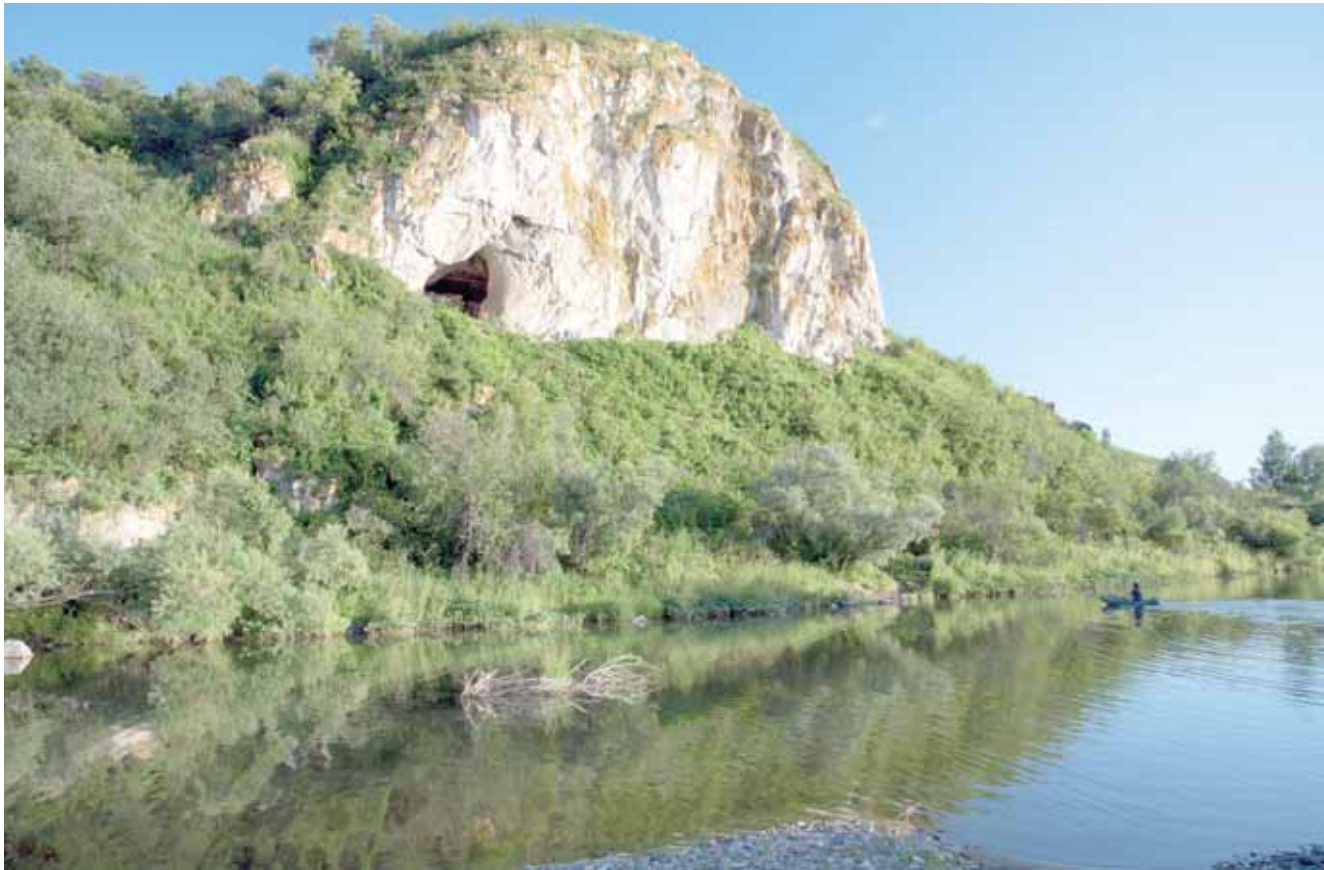


First Known Family of Neanderthals Found in Russian Cave

ANALYSING FOSSILS from a cave in Russia, scientists have found the first known Neanderthal family: a father, his teenage daughter and others who were probably close cousins. The findings, published on Wednesday in the journal *Nature*, painted a tragic picture of our extinct relatives, who roamed Eurasia tens of thousands of years ago. The family, part of a band of 11 Neanderthals found together in the cave,

routine," said Pääbo, a director at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany. "It has been an amazing journey." For his first study of Neanderthal DNA in 1997, Pääbo and his colleagues drilled into a skull cap discovered in 1856 in a German quarry. Over the next few years, they gathered more DNA from other museum specimens, collecting hints about the evolution of Neanderthals and

may have come to Chagyrskaya to hunt bison that migrated each year to graze on the nearby grasslands. In 2020, Pääbo and his colleagues published the first DNA findings from Chagyrskaya: a full genome collected from a Neanderthal woman's finger bone. Her genes showed that she was more closely related to Neanderthals more than 3,000 miles away in Croatia than those just 65 miles away in another



most likely died together, scientists said, possibly from starvation. The study was carried out by a team of researchers including Svante Pääbo, a Swedish geneticist who for 25 years has been uncovering the secrets of Neanderthals, from extracting their DNA from cave floor dirt to replicating their brain cells. He won the Nobel Prize this month for his efforts. "I would not have thought we would be able to detect a father and daughter from bone fragments, or Neanderthal DNA in cave sediments, or any other of the things that are now becoming almost

their links with living humans. Eventually, Pääbo and his collaborators dug up enough ancient DNA to reconstruct the entire Neanderthal genome. The new discovery came from a Siberian cave called Chagyrskaya. Paleoanthropologists with the Russian Academy of Sciences began digging there in 2007, unearthing fragments of Neanderthal bones and teeth. Researchers have also found 90,000 stone tools in the cave, along with butchered bison bones. The cave may have served as a seasonal home for the Neanderthals. They

cave known as Denisova. That kinship suggests that the Neanderthals in Siberia did not belong to a single population. They expanded east from Europe at least twice — first to Denisova, then tens of thousands of years later to Chagyrskaya. Pääbo's team continued testing other Neanderthal fossils from the cave. They hit a genetic mother lode, ending up with DNA from 11 individuals: six adults and five children. The fossils — along with the stone tools and bison bones — all rested in the same layer of sediment in the cave. "Archaeologists call this a 'short

occupation,'" said Laurits Skov, a post-doctoral researcher at the University of California, Berkeley, who was a co-author of the new study. In other words, the bones were all trapped in this layer of dirt within a relatively short span of time, geologically speaking. "But 'short' here means a couple thousand years or less." Still, Skov thinks that the 11 Neanderthals all lived around the same time because many of them were close relatives. To look for kinship, Skov and his colleagues scanned the DNA of the fossils for tiny variations. Two of the fossils shared enough variations that they had to be first-degree relatives. One came from a broken vertebra that appeared to belong to an adult male. The other came from a tooth that seemed to come from a teenage female. If these estimated ages were accurate, then the specimens could have come from siblings, or from a father and his daughter. DNA from the fossils allowed researchers to pin down the relationship more precisely. The scientists took advantage of the fact that mothers pass down an extra set of genes to their children, called mitochondrial DNA. The Chagyrskaya man and the girl had different mitochondrial DNA, ruling out a sibling relationship. "So that means that we can prove that this was in fact a father and a daughter," Skov said. Other fossils offered hints of other familial relationships. The father proved to be a close relative of two other adult males at Chagyrskaya. And an adult woman and a boy also shared enough DNA that they were likely related. Skov said that the kinship of the Neanderthals suggested that they all died at once. If they had died at different times, that would mean the group would have returned to the same cave over many years to bury each member — a scenario Skov considers very unlikely. Researchers have found other evidence of Neanderthals dying in large numbers. In 2010, a team of researchers in Spain reported that a dozen Neanderthals perished around 49,000 years ago when a cave roof collapsed on them. Skov said there's no sign of such a disaster at Chagyrskaya. He speculated that the band's bison hunts failed one year, leading to starvation. None of the 11 Neanderthals at Chagyrskaya showed any genetic link to the Neanderthals of the Denisova cave. But Skov and his colleagues discovered a connection to a third cave nearby known as Okladnikov. Two Neanderthal fossils found at Okladnikov have genetic links to Chagyrskaya. Skov and his colleagues combined the 13 Neanderthals from the two caves to create a genetic profile of their entire population. In one analysis, they compared the genetic diversity of males and females. The researchers found that the Y chromosomes shared by the males were fairly similar. The mitochondrial DNA passed down from mothers to their children, on the other hand, was diverse. This pattern emerges in many human societies in which men tend to stay in the group where they were born and the women often move to new groups before having children. Skov and his colleagues concluded that among Neanderthals, it was the women who moved from band to band. "We estimate that between 60 to 100 per cent of women in any community actually come from other communities," Skov said. — **NYT**

MUSIC

Taylor Swift, 30-Something, Is Revising Her Own Love Stories

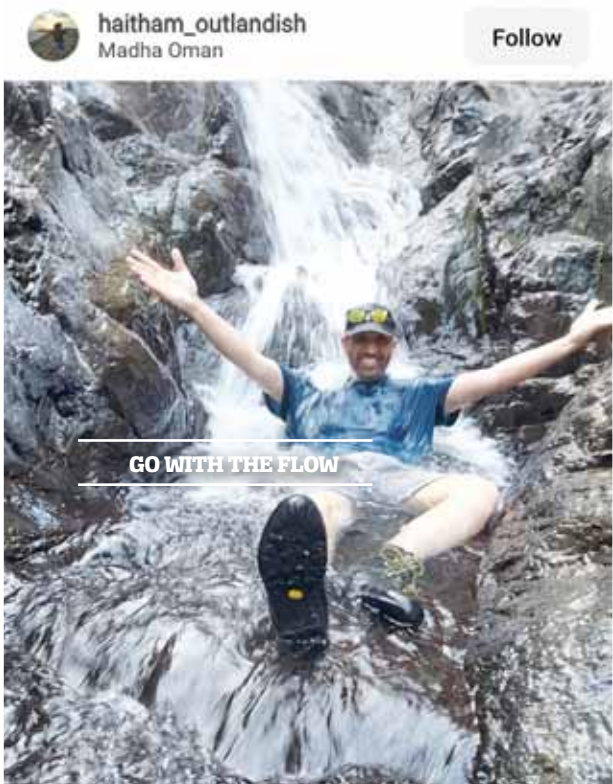


ON THE PLUCKY, bucolic "Love Story" — the first single from her 2008 sophomore album "Fearless," and one of the mainstream smashes that initiated her crossover from country to pop — then-19-year-old Taylor Swift felt emboldened to rewrite Shakespeare, imagining a happy ending for literature's most famously doomed couple. "Marry me, Juliet, you'll never have to be alone," Swift's Romeo proposes in the final chorus, as an accelerating tempo and sudden key change kick the song into an ecstatic gear. The answer to the couple's woes, "Love Story" earnestly suggests, and the only sacrament that could prevent their story from becoming a tragedy, is that trusted deus ex machina of Shakespeare's comedies: holy matrimony. Fourteen years later, on her moody 10th studio album, "Midnights," Swift doesn't sound quite so sure that Juliet should have accepted the offer. "Midnights" oozes with ambivalence, not just about the sorts of starry-eyed, fairy-tale endings Swift's earlier songs used to dream of, but also about the expectations and traditional timelines of adulthood writ large. "All they keep asking me is if I'm gonna be your bride," Swift sings on "Lavender Haze," the album's sleek introductory airing of grievances, adding, "The only kind of girl they see is a one-night or a wife." Later, on the smeary, pulsating "Midnight Rain," Swift revisits an old relationship seemingly thwarted by her professional ambition and ambivalence about settling down: "He wanted a bride, I was making my own name," she sings, Jack Antonoff's production pitching her voice down to a notably masculine register. At 32, Swift is still as much an object of tabloid scrutiny as when she was that 19-year-old ingenue. But the excessive energy that the gossip pages used to spend on who she was dating has now transformed into a fixation on whether she and her longtime partner, actor Joe Alwyn, are ready to get engaged, or have already gotten engaged, or have been secretly married for who knows how long. Swift's relationship with Alwyn has been her most resolutely private and also her longest, having now reached a duration that can invite unwanted speculation even for people who are not megawatt superstars but mere mortals trying to make it through a Thanksgiving dinner. Frustration with this line of questioning bubbles over throughout "Midnights." In both its self-referential, backward-glancing sound and its lyrical preoccupations, "Midnights" is a record about stasis, arrested development, and that liminal time between yesterday and tomorrow. "I've got this thing where I get older but just never wiser," Swift sings on the album's infectious, playfully self-flagellating lead single, "Anti-Hero." (In a sense, it's a sequel to her affecting 2019 song "The Archer," on which she plays pop star as Peter Pan and admits, "I never grew up, it's getting so old.") Since Swift is one of the most famous people on the planet, it's hard to consider much of anything about her life "relatable" — which poses an artistic challenge for a singer-songwriter who prizes connection with her audience. The divide between Swift and Swiftie felt most vast on 2010s blockbuster albums such as "1989" and "Reputation," on which Swift fixated on feuds with other celebrities and the minutiae of her public persona. "Midnights" is still largely about Being Taylor Swift, but the attention she brings to her own sense of inertia and discomfort allow her to tap into something larger than herself. Like Swift, much of her cohort is also putting off or forgoing supposedly transformative life events such as marriage and parenthood, or at least attempting to re-imagine what partnership and adulthood looks like in such a strange time to come of age. If "Folklore" was characterised as her pandemic album, "Midnights" feels like her are-we-ever-going-to-be-able-to-say-"post-pandemic" album, a work of exasperation and spiritual exhaustion. Here, Swift sounds more authentically like an ambassador of millennial unease than she has in some time. For all its evocations of stasis, though, "Midnights" does represent a maturation in Swift's perspective, particularly when it comes to depictions of other women. Unlike, say, the regrettable "Better Than Revenge" or even the campily catty "Bad Blood," the Swift of "Midnights" is no longer chastising other women from a suspiciously lofty position of moral superiority; she's pointing a finger at a culture that has enforced a different set of rules for her female peers or — occasionally to uncomfortably self-deprecating excess — she's blaming herself. "No one wanted to play with me as a little kid," she sings on the intricately composed finale, "Mastermind." "So I've been scheming like a criminal ever since." Crucially, though, she is also revising herself, revisiting those streamlined fairy tales she used to propagate and adding in all the doubts and complications she once left out — or wasn't yet aware of. Most effective is "You're On Your Own, Kid," which plays out like a letter to her younger self, or maybe one of those side-by-side Instagram posts that points out what parts of a too-perfect picture had been Photoshopped. "I hosted parties and starved my body like I'd be saved by a perfect kiss," Swift sings, presenting the supposedly innocent era of her early stardom with a new overlay of world-weariness and pain. As she suggests on the warm, contented ballad "Sweet Nothing," co-written with Alwyn under the pseudonym William Bowery, Swift now seems to have the love she so desperately believed would usher in her happy ending on her early classics such as "Teardrops on My Guitar" and "Love Story." But the brooding "Midnights" is also proof that love hasn't solved all her problems. The only thing that can help with that, she realises, at the exhilarating end of "You're On Your Own, Kid," is chasing the next song — even if it's just a more accurate rendering of a scene she has already set. That, though, is something of a flex. She used to rewrite Shakespeare. Now she rewrites Taylor Swift. — **NYT**



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AROUND THE WORLD

ART

Print of King's painting of Balmoral snapped up for more than £5,000



A PRINT OF A WATER colour of Balmoral castle in Scotland painted by King Charles III has been bought at auction for more than eight times its estimate.

Thought to be the first time a print by a reigning monarch has been sold at auction, a private British collector paid £5,738 on Thursday so they could own the print, number 18 of 100.

Hamish Wilson, curator of Bonhams' Scottish Home sale, said: "This charming print combined the King's passion for painting and his deep affec-



tion for Scotland."

"It acquired special resonance and appeal, of course, because of recent events and I am not surprised there was such keen bidding nor that it exceeded its estimate by so much."

Prints that Charles has done in the past have usually sold for between £400 and £600, which means the sale brought in more than eight times the top estimate.

The framed print of the Scottish castle, where Queen Elizabeth II's pent her final days earlier this year, is signed and dated "Charles 2001" in pencil and comes with a certificate of authenticity.

The print was reproduced from the a watercolour by the King, and on the certificate of authenticity it said: "As a painting subject, it poses many artistic challenges, not least because of the complexity of its design and the many towers, turrets and embellishments."

"This picture reveals HRH The Prince of Wales's fascination with the setting of the castle and its sense of place. He relates the skyline of the building with the rhythm of the trees and the mountains beyond, and contrasts the theatricality of the man-made with the excitement and drama of nature," Wilson explained. The lithograph is printed on paper made at St Cuthbert's Mill in Somerset and carries a special watermark.

Before the sale, staff at the auctioneer in Edinburgh said they had been "flabbergasted" by the interest shown in the print. — PA Media/dpa

DINING

Give Your Gnocchi the Shrimp Scampi Treatment



YOU COULD SAY that shrimp scampi, like "chai tea," is a dish so nice they named it twice. But really, it comes down to a mistranslation.

The word "scampi," in Italian, refers to a type of crustacean that's similar to a langoustine — resembling a tiny lobster and often sautéed in olive oil with garlic and wine. When immigrants from Italy arrived in the United States in the early 20th century, scampi weren't widely available, so they made the dish with local shrimp. Shrimp scampi was born.

So, translated, the dish is "shrimp shrimp" (just as chai tea translates to "tea tea"). But words and phrases evolve, and the word "scampi" in the United States now usually refers to the garlicky pan sauce the shrimp are cooked in.

All of this explains why, of the myriad scampi variations that exist, many don't contain any shrimp at all. (I'm looking at you, chicken, scallop and squash.)

I keep the shrimp in this scampi variation, and they, along with their heady scampi sauce, share the pan with pillows of potato gnocchi.

The gnocchi serve several purposes here. They round out the dish, giving it heft. They absorb the glorious pan sauce, eliminating the need for bread or spaghetti. And, because they're browned in the skillet before the shrimp are incorporated, they add a chewy-crisp texture that goes nicely with the juicy springiness of the shrimp.

You can use any premade potato gnocchi here — shelf-stable, frozen (and thawed) or refrigerated. Then, you can just toss them in the pan with some oil and let them sear

until they turn bronze in spots and mostly tender within.

I say "mostly tender" because the thing about prepared potato gnocchi (as opposed to fluffier homemade versions) is that they always stay a bit dense and pliable in the centre. To me, a person who adores springy matzo balls, bouncy mochi and the elasticity of the tapioca pearls in bubble tea, this is vastly appealing and the point of the dish. Light and airy, these are not.

But if you like a touch of chewiness, these deeply flavourful, garlicky dumplings and succulent shrimp, bathed in a buttery scampi sauce, are pleasing to eat and simple to make — a one-pan meal in under 30 minutes.

A dish that's half the work for double the flavour is worth saying twice, don't you think?

ONE-PAN SHRIMP SCAMPI WITH CRISPY GNOCCHI

By Melissa Clark
Yield: 3 to 4 servings
Total Time: 25 minutes

INGREDIENTS:

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for serving
1 pound gnocchi (fresh, frozen or shelf-stable)
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
4 garlic cloves, finely grated or minced
1/2 cup dry white wine (or clam juice, or broth)
Kosher salt (such as Diamond Crystal) and freshly ground black pepper
1/8 teaspoon red-pepper flakes, plus more for serving

1 pound large or extra-large shrimp, shelled (deveined, if you like)
1 lemon
1/2 cup chopped parsley

PREPARATION:

1. In a large, preferably non-stick skillet, heat 2 tablespoons oil over medium-high. Add gnocchi to the pan, breaking up any that are stuck together. Cook for 10 to 12 minutes, tossing every 1 to 2 minutes, so they get golden and crispy all over. Transfer to a bowl or plate.
2. In the same skillet over medium-high, add remaining 1 tablespoon oil and all of the butter, letting it melt for a few seconds. Add garlic and sauté until fragrant, 30 seconds to 1 minute. Add wine, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/4 teaspoon black pepper and all of the red-pepper flakes. Bring to a simmer, and let the wine reduce by half, about 2 minutes.
3. Add shrimp and sauté until they just start to turn pink, 2 to 3 minutes, depending on their size.
4. Return gnocchi to the pan and add another 1/4 teaspoon salt. Using a Microplane or other fine grater, grate the zest from the lemon into the pan. Add parsley, tossing well. If your pan looks dry, add a splash of water, 1 tablespoon at a time, tossing to combine, then remove pan from the heat.
5. Cut the naked lemon in two and squeeze in the juice from one half, gently tossing to combine. Taste and add more salt if you like. Cut the remaining lemon half into wedges for serving.
6. Top with more olive oil and more red-pepper flakes, if you'd like, and serve with lemon wedges on the side.

— NYT

A PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

Friendship and its miracles

WE ARE ALL aware of how people are most generous, joyful and amazing when talking to and about their friends. Perhaps the simplest and most visible force that forms and maintains friendships is spending time together and among themselves. It is not even surprising that it takes shape in places where people spend a lot of their time whether at work, school or even in their sporting activities. Sometimes this time builds up slowly, as it happens with two neighbours who live side by side and talk to each other daily. Some for twenty years!

Making friends can indeed be difficult, but there may be more opportunities than we think. And I may believe here that communication can come from anywhere and at any time! So you have to look for friendship in places you would never expect. Moreover, if I could tell there might be a new friend waiting in the comments section with an article you're reading! As much as we feel that our social networks are set up and stabilised, it's never too late to meet someone important to you and for the rest of your life.

Personally, I find the effort of coordinating (or even phone calls) the biggest barrier to seeing friends. Perhaps it is much easier when something is brought into your agenda and all you have to do is show up. Emphasising here that society has a place for friendships, but unfortunately, it is on the sidelines. Society is supposed to play a supportive role in work and the family and to design the lives of individuals so that true friendship plays the role that society hopes for with the solidarity of its people.

Here I was inspired by some of the people I spoke with at one point who imagined something different for themselves: friends who went to therapy together and whose struggle for justice was fueled by friendship. To mention the man who gave his kidney to his friend... Are there true friends who choose to love each other so radically every day? Perhaps what I'm talking about are ideals, it is impossible in our time to live up to a full level and life often gets in the way... but it certainly exists in our lives!

On the other hand, most true friends report that they don't see each other often, or that they don't talk as much as they want to. The truth and without a doubt I see here is that friendship does not always have to be about presence, it can also be about love that can overcome absence.

Yet absences don't have to last forever. There are elementary school friends who start meeting their former classmates again after a fifty-year reunion and even best friends who reconnect after someone decides to return a shirt or souvenir that was given to them twenty years ago.

In the end, I have always liked the concept of grace, that gift which is really profound. So when I mention grace here as the last and most important force in friendships, I mean it in two ways. The first is the forgiveness we offer to each other. The other is the space that creates connections which seems nothing short of miraculous.

Dr Yousuf Ali Al Mulla is a physician, medical innovator and writer.

art & life

Local Scene

f t i y @omanobserver

THURSDAY | OCTOBER 27 | 2022



World Hip hop dance championship to be launched in Oman



Lakshmi Kothaneth

Beaming with pride at 32nd spot in the world Ranking of World HIP Hop International dance (HHI) championship is the team of Kings United Dance Academy, Muscat consisting of Leandro Reyner, Rishab Gupta, Renessa Walder, Rezwin Geordi, Anaida Shokrekthoda, Shrika Shaji who performed and garnered attention and performed without any deductions which in itself is considered noteworthy.

According to the students it was an unbelievable experience to be in Phoenix, Arizona with so many international teams competing.

"We learnt so much just being there. We would take opportunity to practice anywhere even the car park. Once a group of basketball players saw us and they invited us to play in their court. They would take a break and let us practice dance," they said excitedly.

"Thinking of attempting such competition at the world level, was like a dream and reaching to the platform was like a dream come true," said Nadeem al Balushi, the partner, Kings United Dance Academy, Muscat whose team went to take part in world HHI championship 2022 in August.

It was in 2020 at the onset of the pandemic, the team submitted their application for taking part in the HHI held in USA. This was the time when lockdown started and they had to engage themselves in all constructive work which was possible remotely. The culture of remote working was possible during the lockdown and we were able to communicate with officials and share lot of credentials to become qualified. Thanks to the hard work, dedication and previous track of our Principal team of KINGS United India who appeared in the World championships 2012 and 2015.

"When Kings appeared for the first time, they could not register their presence but failure of the successful attempt created lot of buzz in the dancing industries and ABCD2 movie was filmed on our real life story," said Tejas Gupta, the Director of Kings United Dance Academy, Muscat. Our partner Suresh Mukund's character was played by actor Varun Dhavan in the film.

She added, "This movie gave us the courage and motivation to try again for the championships and in 2015, Team India appeared again and won Bronze for the country. This story is so inspiring that we have been thinking to live the same

dream for our team from Oman."

After three years of efforts, they managed to get green signal to appear in the World HIP HOP Championships 2022 and Royal Beast from Oman.

The team recollect, "This was just a beginning of our real hard work and struggle because getting the US visa was one of the most challenging part. We started practicing without thinking about Visa. The real challenge was to find a trainer who knows the HHI rules and regulations and then we found two times HHI participant Prashant Shinde from Kings INDIA team. He had appeared in both editions of HHI. We started clearing hurdles one by one and manage to get the trainer in Oman for entire month."

The team put in 350 plus hours of rehearsals, which saw injuries, but with the experience of the trainers the team was able to avoid any deductions during the actual competition which is considered remarkable.

"We thank the parents and our dear students for sharing the same passion and trusting us immensely," said Tejas adding, "We at the King United Dance School, Muscat having taught a pool of talent, have the best faculty of trainers who are not just

sufficient in teaching but are also well trained and experienced to teach anybody and age is not a limitation.

Our certification courses in hip hop, contemporary and many others clubbed with internal exams enable the students to gain confidence and train them to begin self choreographing in different styles. The certified trainers have themselves achieved heights on the various championships within and outside of India that adds value to their vision."

The training is bounded by rules and regulations of the HHI and as per their advices, they are expected to announce the plans for HHI in the Middle East region. To start with, HHI is planning to organise a rules and regulation workshop in Oman where team of experts will be coming from one of the HHI certified panel. There will be complete session where anyone can be part of this workshop and can gain the knowledge of HHI certification and can become the panel judge once qualified. After this, there will be Oman based HHI championships which will decide the selection of the next teams who would be taking part in world HHI championships in 2023 in USA.

