

HM greets Kenya President

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Dr William Ruto of the Republic of Kenya on his country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Ruto and the people of his country.



His Majesty hosts dinner on SAF Day



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, hosted a dinner at Al Barakah Palace on Monday evening on the occasion of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) Day.

The ceremony comes as a felicitation by His Majesty, the Supreme Commander, to all military formations and units of the Armed Forces on this glorious day. It symbolises his Royal recognition for their great dedication in performing the sacred duty to defend the homeland, protect its security and ensure its stability and safety.

It is a manifestation of the Sultan's Armed Forces' role in safeguarding the national achievements to boost Oman's renewed renaissance and retain its status as an oasis of peace and harmony under the inspiring leadership of His Majesty the Sultan. The ceremony was attended by some Royal family members, ministers, commanders of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and senior military and civil officers. **SEE ALSO P2**

Oman condemns Israeli actions in Gaza Strip

GENEVA: The Sultanate of Oman renewed its strong condemnation, in a statement by its Permanent Representative to the United Nations and international organisations at the special session held in Geneva at the headquarters of the World Health Organisation regarding health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, of targeting civilians, medical staff and health facilities, and assaulting ambulance convoys and not ensuring safe routes for them in accordance with what is dictated by relevant international laws.

In a speech delivered by Ambassador Idris bin Abdulrahman al Khanjari, the Sultanate of Oman expressed its thanks and appreciation to the WHO and its Director-General and to everyone who supported the holding of the special session.

The Sultanate of Oman also offered its sincere condolences to the families of the Palestinian martyrs and to the international community following the killing of a large number of WHO employees and other United Nations employees due to the ongoing aggression by the Israeli occupation forces against the Gaza Strip and other Palestinian cities, which claimed more than 23,000 innocent lives, most of them children, and severe injuries to about 46,000, according to latest statistics from the Euro-Mediterranean Centre.

The ambassador said that providing immediate support to the health sector in Gaza has become an urgent matter, as ignoring the needs of people with chronic diseases and those injured in war is similar to giving mass death sentence to thousands of innocents. — **ONA**

Budget surplus at RO 830m

MUSCAT: The State's General Budget registered a surplus of RO 830 million by the end of October 2023, compared to a surplus of RO 1,208 million achieved over the same period in 2022.

The state public revenue as at the end of October 2023 stood at RO 9,800 million, down by 17 per cent compared to RO 11,862 million registered over the same period in 2022, according to the Fiscal Performance Bulletin issued by the Ministry of Finance.

The bulletin indicated that at the end of October, net oil revenue amounted to RO 5,446 million, down by 12 per cent when compared to RO 6,193 million registered over the same period in 2022. The average oil price amounted to \$81 per barrel while average oil production reached to 1,053,000 barrels per day.

Net gas revenue at the end of October 2023 amounted to RO 1,734 million, comprising a decrease by 43 per cent when compared to RO 3,051 million registered over the same period in 2022. This is due to the deduction of gas purchase and transport expenses from total revenue collected from Integrated Gas Company.

By the end of October 2023, current revenue registered RO 2,608 million, up by RO 14 million when compared to an

amount of RO 2,594 million collected over the same period in 2022.

Further, public spending amounted to RO 8,970 million by the end of October 2023, constituting a fall by RO 1,684 million, i.e. 16 per cent compared to actual spending over the same period in 2022.

At the end of October 2023, current expenditure amounted to RO 6,872 million, down by RO 1,007 million when compared to an amount of RO 7,879 million registered over the same period in 2022.

GENERAL BUDGET

This is mainly due to the removal of gas purchase and transport expenses from the State's General Budget, which were transferred to Integrated Gas Company.

As far as development expenditure of civil ministries and government units is concerned, the amount reached RO 770 million by the end of October 2023, representing 86 per cent of total development spending, i.e. RO 900 million, allocated for 2023.

By the end of October, the total of contributions and other expenses amounted to RO 1,278 million, down by 16 per cent when compared to an amount of RO 1,527 million registered over the same period in 2022. — **ONA**

Peak of Geminid meteor shower on Thursday

MUSCAT: The skies of the Sultanate of Oman will on Thursday see the peak of a Geminid meteor shower, named after its source constellation "Gemini".

The spectacle will grow in full bloom on the night of Wednesday till the dawn of Thursday.

Ibrahim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Deputy Chairman of the Board of Directors of Oman Astronomical Society, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the month of December will see more astronomical showers.

The month of December is the best time of the year to watch celestial wonders due to the fact that the meteors meet dark nights devoid of moonlight, Al Mahrouqi added.

He noted that astronomical calculations indicate that the forthcoming meteor shower will thus form fireballs, an eye-catching scene in Oman skies and elsewhere in the world during this time of the year. — **ONA**



December will see more astronomical showers.



HM hosts dinner on Sultan's Armed Forces Day



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, the Supreme Commander, hosted a dinner at Al Barakah Palace on Monday evening on the occasion of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) Day. – ONA





Royal Army of Oman marks SAF Day

MUSCAT: The Royal Army of Oman (RAO) on Monday celebrated the Sultan's Armed Forces Day (SAF Day), which falls on December 11 every year.

The ceremony, which took place at Muaskar Al Murtafaa in the Governorate of Muscat, was held under the auspices of Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Governor of Muscat.

The event began with a military salute to the Governor of Muscat. The RAO band played the Royal Anthem, followed by episodes of the celebration. The chief guest and attendees saw examples of training exercises, military shows and various field skills that demonstrated competence and skill mastered by members of the RAO.

The attendees also watched an equestrian show and a tent-pegging show performed by the Sultan of Oman's Armoured Cavalry, followed by a free-fall show performed by a team from the Sultan of Oman's Parachutes regiment.

After that, the Sultan of Oman's Artillery gave a show highlighting field skills mastered by the military personnel. A show featuring modern military mechanisms and equipment used in the Royal Army of Oman was also held. It revealed the servicemen's competence in safeguarding Oman's accomplishments and defending its lands.

Then, the Governor of Muscat felicitated members of the RAO and distributed medals of Long Excellent Service.

The ceremony was attended by commanders of the SAF and other military and security units, SAF veteran commanders, SAF senior officers, other military and security units, senior retired officers, SAF personnel and a group of school students.

— ONA



The event began with a military salute to the Governor of Muscat. – ONA



Musandam Command marks SAF Day



KHASAB: Musandam Sector Command at the Royal Army of Oman (RAO) on Monday marked the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) Day, which falls on December 11 every year. A ceremony to celebrate this occasion was held at the headquarters of Musandam Sector Command under the auspices of Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Governor of Musandam. During the ceremony, the chief guest pinned long-service and good conduct medals on some personnel of Musandam Sector Command in appreciation to their sincere efforts and dedication in carrying out the sacred national duty. – ONA

11TH INFANTRY BRIGADE, FIRAQ FORCES MARK SAF DAY



THAMRAIT: The 11th Infantry Brigade and the Firaq Forces at the Royal Army of Oman (RAO) marked on Monday the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) Day, which falls on December 11 every year. A ceremony to celebrate this occasion was held at the military parade ground of the Firaq Forces Command in the Governorate of Dhofar under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar. During the ceremony, the chief guest pinned long-service and good conduct medals on some officers and personnel of the 11th Infantry Brigade and Firaq Forces in appreciation to their sincere efforts and dedication in carrying out the sacred national duty. – ONA



Historically nurtured bilateral relations

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The royal visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to Singapore, scheduled from December 13 to 15, 2023, stands as a testament to the continued strengthening of ties between two seafaring nations.

“This is a historic visit. It is the first in many respects: It will be Oman’s first ever State Visit to Singapore; it is His Majesty’s first official visit to East Asia; it is the first state visit hosted by President Tharman Shanmugaratnam, who was elected in September 2023,” a note from the Singapore Embassy in Oman said.

Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established on February 21, 1985, and since then, various sectors have witnessed a steady ascent in cooperation. The year 2022 witnessed numerous significant developments, and in December, the first Singapore-Oman Strategic Dialogue (SOSD) took place. This dialogue reflected the mutual commitment to elevate bilateral ties, leading to the decision to upgrade both nations’ Consulates General to Embassies headed by a Chargé d’affaires.

The bilateral relations, historically nurtured through the Singapore-Oman Bilateral Consultations (SOBC) and the Singapore-Oman Joint Committee

(SOJC), reached new heights with the SOSD co-chaired at the Ministerial level. Several governmental and business-to-business exchanges ensued, including meetings at international forums like the G20, where both Oman and Singapore were special guests of the Indian Presidency.

Despite geographical separation, Oman and Singapore share commonalities as maritime nations, reliant on open trade and a rules-based international order. Both nations embarked on parallel paths of development post-nationhood, fostering ties in education, healthcare, trade links, and communication systems. Their historical connections date back centuries,

intertwined through early trade routes.

Two notable initiatives exemplify this shared history. First, the symbolic route of the Jewel of Muscat mirrored the paths of ancient traders, linking Asia and the Middle East. Second, the redevelopment of Muscat Street in Kampong Glam, Singapore, featuring Omani-style archways and murals, highlights the cultural interplay between the two nations.

Oman established a Consulate-General in Singapore in May 2011, reciprocated by the opening of the Consulate-General of Singapore in Muscat on August 15, 2013. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)-Singapore

Free Trade Agreement (GSFTA), signed in 2008 and enforced in 2013, marked the first FTA between the GCC and a non-Middle East country. This agreement has facilitated access to GCC markets, including Oman, and ongoing efforts are under way to upgrade it to address the demands of the digital economy.

Further strengthening economic ties, Singapore and Oman ratified a Bilateral Investment Treaty in August 2009 and an Avoidance of Double Taxation Agreement in April 2006. The latter provides relief from double taxation when income is subject to tax in both countries.

Muscat Street and Jewel of Muscat underline close links

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Muscat Street in Singapore is one of the popular locations in the Kampong Gelam neighbourhood and attracts both tourists and visitors.

In the 1800s to the early 1900s, Muscat Street was full of traders doing their business.

The street has paintings and architecture based on Omani culture, such as ships, Omani flags, date trees, and others.

Muscat Street was renovated in November 2012 under a collaboration project between Singapore’s Urban Redevelopment Authority and the Muscat Municipality. This small street is seen as a reminder of Singapore’s connection with Arab traders in early history.

According to Singapore’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the iconic project to redevelop Muscat Street highlighted the close links between Singapore and Oman.

It was officially opened on November 8, 2012, by Singaporean Minister K Shanmugam and Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, the current Foreign Minister, who was then Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

At both ends of Muscat Street are 8-metre-high granite arches displaying ornate Omani carvings.

The street is also decorated with granite murals and mosaic artwork. Omani artists and the tiles painted in the murals were specially selected and imported from Oman.

The murals present unique aspects of Omani culture. The khanjar, for example, is a traditional Omani dagger; it is curved and sharpened on both edges and is usually carried in a sheath decorated with silver filigree. The dallah is a metal pot with a long spout to make and serve Arabic coffee.

The murals also depict one of Oman’s many forts, which give a glimpse of Oman’s rich history.

Kampong Glam is known as Singapore’s Muslim Quarter. Its 19th-century shophouses have been turned into stores selling textiles and casual restaurants serving spicy Malay and global fare.

Notable landmarks here include the golden-domed Sultan Mosque and the Malay Heritage Centre, where exhibits focus on local history. Clothing boutiques, street art, and trendy Haji Lane.

THE JEWEL OF MUSCAT

A mural along Muscat Street also features the Jewel of Muscat, a State Gift from the Late Sultan Qaboos to the Government and People of Singapore. The Jewel of Muscat project symbolises the revival of the ancient trading routes that linked Asia and the Middle East.

It is a replica of a 9th-century Arabian ship carrying Chinese artefacts, salvaged off Belitung Island in the Java Sea in 1998.

The dhow is 18 metres long and 6 metres wide and was constructed using planks hand-sewn together with coconut fibres, similar to 9th-century Arab shipbuilding methods.

With a crew of 15 sailors, including Omanis and Singaporeans the Jewel of Muscat spent 68 days at sea, while the entire voyage lasted 138 days, and covered 3,580 nautical miles (the equivalent of 4,119 miles or 6,630 kilometres). The crew used 9th-century navigational methods throughout the voyage.

The main tool used is a kamal that determines a ship’s latitude based on the sightings of known stars.

The dhow arrived in Singapore on July 3, 2010.

Since the launch of the Jewel of Muscat project in 2007, there have been many high-level visits between Singapore and Oman, including a State Visit by then President S R Nathan in 2009, Singapore’s foreign ministry says. The ‘Jewel of Muscat,’ a meticulously reconstructed 9th-century Arab trading dhow (ship), embarked on a remarkable journey from the Sultanate of Oman to Singapore, covering 6,000 kilometres. This voyage symbolised the revival of historical maritime connections and heralded a new chapter in the bilateral relations between Oman and Singapore.

The grand replica found its permanent home at the Maritime Experiential Museum in Sentosa Resorts World, Singapore, while a scaled model, accompanied by an explanatory plaque, graced the Marina in Al Mouj, Muscat.





Gen Al Numani receives Ambassadors of Türkiye, Sudan

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office received on Monday Mehmet Hakimoğlu, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to the Sultanate of Oman.

The ambassador expressed his thanks for the Sultanate of Oman in enhancing bilateral cooperation to achieve joint interests.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed several matters of mutual interest and means of promoting them.

Gen Al Numani also received Salah Al Din Al Hajj Mohammed Al Kando, Ambassador of the Republic



Gen Al Numani with Mehmet Hakimoğlu, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye. – ONA

of Sudan to the Sultanate of Oman.

The Minister of the Royal Office reviewed areas of

joint cooperation and ways to strengthen relations between Oman and Sudan. He underscored the bilateral

relations binding the two countries.

The Minister of the Royal Office expressed his wishes



Gen Al Numani met Salah Al Din Al Hajj Mohammed Al Kando, Ambassador of Sudan. – ONA

for peace and stability to prevail in Sudan.

On his turn, the Ambassador expressed his

thanks to Oman. He also underlined the strength of relations between the two countries.

During the meeting, the two sides also discussed several matters of mutual interest. — ONA

Conference on computing and data analysis concludes in Ibri

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 11

The International Conference on Computing and Data Analysis concluded at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Ibri on Tuesday. The three-day event brought together experts, researchers, and enthusiasts from around the world. The final day witnessed a continuation of conference sessions, paving the way for the much-anticipated closing ceremony.

The conference, a hub of knowledge exchange and innovation, featured a diverse array of workshops and presentations. Monday alone, more than 70 worksheets were unveiled across ten venues, covering crucial topics in the realm of computing and data analysis.

One of the highlights was a workshop titled ‘Once artificial intelligence can do everything for us, what do we do?’ by Dr Patrick Mayer from the University of Zurich, Switzerland. Dr Mayer delved into the evolving role of humans in a world dominated by artificial intelligence, raising thought-provoking questions about our future in the wake of technological advancements.

Another noteworthy workshop, “Information Technology Framework,” presented by Qais al Ameri from the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology in Oman, provided practical training on IT services continuity framework. The session covered essential topics such as risk management and business continuity, offering attendees valuable insights into the ever-evolving IT landscape.



The conference, a hub of knowledge exchange and innovation, featured a diverse array of workshops and presentations

Mona al Marzuqi, a senior cybersecurity analyst from Namaa Company in Oman, led a workshop on ‘Cybersecurity Awareness.’ Attendees gained knowledge about various aspects of cybersecurity, emphasising the importance of safeguarding personal information and practicing caution during electronic transactions.

Professor Noritwati Mohamed Tahir from the University of Technology - Mara, Malaysia, shared insights on ‘How to establish an IEEE branch.’ This workshop provided a detailed road-map for universities looking to forge partnerships with the IEEE organisation, outlining the advantages and responsibilities for both parties involved.

Dr Gautam M Pukar from the Ramrao Adek Institute of Technology in India brought his expertise to the fifth workshop, focusing on ‘Cybersecurity risk assessment and AI-based

incident response.’ The session explored methodologies for assessing cybersecurity risks and formulating effective responses to incidents arising from the utilisation of artificial intelligence.

Concluding the day’s events, Dr Sebastian Anthony Joe S, a lecturer at Gulf College, presented a workshop on ‘The Internet of Things based on artificial intelligence for higher education institutions.’ Attendees gained valuable insights into leveraging the Internet of Things in higher education, with a particular focus on artificial intelligence applications that benefit students and lecturers alike.

As the conference drew to a close, participants eagerly anticipated the closing ceremony and a visit to the ‘Oman Museum Through Time,’ capping off an intellectually enriching and collaborative gathering of minds in the field of computing and data analysis.

الخزائن
KHAZAIN
شركة الخزائن للخدمات النفطية ش.م.ع.
AL KHAZAIN OILFIELD SERVICES

شركة الخزائن للخدمات النفطية (ش.م.ع.م)

إعلان الدعوة لاجتماع الجمعية العامة غير العادية

يسر رئيس وأعضاء مجلس إدارة شركة الخزائن للخدمات النفطية (ش.م.ع.م) دعوة المساهمين الكرام لعقد اجتماع الجمعية العامة غير العادية، والمقرر عقده في تمام الساعة الثانية من (مساء) يوم الأربعاء، الموافق: ٢٠٢٣/١٢/٢٧، عبر المنصة الإلكترونية لانعقاد الجمعيات العامة غير العادية ويمكنكم الدخول إليها عبر موقع شركة مسقط للمقاصة والاداء (www.mcd.gov.om)، وإذا لم يكتمل النصاب القانوني لانعقاد اجتماع هذه الجمعية، سيتم عقد الاجتماع الثاني في تمام الساعة الثانية من (مساء) يوم الخميس الموافق: ٢٠٢٣/١٢/٢٨ لمناقشة جدول الأعمال التالي:

- جدول أعمال الجمعية العامة غير العادية :-

١. الموافقة على تعديل بعض مواد النظام الأساسي للشركة وفقاً لقانون الشركات التجارية رقم ٢٠١٩/١٨ (وفق المرفق) :-

ووفقاً للنظام الأساسي للشركة وضوابط انعقاد الجمعية العامة باستخدام وسائل التقنية الحديثة، نود أن تلفت عنايتكم للآتي:

١. يحق للشخص الطبيعي دون غيره تفويض شخص طبيعي لحضور الاجتماع والتصويت نيابة عنه من خلال وسائل التقنية على أن يكون لهذا الشخص الطبيعي رقم مستثمر لدى شركة مسقط للمقاصة والإيداع.

٢. يبدأ التصويت على البند المطروح بجدول الأعمال قبل تاريخ انعقاد الجمعية بعدة لا تزيد على ثلاثة أيام وحتى نهاية عملية التصويت في يوم الاجتماع، وفي حالة تغيير رصيد المساهم بالزيادة أو النقصان فسيتم إلغاء عملية التصويت، وتعين عليه إعادة التصويت مرة أخرى في يوم اجتماع الجمعية.

وفي حالة وجود أي استفسارات يرجى الاتصال بالفاضل / أحمد الرواحي هاتف: ٩٣٨٩٦٠١١

رئيس مجلس الإدارة مراقب الحسابات المستشار القانوني

شركة المجموعة العمانية الدولية ش.م.ع.م
OMAN INTERNATIONAL GROUP SAOC

Notice of Annual General Meeting of Oman International Group SAOC

We, the Board of Directors of Oman International Group SAOC (the “Company”) hereby invite the shareholders of the Company to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Company to be held at the Al-Rawahy Complex, Wattayah, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman on Thursday, 28 December 2023 at 11.00 am, and if the quorum of the meeting is not complete, then the second AGM is determined to be held on Monday, 1 January 2024 at 11:00 am in the same previously mentioned location to consider and to approve the following agenda:

Agenda for the Meeting

- The consideration and approval of the Report of the Directors for the financial year ended 30 September 2023.
- The consideration and approval of the financial statements and auditors' report for the year ended 30 September 2023
- The approval of the final dividend for the financial year ended 30 September 2023.
- The consideration and approval of the Board of Directors' remuneration and sitting fees for the financial year ended 30 September 2023.
- The consideration of a sitting fee for the meetings for the Board of Directors for the next financial year ending on 30 September 2024.
- The consideration and approval of related party transactions which were entered into by the Company with third parties during the year ended 30 September 2023.
- The consideration and the approval of related party transactions, which are expected to be concluded during the year ending 30 September 2024.
- The approval of the appointment of the auditors of the Company, and to determine the auditors' remuneration for the financial year ending on 30 September 2024.

In accordance with the provisions of the Company's Articles of Association, a shareholder entitled to attend and vote at the meeting convened by this Notice is entitled to authorise another shareholder to attend the meeting and vote on his/ her behalf at the meeting.

If you wish to appoint a proxy, please complete and submit the attached proxy form to the Company's office.

To prevent delay in starting the meeting, shareholders are required to arrive about half an hour before the scheduled time for starting the meeting.

For further information, please contact our Finance Manager, Mr. Louis D'Souza on telephone no. 24576911 or 91457911.

Chairman

Auditors

Legal Adviser

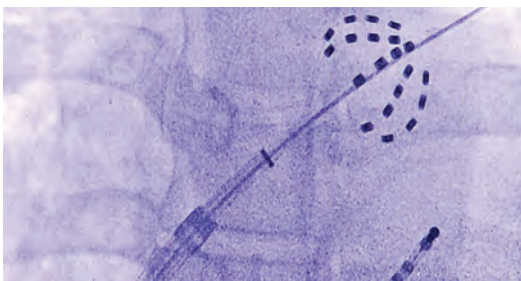
Royal Hospital launches technology to treat arrhythmia



MUSCAT: Represented by the National Centre for Cardiac Medicine and Surgery, the Royal Hospital has introduced a global technology for treating atrial arrhythmia, a step forward in the hospital's drive to modernise the treatment of heart rhythm disorders.

Dr Najeeb bin Zahran al Rawahi, Director of the National Centre for Cardiac Medicine and Surgery, said that the new technology, known as ‘Pulse Filed Ablation’, figures among the latest international technical updates in treating atrial arrhythmia, due to its high effectiveness and low instances of complications.

He observed that the Sultanate of Oman emerges as one of the first countries in the region to use this new technology. — ONA



Known as ‘Pulse Filed Ablation’, the technology figures among the latest international technical updates in treating atrial arrhythmia. — ONA

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

Tender Announcement

Tender No.	217/2023/MHT/HQ-44	Tender Name	Supply, Installation, Integration and Commissioning High-End Curved LED Video Wall for Oman Botanic Garden
Fees of Tender Documents for SME	10 O.R		
Fees of Tender Documents	25 O.R		
Tender Document Sales End Date	31/12/2023		
Last Date for Bid Submission	22/1/2024		
Grade	Excellent		
E-Tendering Portal	https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om		

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- The Tenderers must acknowledge commitment to the bid.
- The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids.
- The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before (10:00 am, Oman time).

Support and Inquiries	For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@mtci.gov.om or 24402200
For further information	Email : solic@mht.gov.om Phones : 22088348 - 22088085



EU set for summit showdown over Ukraine accession talks

BRUSSELS: Hungary said on Monday it would not bow to pressure from other European Union states to give the green light for accession talks with Ukraine, setting the stage for a showdown at an EU summit this week.

Ukraine’s foreign minister said it would be “devastating” for his country and the EU if the December 14-15 summit did not the go-ahead for membership talks.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who boasts about his ties with Russian President Vladimir Putin, has threatened to veto the aid and enlargement talks.

Other EU states, including richest member Germany, have said they back starting negotiations with Kyiv on the long process of joining the bloc, but Budapest dug in its heels.

“A majority of European politicians want to make such important decisions which are entirely unprepared and lack strategic agreement on the future of Europe,” Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto wrote on Facebook before a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels that will help prepare the summit.

“We will not give in to any pressure ... irrespective of where that is coming from, from whom, and what kind of blackmail it is or promise.”

Hungary is not at odds with its EU partners for the first time. It watered down sanctions against Russia and last December vetoed



European Union flags fly outside the European Commission in Brussels, Belgium. – Reuters file photo

a deal to grant Ukraine 18 billion euros in 2023.

Budapest eventually allowed that assistance through after haggling for days over EU aid to Hungary, which had been blocked over concerns of democratic backsliding under Orban.

“I want to believe that the Europeans will be united ... and we will today send clear messages to our Hungarian counterpart so it can be so,” French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna said.

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis described it as “a clash of ideologies, between those who want Europe to be strong and those who don’t want

A majority of European politicians want to make such important decisions which are entirely unprepared and lack strategic agreement on the future of Europe

PETER SZIJARTO
Hungarian FM

the EU at all”

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, who took part in

the EU foreign ministers’ meeting, said failing at this week’s summit to agree on open accession talks would show the EU is unable to follow through on historical commitments.

“I cannot imagine, I don’t even want to talk about the devastating consequences that will occur shall the (European) Council fail to make this decision,” he said, calling it “the mother of all decisions”.

Securing new financial assistance from Europe is critical, and doubts are also growing over future U.S. support for Kyiv as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy heads to talks in Washington.

— Reuters

New COP28 draft deal stops short of fossil fuel ‘phase out’

DUBAI: A draft of a potential climate deal at the COP28 summit on Monday offered various options to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but stopped short of the full “phase out” of fossil fuels many nations have demanded.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said a central benchmark of success for COP28 would be whether it yields a deal to reduce coal, oil and gas use fast enough to avert disastrous climate change.

“That doesn’t mean that all countries must phase out fossil fuels at the same time,” he told reporters at the Dubai summit, which is scheduled to end on Tuesday but could go on longer if negotiations drag on.

A new draft of a COP28 agreement, published by the United Arab Emirates’ presidency of the summit, proposed various options but did not refer to a “phase out” of all fossil fuels,

which had been included in a previous draft.

The draft deal listed eight options that countries “could” use to cut emissions, including by: “reducing both consumption and production of fossil fuels, in a just, orderly and equitable manner so as to achieve net zero by, before, or around 2050”.

Other actions listed included tripling renewable energy capacity by 2030, “rapidly phasing down unabated coal” and scaling up technologies including those to capture CO2 emissions out of the atmosphere.

A coalition of more than 100 countries including oil and gas producers the United States, Canada and Norway, as well as the European Union and climate-vulnerable island nations, wanted an agreement that included language to phase out fossil fuels, a feat not achieved in 30 years of the UN summits. — Reuters



COP28 Director-General Majid Al Suwaidi speaks at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai. – Reuters

UK’s Sunak faces key test over Rwanda migrant policy vote

LONDON: UK leader Rishi Sunak faces the riskiest week of his premiership, with lawmakers gathering on Monday to decide whether to back his flagship policy to send asylum seekers to Rwanda.

Factions of MPs from across Sunak’s divided Conservatives have convened meetings to consider how to vote when the controversial legislation goes before parliament on Tuesday.

Sunak has put the plan at the heart of his pledge to stop irregular migration, making the issue a key battleground in a general election expected next year.

But opposition to the scheme from both right-wingers and centrists is widening schisms in the ruling party, putting Sunak’s year-and-a-bit leadership in jeopardy.

The government announced a

The government announced a new bill last week after Supreme Court judges ruled in November that the deportation plan was illegal

new bill last week after Supreme Court judges ruled in November that the deportation plan was illegal, as Rwanda was not a safe country.

The legislation would compel judges to treat Rwanda as safe and proposes giving UK ministers powers to disregard sections of human rights legislation.

The proposals have sparked fresh concerns from opposition parties, human rights groups and



Britain’s Prime Minister Rishi Sunak (R) arrives to attend a UK public inquiry, in west London. – AFP

more moderate Tories who oppose any violations of international law by Britain.

However, right-wingers — including Robert Jenrick, who quit as immigration minister last week, and firebrand ex-home secretary Suella Braverman — say the legislation fails to go far enough.

Some on the right have called for Britain to withdraw from the European Court of Human Rights and other international treaties, to stop courts blocking removals.

Up to 100 backbench MPs from five different groupings on the Conservatives’ right wing, including the powerful European Research Group (ERG), which advocated a hardline Brexit.

The ERG called the bill was “the toughest piece of migration legislation ever put forward by a

UK government”.

But it said it only provided a “partial and incomplete solution” to expected legal challenges and would require “very significant amendments”.

The centrist One Nation group, which also has about 100 members, is expected to release its own statement later on Monday.

Tuesday is the first opportunity that MPs will have to vote on the legislation, in what is called a second reading.

Sunak has bet his pledge to “stop the boats” crossing the Channel on the Rwanda scheme — which has been stuck in the courts since the first deportees were pulled off a flight at the last minute in June 2022, after an injunction from the European Court of Human Rights.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

WELLINGTON

Police arrest 12 after museum exhibit defaced

A dozen protesters from a Maori activist group were arrested on Monday at New Zealand’s national museum after defacing an exhibit about the country’s founding document, the Treaty of Waitangi.

Police said a man abseiled from above the exhibit at the Te Papa museum in Wellington, before using an angle grinder and spray paint to damage a panel which is several metres high.

The protesters were from the Te Waka Hourua group, who



describe themselves as defenders of justice for Maori, New Zealand’s Indigenous population.

Police said four people were charged with offences including intentional damage and breach of bail. — AFP

PARIS

Interior minister drops presidential ambition

France’s powerful Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin has indicated he is no longer interested in running for the presidency in 2027, saying that former prime minister Edouard Philippe is best placed to succeed Emmanuel Macron.

Jostling for position had already started ahead of the 2027 election with pro-Macron centrist forces seeing far-right figurehead Marine Le Pen as the main challenger. “Right now, I think that Edouard Philippe is



the best placed,” Darmanin, 41, said. “I don’t particularly dream of being president of the republic. I am very proud to be minister of the interior at the age of 40,” he said, while adding that “we can never say never”. — AFP

TOKYO

Kishida to sack key ministers over graft claims

Japan’s Prime Minister Fumio Kishida is set to fire several top ministers who are reportedly under investigation for alleged fraud, local media said on Monday.

Those to be axed, potentially as early as this week, include Kishida’s right-hand man Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno and Yasutoshi Nishimura, the minister of economy, industry and trade, the reports said. According to Japan’s influential daily, Asahi Shimbun,



the total number to be sacked will be 15, including several deputy ministers and parliamentary vice ministers.

All belong to a faction formerly headed by late premier Shinzo Abe. — AFP



omanobserver.com/podcast

‘I’m destroyed’: UN envoys meet victims of Gaza war

EL-ARISH: UN Security Council ambassadors travelled to Egypt on Monday to meet Gazan victims of the Israeli strikes, days after the United States blocked a ceasefire resolution.

The informal one-day trip organised by the United Arab Emirates and Egypt came amid a spiralling humanitarian crisis in war-torn Gaza, described as a “graveyard” by United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

Around a dozen ambassadors took part from countries including Russia and Britain.

But the US, which vetoed the Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire on Friday, did not send a representative and neither did France. The envoys visited a hospital in El-Arish near the Rafah border crossing with Gaza, treating people who had been evacuated from the conflict.

Among the people they met was Wafaa Asaad, a 27-year-old from Gaza who was heavily pregnant when her house was hit by an Israeli strike, killing her husband and injuring her two daughters.

She was evacuated to Egypt for medical treatment and had an arm and leg amputated, but miraculously managed to give birth just hours after crossing the border, her sister Alaa said.

“Our message to the UN is we

“There is “deep frustration, disappointment and some outrage that we can’t even reach a consensus for a ceasefire

PHILIPPE LAZZARINI
Head of UNRWA

want the war to stop,” Alaa said, her newborn niece laying on a bed beside her.

Ecuador’s envoy Jose de la Gasca said that he was “destroyed” by the visit to the hospital.

“I just met a young mother who lost a kid and has another little girl who is wounded,” he said.

“I dont ever want to see again what I have just seen. It’s horrible.”

Departures via the crossing are tightly controlled, with only foreign nationals and severely wounded people allowed to leave Gaza in most circumstances.

Speaking at the start of the trip, UAE envoy Lana Nusseibeh said the trip was not official Security Council work, and members were taking part on their own “national and personal” initiatives.



A picture shows smoke billowing during Israeli bombardment on northern Gaza. — AFP

Philippe Lazzarini, head of the UN’s Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA, briefed the envoys on the humanitarian situation before he headed to Gaza for his third visit since the start of the war in October.

There is “deep frustration, disappointment and some outrage... (that) we can’t even reach a consensus for a ceasefire,” Lazzarini said.

“There is no real safe place in the Gaza Strip. Even the UN premises currently hosting more than one million people have been hit,” he added.

“Hunger is prevailing in Gaza. More and more people haven’t eaten for one day, two days, three days... people lack absolutely everything.” — AFP



Palestinians injured following Israeli strikes on Al-Maghazi refugee camp receive care at Al-Aqsa hospital in Deir Balah in the central Gaza Strip. — AFP

Palestinians go on strike over the strip onslaught



Palestinians carry a list of Gaza victims during a rally amid a general strike in Ramallah city in the occupied West Bank. — AFP

RAMALLAH: Shops, schools and government offices shut across the occupied West Bank and annexed east Jerusalem on Monday as Palestinians staged a general strike protesting against Israel’s relentless onslaught in the Gaza Strip.

The bloodiest ever war in Gaza has killed around 18,000 Palestinians in the territory, mostly women and children, and 101 Israeli soldiers, according to the latest reported death tolls.

Activists had called for a strike in solidarity with the besieged territory covering businesses, public workers and education.

Many Palestinians took part and rallies were planned in the West Bank, according to Essam Abu Baker who coordinates Palestinian factions in Ramallah.

He described the protest as part of a global effort to put pressure on Israel to stop the war, reporting strikes also taking place in parts of Jordan and Lebanon.

“The strike today is not only in solidarity with Gaza, but also against the USA which used its veto in the Security Council against a truce,” he said, referring to the US rejection of a ceasefire resolution on Friday.

Overnight in Gaza, more Israeli air strikes targeted the biggest southern city of Khan Yunis, while deadly fighting and bombing were also reported in the centre and north of the narrow territory. At a rally in Ramallah, seat of the Palestinian Authority, demonstrators unfurled a huge list of names of the victims in Gaza. — AFP

Gazans say hunger is causing social breakdown, fuelling fears of exodus

GAZA: Palestinian groups said they were striking back against Israeli forces across Gaza on Monday and international relief agencies said public order was disintegrating as hunger spread, fuelling fears of a mass exodus to Egypt.

The narrow coastal strip has been under a full Israeli blockade since the start of the conflict more than two months ago and the border with Egypt is the only other way out.

Most of Gaza’s 2.3 million people have been driven from their homes and residents say it is impossible to find refuge, or increasingly food, in the densely populated enclave, with around 18,000 people already killed and conflict intensifying.

Gazans said people forced to flee repeatedly were dying of hunger and cold as well as bombardment, describing desperate attacks on aid trucks and sky high prices.

“Had any of us expected that our people may die of hunger, had it crossed anyone’s mind before?”

said Rola Ghanim, among many expressing bewilderment on social media. Aid trucks risked being stopped by desperate residents if they even slowed down at an intersection, Carl Skau, said deputy executive director of the



A man prepares food on a street next to destroyed houses in Rafah on the southern Gaza Strip. — AFP

UN World Food Programme.

One Palestinian said that he had not eaten for three days and had to beg for bread for his children.

“I pretend to be strong but I am afraid I will collapse in front of them at any moment,” he said.

After the collapse of a week-long ceasefire on December 1, Israel began a ground offensive in the south last week and has since pushed from the east into the heart of the city of Khan Younis, with warplanes attacking an area to the west.

UN officials say 1.9 million people 85 per cent of Gaza’s population — are displaced and describe the conditions in the southern areas where they have concentrated as hellish.

“I expect public order to completely break down soon and an even worse situation could unfold including epidemic diseases and increased pressure for mass displacement into Egypt,” UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Sunday.

The border with Egypt is

heavily fortified, but Hamas militants blew holes in the wall in 2008 to break a tight blockade. Gazans crossed to buy food and other goods but quickly returned, with none permanently displaced.

Egypt has long warned it would not allow Gazans into its territory this time, fearing they would not be able to return.

Jordan, which absorbed the bulk of Palestinians after the creation of Israel in 1948, accused Israel on Sunday of seeking “to empty Gaza of its people”. — Reuters

Dr. Huda Al-Hadi

The author is an Omani academic, writer and poet

Western narratives, in particular, have historically shaped the term “terrorism” with connotations of fear, coercion, and illegitimacy. This perspective necessitates a profound reexamination, especially

However, the narrative landscape is undergoing a transformation. The rise of alternative media platforms is challenging long-established narratives, bringing diverse perspectives to the forefront. These emerging narratives, grounded in evidence and logical argumentation, are exposing historical distortions and presenting more nuanced understandings of global events. This shift is not just about counter-narratives; it's about the democratisation of narrative spaces,

IN TODAY'S
GEOPOLITICALLY
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where multiple voices can coexist and be heard.

This evolution marks a significant stride towards truth and integrity in political discourse. The increasing diversity of narratives is fostering a more comprehensive examination of global events, highlighting the need for a multiplicity of perspectives in international politics. It underscores the importance of critical media literacy in today's world, where discerning the truth requires navigating through a maze of competing narratives.

Moreover, the role of education in shaping an informed citizenry capable of critical analysis cannot be understated. In an era where misinformation can spread rapidly, the ability to critically evaluate political narratives is essential for democratic participation and global understanding.

In conclusion, the exploration of political narratives is not just an academic exercise; it is a necessary endeavour in a world where language and power are intricately linked. As we witness the unfolding of global events, the need to scrutinise and understand the narratives that shape our perceptions becomes increasingly vital. In this pursuit, fostering a diverse and inclusive narrative landscape is paramount, ensuring that all voices, especially those marginalised or silenced, are part of the global dialogue.

SACHIN RAVIKUMAR AND ALI
KUCUKGOCMEN

Parks' Tower Dental clinic in Istanbul has treated more than 500 British patients this year, up from 200 in 2022, and it expects that to continue to grow, helped in part by a weak lira. Other dental companies operating across Turkey and in Hungary and Romania said they were seeing strong UK demand. — **Reuters**

ANNA KOPER AND PAWEŁ
FLORKIEWICZ

PiS came first in the election and



Donald Tusk, the leader of the largest opposition grouping Civic Coalition (KO), looks on after meeting with entrepreneurs in Lodz, Poland. – **Reuters**

“A Europe of fatherlands, not a

Some observers have also attributed the surge in interest to the appointment of a celebrity as speaker of parliament. Szymon Holownia's wise-cracking approach to running debates has charmed many viewers who first got to know him as the host of a prime-time talent show. — **Reuters**

American exceptionalism in 2024

As the 2024 presidential election approaches, three broad camps are visible in America’s debate over how the United States should relate to the rest of the world: the liberal internationalists who have dominated since World War II; the retrenchers who want to pull back from some alliances and institutions; and the America Firsters who take a narrow, sometimes isolationist, view of America’s role in the world.

Americans have long seen their country as morally exceptional. Stanley Hoffmann, a French-American intellectual, said that while every country considers itself unique, France and the US stand out in believing that their values are universal. France, however, was limited by the balance of power in Europe, and thus could not pursue its universalist ambitions fully. Only the US had the power to do that.

The point is not that Americans are morally superior; it is that many Americans want to believe that their country is a force for good in the world. Realists have long complained that this moralism in American foreign policy interferes with a clear analysis of power. Yet the fact is that America’s liberal political culture made a huge difference to the liberal international order that has existed since WWII.

Today’s world would look very different if Hitler had emerged victorious or if Stalin’s Soviet Union had prevailed in the Cold War.

American exceptionalism has three main sources. Since 1945, the dominant one has been the legacy of the Enlightenment, specifically the liberal ideas espoused by America’s founders. As President John F Kennedy put it, “the ‘magic power’ on our side is the desire of every person to be free, of every nation to be independent... It is because I believe our system is more in keeping with the fundamentals of human nature that I believe we are ultimately going to be successful.” Enlightenment liberalism holds such rights to be universal, not limited to the US.



Joseph S Nye, Jr

a professor at Harvard University and a former US assistant secretary of defence

AMERICANS HAVE LONG SEEN THEIR COUNTRY AS MORALLY EXCEPTIONAL, BUT THEIR EXCEPTIONALISM ACTUALLY COMPRISES THREE DISTINCT VIEWS

Of course, Americans always faced contradictions in implementing their liberal ideology. The scourge of slavery was written into the Constitution, and it was more than a century after the Civil War before Congress passed the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Racism remains a major factor in American politics to this day.

Americans have also differed over how to promote liberal values in foreign policy. For some, the universalist project became an excuse to invade other countries and impose friendly regimes. Racism undoubtedly played a role in US interventions in places like Mexico, Haiti, and the Philippines. For others, however, liberalism was the impetus for creating a system of international law and institutions that protect domestic liberty by moderating international anarchy.

A second strand of American exceptionalism stems from the country’s Puritan religious roots. Those who fled Britain to worship God more purely in the new world saw themselves as a chosen people. Their project was less crusading in nature than anxious and contained, like the current “retrencher” approach of fashioning America as a city on a hill to attract others.

The founders themselves worried about the new republic losing its virtue, as the Roman republic had done. In the nineteenth century, European visitors as diverse as Alexis de Tocqueville and Charles Dickens noted the American obsession with virtue, progress, and decline. But this moral concern was more inward- than outward-looking.

The third source of American exceptionalism underlies the others: America’s sheer size and location has always conferred a geopolitical advantage. Already in the nineteenth century, De Tocqueville noted America’s special geographical situation. Protected by two oceans, and bordered by weaker neighbours, it was able to focus largely on westward expansion throughout the nineteenth century, avoiding Europe-centric struggles for global power.

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IN THE CLOUDS!



In this aerial view, the landmark Kuwait Towers pierce through the cloud cover over Kuwait City on Sunday. – AFP

A bargain in saving lives

In 2021, malaria caused 619,000 deaths, 77 per cent of which were children under five, and 96 per cent of them in Africa. But now, after decades of research — and several false dawns — a malaria vaccine known as R21/Matrix-M (henceforth just R21) has been shown to be effective in 70-78 per cent of cases. Although three doses are required before that level of protection is reached, and a booster is needed one year later, the vaccine, developed at the University of Oxford and the Serum Institute of India, is cheap. It can be produced for \$2-\$4 per dose – comparable to the cost of other childhood vaccines.

Adding costs for delivery and administration, we can say that R21 costs approximately \$5 per dose. A recent study indicates that fully vaccinating eligible children in areas where malaria is prevalent would save more than 600 lives per 100,000 children vaccinated, as well as prevent nearly 200,000 clinical cases of malaria (because once someone gets malaria, it is likely to recur). This suggests that the deaths of hundreds of thousands of children could be prevented for roughly \$3,300 per life saved.

In October, R21 was recommended by the World Health Organisation. It now needs to go through the WHO’s prequalification process and receive the recommendation of the WHO’s Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunisation. Then a broad international rollout can begin.



Peter Singer

Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University, is Founder of the nonprofit organisation The Life You Can Save

WHEN VACCINES FOR COVID-19 BECAME AVAILABLE, GOVERNMENTS’ HIGHEST PRIORITY WAS TO GET THEM APPROVED AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, IN ORDER TO SAVE MILLIONS OF LIVES

Children eligible for R21 are between five months and three years old. About 80 million eligible children live in malaria-prone regions of Sub-Saharan Africa. To give them all three doses of the vaccine in 2024 would require 240 million doses, followed by a further 80 million boosters in 2025. After that, with the backlog of currently unvaccinated children dealt with, the roughly 30 million children born every year would need 120 million doses. This would save about 450,000 lives per year.

Saving a life for \$3,300 is a bargain. In the United States, Medicare covers the cost of kidney dialysis for patients over 65 who would otherwise die while awaiting a transplant. Fifteen years ago, economists from Stanford and Wharton calculated that the average cost per quality-adjusted year of life gained by this coverage was \$129,000. Adjusting that figure for inflation (and overlooking the fact that medical costs have risen faster than other prices) takes it to \$182,000 — and that’s just for one extra year of life. By comparison, if we conservatively estimate that the children saved by vaccination against malaria have a life expectancy of 50 years, the cost per year is \$66.

Even when judged by global, rather than American, standards,

saving a life for \$3,300 is an exceptionally good value. The most cost-effective evidence-backed programmes that leading charity evaluator GiveWell has been able to find cost roughly \$3,500-\$5,500 per life saved. For example, the Against Malaria Foundation, which is also one of The Life You Can Save’s top charities, distributes bed nets to protect children against malaria. Although each net costs only a few dollars, distributing enough of them to save a life costs over \$4,000.

When vaccines for Covid-19 first became available, governments’ highest priority was to get them through the regulatory process. The US Food and Drug Administration normally takes about ten months to authorise the use of a new vaccine, but it approved

the use of the Pfizer vaccine in a breathtaking 21 days, and authorisation for Moderna’s vaccine took just 19 days. WHO prequalification normally takes 270 days after the WHO recommends a vaccine. That is an unacceptable delay. The WHO should accelerate its process and tell the public how quickly it can complete prequalification.

1Day Sooner was founded to represent people who wanted to volunteer to take part in human challenge trials to accelerate vaccine development. When the organisation was established in March 2020, its focus was a vaccine against Covid-19: getting it out one day sooner would, quite literally, save thousands of lives. Many of the organisation’s staff and a high proportion of the volunteers were effective altruists.

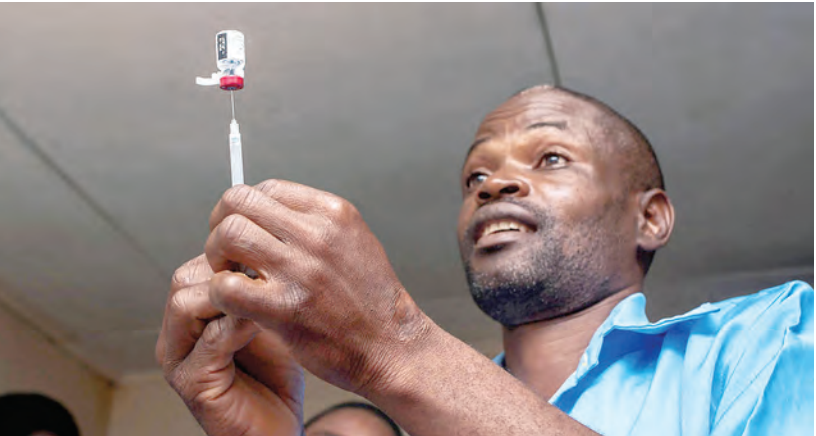
The organisation’s original

mission has broadened to promoting efficient development of life-saving medical research and the speediest and most equitable distribution of its products. As part of that broader mission, 1Day Sooner set up 1Day Africa to promote vaccination on the continent by strengthening Africa’s scientific capacity and its ability to manufacture vaccines locally.

Now, 1Day Africa is concerned that the WHO and national governments are not assessing the safety and effectiveness of the new malaria vaccine with the same urgency as they assessed the Covid-19 vaccines. As a result, the organisation is pressing for the production of as many doses of R21 as possible in 2024, and getting those doses into the arms of children as quickly as possible, to prevent millions of cases of malaria and save hundreds of thousands of lives.

Some of the relevant facts are in dispute, including how long the WHO’s prequalification process needs to take, and how quickly the necessary quantity of doses can be produced. But one thing should be clear: failing to save the lives of African children when that can be achieved for as little as \$3,300 each would render hollow our lofty rhetoric about the equal worth of every human life.

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Children eligible for R21 are between five months and three years old.

sport

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TOTTENHAM SLAM



ANDY JALIL
LONDON, DEC 11

After an unbeaten spell of 11 matches, including nine victories, from the start of the season, Tottenham Hotspur seemed to have lost their way with four defeats in five consecutive Premier League games until hitting two goals in each half for an emphatic 4-1 win against Newcastle.

Tottenham manager, Ange Postecoglou, praised his team captain Heung-Min Son and striker Richarlison, for their performance: “That’s what you need from leadership and the rest of the lads fed off that. We were a lot more threatening in the final third than we have been. With Sonny, he’s still our best finisher and I thought getting him back on the left would give us some more avenues to score goals.”

About Richarlison, the £50m signing from Everton last season, who scored twice on return from groin surgery, he said: “Since he’s come back he feels a lot better physically and I think that’s helped him mentally as well. It wasn’t just his goals, it was his general work-rate, energy and physicality.”

Tottenham were an attacking force throughout the game and clinical up front. Although it was Newcastle who could have taken the lead within the first 10 minutes but Alexander Isak missed the chance as he side-footed into touchline from point-blank range and held his head in disbelief. Spurs too missed chances. Christian Romero’s header was hooked off the line by Miguel Almiron, then Richarlison just failed to meet a superb cross from Son first and then Brennan Johnson’s pass into the area was a little too far ahead of him. But the spurt of Spurs’ goals began just over midway through the first half. It came from a low cross from Son which Destiny Udogie firmly drove in as he rushed at it along with two defenders on him.

The second goal came in the 38th minute with Son beating Kieran Trippier as he dribbled past him and pulled the ball back to the six-yard line from where Richarlison drilled his shot in. Trippier had been having a difficult time in marking the Tottenham captain who kept beating him on the left wing throughout the match. Newcastle should have scored shortly before the break when Anthony Gordon sent a fine pass to Almiron who hit his shot too close to Guglielmo Vicario in the Tottenham goal.

A quarter of an hour into the second half, Spurs extended their lead with Richarlison meeting a long pass from Pedro Porro and going past Jamaal Lascelles then sliding the ball through the legs of Martin Dubravka before guiding it into the net for the third goal. Five minutes before normal time, Son converted a penalty after he had been fouled by Dubravka and in added time Joelinton scored a consolation goal for the visitors.

Newcastle United manager Eddie Howe, who has injury problems in the squad, said: “Physically we looked a fatigued side and there wasn’t much we could do about it. We’re in a difficult position but we’ll keep going. The players are used to it, big games with minimal rest. All we can do is take the next challenge on.”

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS ON SUNDAY:

Everton 2 (Doucoure 54, Dobbins 90) Chelsea 0
Fulham 5 (Jimenez 22, Willian 31, Adarabioyo 41, Wilson 60, Vinicius 89) West Ham 0
Luton 1 (Adebayo 45+2) Manchester City 2 (Silva 62, Grealish 65)
Tottenham 4 (Udogie 26, Richarlison 38, 60, Son 85-pen) Newcastle 1 (Joelinton 90+1)

PLAYED SATURDAY

Aston Villa 1 (McGinn 7) Arsenal 0
Brighton 1 (Adingra 77) Burnley 1 (Odobert 45)
Crystal Palace 1 (Mateta 57-pen) Liverpool 2 (Salah 76, Elliott 90+1)
Manchester United 0 Bournemouth 3 (Solanke 5, Billing 68, Senesi 73)
Sheffield United 1 (McAtee 45+1) Brentford 0
Wolves 1 (Cunha 32) Nottingham Forest 1 (Toffolo 14)

OFA holds talks on promotional campaign for Oman at Asian Cup



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, DEC 11

The Oman Football Association (OFA) in coordination with its media and commercial partners discussed and reviewed the details of its promotional campaign to support Oman national team in the 2024 AFC Asian Cup in Qatar next January and the Preliminary Joint Qualification (Round 2) for the Fifa World Cup 2026 and AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027. The discussion workshop took place on Sunday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in presence of OFA officials, representatives of media and commercial partners.

Mohammed al Yahmadi, Executive Director of OFA, began the workshop on highlighting the importance of this campaign.



"It is a great opportunity to meet today and discuss on the initial thoughts on the slogan and details of the national team promotional campaign that will take place soon to support the team in its journey in the upcoming Asian Cup Championships and joint qualifiers for the Fifa World Cup 2026 and AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027. This workshop will provide many inputs and outputs

from the participants who will help us to draft a proper campaign together. We are here to listen from everyone any ideas, thoughts and supportive proposals. The OFA prefers to follow a clear strategy that will ensure involving everyone in determining the slogan," he said.

The promotional campaign workshop included many discussions including the fans' activities and events which will

be run in cooperation with the OFA and its relevant supporting partners. Also, the function highlighted on roadshows and how to attract more audience for the forthcoming period.

Furthermore, the supporting partners' role during the next phase in assisting the national team campaign towards registering the desired targets. Moreover, the participants in the workshop discussed the common message from local sports media towards supporting Red Warriors in their journey at the next major assignments. Before end of the workshop, the participants were split into groups for brainstorming sessions to create many slogans which will be raised in later stage to the specialists for further revision and studies.

Oman Para Athletics meet on Dec 15, 16

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, DEC 11

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth through the Oman Paralympic Committee, will organise the Oman Para Athletics Meeting on December 15 and 16 at the Sultan Qaboos Complex in Bausher.

Dr Mansoor bin Sultan al Tawqi, head of the Omani Paralympic Committee, stated that the para athletics is an extension of the efforts of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth to empower individuals with disabilities in society and provide services to them in all aspects, whether rehabilitation, sports or education. The forum aligns with Oman's interest in the sector of people with disabilities in various fields and serves as an extension of these efforts.

Al Tawqi said more than 150 para athletes representing Oman and Gulf clubs will participate in the Para Athletics. Kuwait's Al Tamouh Club, Saudi Arabia's Al Ras Club and Al Madina Club, Khorfakkan Club and Al Thiqah Club for Cerebral and Intellectual Disabilities from the UAE are the teams from the GCC.

He pointed out that the para meet aims to motivate individuals with disabilities and create a stimulating environment to showcase their talents in games and sports. The competitions include various track and field events such as running, throwing and jumping for different types of motor, visual and paralysis disabilities.

Al Tawqi emphasised that the athletics meet provides an



Dr Mansour al Tawqi

opportunity for the technical staff of the teams to select outstanding athletes in various competitions and include them in the national teams, each in their category. He highlighted the achievements of disabled athletes at the Arab and Olympic levels, expressing pride and appreciation for their accomplishments in sports.

Dr Mansoor mentioned that the committee will organise an arbitration course to qualify judges for athletics and prepare technical teams capable of managing athletics competitions. The course, with Tarek al Suwaidi as the lecturer, targets 30 students, including judges of athletics.

The course is expected to produce proficient outputs for the administration and arbitration of athletics for people with disabilities. It covers the arbitration laws of athletics for people with disabilities, the arbitration of field and track sports and the important legal modifications in these competitions. It also aims to familiarise participants with the latest laws in arbitrating throwing tools such as the shot put, javelin and discus throw for people with disabilities.

Muscat CT beat Majees CC, Glam Homes trump Orient Travels by 3 wickets

MUSCAT: Muscat CT beat Majees CC on Friday in the Premier Division League 2023-24 powered by Muscat Pharmacy LLC at the Oman Cricket Academy Turf 1.

Ashish Odedra's unbeaten century rallied Muscat CT past a medium target set by Majees CC.

Batting first, Majees CC could manage to reach their total to 241 courtesy 64 from Zeeshan Maqsood along with 37 from Lakpriya Ravindra and a quick-fire 39 from Jan Shafiq.

Samay Shrivastav was the pick of the bowlers for Muscat CT scalping three wickets while Siddharth Prasad and Akash Mohite picked 2 wickets each.

In response, Muscat CT looked in complete control as Kashyap Prajapati and Shoaib Khan stitched a 60-run partnership which helped Ashish Odedra to capitalise and score big helping Muscat CT get to the target with 22 balls and six wickets to spare.

In another match on Friday, Glam Homes



(From left) Yagnik Pandya, Shehbaz Nasar, Mohd Asghar, Usman Ali shined for Glam Homes.

dominated Orient Travels in the A Division League 2023-24 powered by Khimji Ramdas LLC at the Oman Cricket Academy Turf 2.

Orient Travels started off with Sajith Fernando and Ibrar Hussain scoring half-centuries taking the total to 145-3 in 30 overs.

However, the resilient bowling of Usman Ali and Yagnik Pandya scalping three wickets each bundled Orient Travels to a below-par total of

191 runs.

In reply, Glam Homes managed to get over the line courtesy Mohammed Asghar's 47 and a crucial half century by Shehbaz Nasar. Abdul Rauf and Naveed Akhtar picked two wickets each.

On Saturday, Vanderlande thrashed Sarco in the A Division League 2023-24 powered by Khimji Ramdas LLC at the Oman Cricket Academy Turf 2.



Ashish Odedra hit a century for Muscat CT.

BRIEF SCORES

Majees CC 241 all out in 49.4 overs (Zeeshan Maqsood 64 (73); Samay Shrivastav 3-40) lost to Muscat CT 244-4 in 46.2 overs (Ashish Odedra 105 (107b) by 6 wickets. Orient Travels 191 all out in 44 overs (Sajith Fernando 64 (73b); Usman Ali 3-40) lost to Glam Homes 196-7 in 40.4 overs (Shehbaz Nasar 54 (49b); Abdul Rauf 2-31) by 3 wickets. Vanderlande 260 all out in 47.5 overs (Aiyappan Bakthavachalu 88 (91b); Guru Kotian 3-31) beat Sarco 58 all out in 20.3 overs (Althaf Mohammed 3-7, Vivekananthan S 3-12) by 202 runs.

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Girona coach Michel celebrates with players after the match. – Reuters



Girona's Valery Fernandez celebrates scoring their third goal with teammates. – Reuters

STUN

SUPERB GIRONA

CHAMPIONS BARCA TO LEAD LA LIGA



Girona players celebrate after the La Liga match against Barcelona. – Reuters

BARCELONA: Shock Spanish title contenders Girona earned a historic 4-2 win over rivals Barcelona on Sunday to move top of La Liga, with coach Michel saying he believes his team can beat any opponent.

Girona defeated their Catalan rivals for the first time ever in the top flight in a pulsating battle to rise two points above Real Madrid, second, after their 1-1 draw at Real Betis on Saturday.

Champions Barcelona are fourth after Atletico Madrid, third, beat Almeria earlier on, and Xavi's side trail Girona by seven points.

Artem Dovbyk sent Girona ahead and after Robert Lewandowski pulled Barcelona level, Miguel Gutierrez slammed home again for the visitors.

Valery Fernandez extended Girona's lead with 10 minutes remaining, before Ilkay Gundogan netted to set up a frantic finale.

Veteran striker Cristhian Stuani struck from close range in stoppage time to wrap up a stunning victory which reaffirms the minnows' title dream.

"We're enjoying the moment, we're in a hugely positive dynamic," Michel told reporters.

"I don't know if we have the ability to win La Liga, but we are able to beat any opponent."

SPANISH LA LIGA RESULTS ON SUNDAY:
Atletico Madrid 2 (Morata 17, Correa 22) Almeria 1 (Baptistao 62)
Granada 0 Athletic Bilbao 1 (I Williams 6) - match abandoned after 18 minutes following the death of a Granada supporter
Cadiz 1 (Marti 19) Osasuna 1 (Budimir 70-pen)
Barcelona 2 (Lewandowski 19, Gundogan 90+2) Girona 4 (Dovbyk 12, Gutierrez 40, Valery 80, Stuani 90+5)
PLAYED FRIDAY
Getafe 1 (Mayoral 87) Valencia 0
PLAYED SATURDAY
Mallorca 1 (Larin 11) Sevilla 0
Villarreal 0 Real Sociedad 3 (Merino 38, Zubimendi 41, Kubo 45+4)
Alaves 0 Las Palmas 1 (Rodriguez 31)
Real Betis 1 (Ruibal 66) Real Madrid 1 (Bellingham 53)
SPANISH LA LIGA LEADING SCORERS AFTER THE WEEKEND'S MATCHES:
12 GOALS: Bellingham (Real Madrid)
9 GOALS: Griezmann (Atletico Madrid), Mayoral (Getafe)
8 GOALS: Morata (Atletico Madrid), Budimir (Osasuna), Dovbyk (Girona), Moreno (Villarreal), Lewandowski (Barcelona), I. Williams (Athletic Bilbao)
7 GOALS: Duro (Valencia), Guruzeta (Athletic Bilbao), Oyarzabal (Real Sociedad)

Defeat leaves Barcelona's title defence badly dented.

"They deserved it, they've got a lot of merit, they're seven points ahead of us," Xavi told DAZN.

"We want to cut down the gap, this is our reality — this is a Barca under construction, although they have criticised me for (saying) it.

"You take one step back to be able to take two steps forwards."

Girona, part-owned by the City Football Group, were without injured key midfielder Yangel Herrera, whom they signed from Manchester City, but did not let it set them back.

In La Liga for only the fourth season in their history, they played without any fear of their more illustrious neighbours and took the lead early on as the game see-sawed deliciously from end to end.

The visitors split the 27-time champions open with a lethal counter-attack, with Ukrainian winger Viktor Tsygankov feeding his compatriot Dovbyk to slam home in the 12th minute.

Unperturbed, Barcelona levelled quickly through Lewandowski, with the 35-year-old heading home Raphinha's corner to end a run of three matches without a goal.

END-TO-END

Former Real Madrid left-back Gutierrez, no stranger to an adventure upfield, drove into the box and cracked an early strike into the near top corner five minutes before the break.

Barcelona tried to force their way back in, with Paulo Gazzaniga saving Frenkie de Jong's low effort and Raphinha sending a free-kick over the bar.

Valery seemed to end Barca hopes with 10 minutes to go when Stuani headed the ball into his path, and he beat Jules Kounde with ease before firing home.

However Gundogan turned well in the box and lashed past Gazzaniga to give the hosts a chance to snatch a draw. Lewandowski might have levelled but headed wide when well-placed.

Stuani bundled home at the death to complete a sensational night for Girona, with several of their players leaping the advertising hoardings and running towards their fans in celebration.

Michel said beforehand that a win would send his team into a new dimension and there can be little doubt now they are genuine title contenders this season.

Barcelona's title defence, however, is on the ropes.

"We're seven points behind, which is a lot, but there's more than half a season to go," De Jong told DAZN.

"There's time, but we have a lot to come back from."

Earlier Diego Simeone's Atletico took an early two-goal lead through Alvaro Morata and Angel Correa, but Leo Baptistao pulled Almeria into the game after an hour.

Atletico held on for the victory as the Andalusian strugglers threatened to pull level at the Metropolitano.

"They pressed us in the second half, we couldn't find solutions and it was hard for us," Atletico forward Antoine Griezmann admitted to Movistar. Athletic Bilbao's visit to Granada was stopped in the 18th minute because a fan died in the stands, with the match subsequently abandoned.

Inaki Williams had sent the Basques ahead and they will resume play with the lead on Monday night from 17 minutes. — AFP



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Oman sees hydrogen peak output at 25 – 30 MTPA

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, DEC 11

The Sultanate of Oman anticipates green hydrogen output rising to a global-scale 25 – 30 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) when all 50,000 sq kilometres of acreage currently earmarked for the production of this zero carbon energy resource is fully developed over the coming decades.

This compares with a target of around 1 MTPA of green hydrogen starting from 2030, rising to 3.75 MTPA by 2040 before hitting 8.5 MTPA by 2050 when a national commitment to be carbon neutral looms.

The scope and magnitude of Oman’s renewable hydrogen sector were outlined by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufo, Minister of Energy and Minerals, at the Doha Forum, held in the Qatari capital, on Sunday.

Participating in a panel discussion on the theme, ‘Energy Transition: Powering up Green Cooperation between Europe and the Gulf’, Al Aufo said Oman is well-positioned to emerge as a global hub for green hydrogen



Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufo, Minister of Energy and Minerals, speaking at the Doha Forum on Sunday. (Image credit: Doha Forum)

production.

“We have established, through a Royal Decree, the allotment of over 50,000 square kilometres dedicated primarily for the production of green hydrogen through renewable energy from solar as well as wind. We think the area is extremely competitive: it’s probably one of the top four or five locations globally that can offer the lowest possible cost of

hydrogen,” Al Aufo said.

“We have already started a very transparent and open auction system last year. Two areas have been signed as a result of that auction process. Three additional locations were also signed —these are legacy initiatives that we have been in discussion with them prior to the framework. We honoured that discussion and we signed

three agreements.

So five in total were signed that potentially give us almost 50 - 60

“We think the area is extremely competitive: it’s probably one of the top four or five locations globally that can offer the lowest possible cost of hydrogen

ENG SALIM
AL AUFO
Minister of Energy and Minerals

per cent of the target we set for 2030, which is a million tonnes of hydrogen.”

Local Qatari English language

daily *Gulf Times*, in a report on the panel discussion, quoted Al Aufo as affirming Oman’s goal to become a global-scale producer over the long-term.

“Our ultimate target, of course, is much bigger than that.

We believe if all these lands are consumed in renewable energy production and hydrogen, then we could be potentially producing anywhere between 25 million to 30 million tonnes of hydrogen, which is extremely sizable, even by world demand.”

Joining the Omani minister in the panel discussion were: Luigi Di Maio, EU Special Representative (EUSR) for the Gulf region; Dr Elif Calik of Women in Smart Energy — WSE UK; and Dr Cinzia Bianco, Gulf Research Fellow, European Council on Foreign Relations.

Jindal Steel, OQ Alternative Energy team up on Integrated Energy Valley

HIBBA AL KINDI
DUQM, DEC 11

Vulcan Green Energy and OQ Alternative energy recently signed an agreement to establish a joint clean energy venture that will provide round the clock clean energy. The project, known as the Integrated Energy Valley (IEV), aims to combine solar, wind and energy storage to provide 24/7 clean electricity.

Vice Chairman of Vulcan Green Steel — a Jindal Steel subsidiary, Venkatesh Jindal, made the announcement during the recent Vulcan Green Steel plant groundbreaking event, “We have recently launched a green energy venture in Oman Vulcan Green Energy, which is setting up the first of its kind integrated Energy Valley or IEV in partnership with OQAE.

The IEV is a pathbreaking project that is combining solar, wind, and energy storage to provide round the clock 24/7 green electricity for the first time in Oman to power large energy intensive industries such as steel and aluminium.”



He noted that the project has the potential to fulfil Oman’s plans for economic diversification.

“The IEV project aligns seamlessly with Oman’s Vision 2040 to reduce the nation’s dependence on fossil fuel based electricity and boosting economic diversification away from oil and gas. I’m confident that the IEV will also help boost investment and job creation in the Sultanate of Oman, as now special economic zones like Duqm can also market and offer investors not only access to a world-class port and other

infrastructure, but also round the clock green electricity.”

According to a Senior Adviser the project has a capacity of 3 million gigawatts.

The project is expected to take place in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, Oman’s Green Energy Hub, which amassed over \$20 billion in investments over the last year to establish the country’s first green hydrogen projects in line with its commitment to curb carbon emissions by 2050.

The industrial sector in Oman is the highest carbon emitting sector and makes up for around 32 per cent of emissions annually.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C invites interested companies to participate in the following tender

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Site Visit	Tender Price (OMR)
RE-TENDER/ NESC/ 04/2023	DATA CENTER & IT INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT (AMC) at NESC	18/12/2023	01/01/2024	Specialist	N/A	52.500

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -						
Participation	- Companies registered with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and in I Supplier with Nama Groupe may obtain Tender documents. - The amount specified above is including 5% VAT. - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from Tender fees. - The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply). - To obtain the tender document and payment procedure, please contact us by email Tender@supply.nama.om. - Tender purchase will be in working ours between 08:00 AM till 02:00 PM.					
Enquiries	- Any inquiry can be sent to Tender@supply.nama.om. - Any request for clarification received after the above-mentioned period will not be considered. - Last day of receiving clarifications on 27/12/2023.					
Tender Submission	Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER mentioned in the Prime Document.					
Guarantee	- The Tender should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of (1%) of the tender value valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF MINOR TENDER COMMITTEE, Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C. - The bid bond should including 5% VAT. - The bid bond should be submitted as seprate envelope. - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from bid bond requirements. - Any tender not accompanied by a Tender Bond shall be rejected.					
Terms and Conditions	- The Tender shall be valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission including any extension thereof. - If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date. - NESC is not bound to accept the lowest (or highest) Tenderer. - Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization - NESC gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. - Failure to comply with the instructions in tender document may lead to disqualification.					



Bank Muscat's branches main interface translating bank's vision 'To Serve You Better, Everyday'

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat's network of branches distributed across the Sultanate of Oman's Governorates represents the Bank's main interface and a major channel set to deliver a suite of diverse banking services and facilities to customers.

Since its establishment in 1982, Bank Muscat has taken strategic steps and implemented a long-term plan to expand its network of branches, design them with the best business safety and security standards, and equip them with the latest technologies that keep pace with the recent developments.

The Bank's endeavour to expand its branches stems from the Executive Management's belief in the necessity to save customers' time and effort and make the various services and facilities accessible.

Therefore, the Bank today is taking immense pride in its expansive network of branches reaching a total of 178 branches, out of which 5 branches are dedicated to corporate customers, 27 branches are dedicated for Meethaq's Islamic Banking customers, 5 branches for institutional customers, and over 850 ATMs and CDMs available at



Bank Muscat officials are pictured during media visit event.

the branches across the Sultanate of Oman.

This, consequently, makes the Bank's services and facilities available even in the less populated areas which are equipped with mobile ATMs and bus-based banking Units, aiming to benefit as many customers as possible.

To maintain its continuous growth and success and uphold its leadership positioning in the Sultanate of Oman's banking industry, the Bank persists in

implementing new strategies with more branch inauguration plans as well as relocation of some of other branches while ensuring they are in distinctive and spacious areas and that they feature modern designs and technological advancements, aiming to keep pace with the recent and future advancements, enhance customers' banking experience, and strengthen the Bank's leadership position.

In line with its commitment to organising regular media visits,

Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has recently organised a media visit for a number of media representatives to the Bank's newly inaugurated branch in Al Mouj Street, Muscat.

The visit aimed to introduce the audience to the services and facilities offered to customers at the branches and to shed the light on the Bank's strategy of enhancing its branch network in terms of design, space, the types of services

and utilities available to enhance financial inclusion.

The visit also comprised a presentation on the wide range of banking services and facilities offered to customers at the branches. This, in essence, provides the audience with a room for an open exchange of ideas with officials from the Bank and to raise queries on the Banking services, thus, resulting in a strengthened and enhanced relationship between the Bank and its customers.

During the media conference, Bank Muscat's officials emphasised that the Bank's branches represent a main point of contact with its customers from across the Sultanate of Oman.

Therefore, the Bank ensures that its network of branches is equipped with a diverse suite of services and facilities to enable fast and seamless transaction processing and allow customers to enjoy an enhanced and one-of-a-kind banking experience. In addition, it is worth noting that Bank Muscat represents today the first choice for over 2 million customers.

The Bank's strategic plans of enhancing its network of branches with new and modern designs

demonstrates its commitment to keeping pace with the latest multi-aspect advancements.

The new branches are also designed to ensure the availability of a comfortable work environment characterised by safety and security features and equipped with qualified and experienced Omani employees to serve different customer groups, including persons with disabilities.

Bank Muscat officials said that customers may avail multiple services and offering when visiting the Bank's branches, including opening children saving accounts, requesting for personal financing, home financing, car financing as well as applying for various banking cards such as debit, credit, and prepaid cards.

In addition, to provide customers with the best services, most of the branches comprise desks customised to serve customers applying for home financing "Baituna" and "Sayyarati" financing, and other customised desks for "Najahi" Business Banking. These branches are also equipped with over 47 "Asalah" Private Banking centres distributed across the Sultanate of Oman.

Protiviti Oman, Nidaa Charity Team extend 'i on Hunger' initiative



Volunteers have come together in a remarkable display of unity and dedication.

MUSCAT: In a significant demonstration of compassion and community service, Protiviti Oman has partnered with Nidaa Charity Team to extend their 'i on Hunger' programme, directly impacting the lives of hundreds of families in need.

This initiative, a local adaptation of Protiviti's global campaign, focuses on packing distributing essential food boxes and toys to underprivileged families and children.

Volunteers from diverse backgrounds, including Protiviti team members, their clients, Sidrah women, and other business partners, have come together in a remarkable display of unity and dedication.

This year, the initiative reached a new height with an increasing number of food boxes packed and distributed, each filled with vital food staples.

Discussing the programme, Faiza al Rashdi, CEO of the Nidaa Charity Team, said, "The enduring charitable collaboration with Protiviti, now in its seventh consecutive year, reflects admirable cooperation, commitment, and positive influence.

Their involvement cultivates a culture of generosity, motivating volunteer efforts. We extend heartfelt appreciation for the continued dedication of Protiviti in elevating underprivileged families towards a dignified family life."

A volunteer shared her experience, stating, "Witnessing the children's faces light up as we arrived was truly moving. We're doing more than just providing food. We're bringing hope and a sense of belonging to these families."

In conclusion, the Country MD of Protiviti, Shatha al Maskiry remarked, "Our collaboration with Nidaa Charity Team, now in its seventh year, exemplifies the powerful results of shared efforts. We're not only supporting families in need but also inspiring a wave of positive change across the community."

The 'I on Hunger' campaign by Protiviti Oman, part of a global effort that has contributed over 15 million meals, continues to grow in scale and impact, demonstrating the profound impact that collective action and compassion can make in the lives of many.

Taj AlKhair and Sidco Foods join hands to bring Golden Fresh brand to Oman

MUSCAT: Taj AlKhair LLC, is a leading supplier of frozen foods in Oman has joined hands with UAE-based processed foods manufacturer, Sidco Foods to bring their flagship brand 'Golden Fresh' to Oman.

The companies held a launch conference in Muscat on December 1, 2023 which was attended by the entire sales team of Taj AlKhair, their MD, Sathianesan & Business Head C Vohra, and the MD of Sidco Foods, Munir Barmare.

Over the last decade, Sidco Foods has become one of the



Taj AlKhair and Sidco Foods officials are seen in this illustration image.

leading manufacturers & suppliers of processed meat, poultry, and

vegetarian products.

Taj AlKhair has become a

leading importer, distributor & supplier of frozen foods in Oman during the last decade. Congratulations to Taj AlKhair on acquiring the exclusive distributorship of Golden Fresh brand in Oman.

Golden Fresh have some unique products like Corndogs, Chunky Chicken Nuggets, Chicken Kofta, Falafel etc.

Vohra, Business Head at Taj AlKhair, while presenting the distribution & marketing plan, reiterated that the Golden Fresh brand will soon be available across all major supermarkets in Oman.

Chery Arrizo 8 shines at the Red Sea International Film Festival

MUSCAT: The 2023 RISFF took place from November 30 to December 9 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, bringing together top global film producers, international media, industry professionals, and film enthusiasts.

As the exclusive partner, Chery provided designated vehicle services for this RISFF. Its inaugural business flagship sedan, the Arrizo 8, took centre stage at this cinematic feast, showcasing the profound integration of "automobiles and films" and the ultimate charm of the celebrity vehicle.

At the RISFF's gala ceremony, more than 120 renowned film and television stars, along with celebrities, attended the event. The Chery Arrizo 8 made a prominent appearance as the official designated celebrity vehicle, escorting all the stars.

The sparkling Arrizo 8 fleet boulevard complemented each other, creating a picturesque scene at this RISFF and showcasing the charm of the celebrity vehicle. The positioning of the Chery Arrizo 8 as a business flagship sedan reflects a discreet and elegant temperament.



The Chery Arrizo 8 made a prominent appearance as the official designated celebrity vehicle.

The vehicle boasts impressive features such as aesthetic design, a luxurious interior, intelligent technology, and comprehensive safety, demonstrating extraordinary charm and outstanding prowess.

Guided by the design philosophy "Glare in watery", the Arrizo 8 combines the dynamic beauty of water with the flickering play of

light, captivating viewers with its artistic temperament, which is in harmony with the dazzling starlight at the RISFF.

The front grille, resembling flowing streams intertwined with watery, maintains a discreet and elegant temperament without compromising its sharpness. The sharp double waistlines on the vehicle's side, along with the smooth top line and sleek profile, exude both the agile essence of a sports vehicle and the sophisticated ambiance of an executive sedan.

The wing-shaped taillights and matrix-style brake lights, coupled with flowing turn signals, create an exclusive, sophisticated ambiance of a business sedan.

Recently, Kantar and Google jointly released the 2023 Chinese Global Brand Builders Top 50. Chery is ranked as the best Chinese global brand builder in cars and 14th in the overall list and its brand power has achieved strong growth. Chery Automobile took the first spot among all Chinese automotive brands in J D Power 2023 China Initial Quality StudySM(IQS).

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

Fiscal sustainability programme nears completion of phase 2



NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, DEC 11

As the National Programme for Fiscal Sustainability and Financial Sector Development, commonly known as 'Es'idamah', approaches the conclusion of its second development phase (Q3-2023 to the end of 2023), the programme remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing Oman's financial landscape.

In a recent workshop held in collaboration with the British Growth Fund (BGF), 'Es'idamah' brought together key stakeholders, including Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Finance, and CEOs of local banks, for a meaningful exchange.

With the imminent conclusion of this development phase, the workshop aimed to underscore achievements and set the stage for the next steps. One of the focal points was strengthening competitiveness within the banking sector.

The emphasis persisted on designing financing options that not only address the diverse needs of businesses but also contribute to the expansion of the overall finance market. Stakeholders explored strategies and potential collaborations, laying the groundwork for sustained economic growth.

Simultaneously, the workshop delved into innovative financial solutions tailored for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Recognising the role SMEs play in economic growth, discussions centred on collaborative efforts with local banks to devise and implement groundbreaking financing options.

The aim is to empower SMEs, fostering an environment where they can thrive and significantly contribute to Oman's economic fabric.

The timing of the workshop is significant, given the programme's impending transition from the second development phase. As the period draws to a close, the focus on strategic collaboration aligns with the broader vision of fiscal sustainability and sectoral growth.

'Es'idamah', steering Oman through this critical phase, underscores its dedication to achieving comprehensive and sustainable development in the country's financial sector.

Credit Oman workshop prepares Dhofar businesses for export markets

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, DEC 11

On a mission to empower Omani businesses to conquer global markets, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Dhofar branch), alongside Credit Oman - the leading export credit agency of the country, hosted the 'Salalah Workshop to Boost Omani Exports with Credit Oman Insights.'

Credit Oman's Ahmed bin Hamdan al Farsi emphasised the importance of credit insurance for Omani exporters, highlighting its ability to mitigate both commercial and non-commercial risks, enabling them to sell confidently and securely.

He presented Credit Oman's various services, including local credit insurance, export credit insurance, and multi-buyer policies, explaining their role in enhancing Oman's export system.

Aspiring exporters actively



Ahmed al Farsi emphasised the importance of credit insurance for exporters.

participated in the workshop, gaining invaluable knowledge and tools to navigate the ever-evolving landscape of international trade.

Key themes explored included:

- Demystifying the Omani Export System: Participants received a comprehensive overview of the current export framework, encompassing regulations, procedures, and

available support mechanisms, ensuring they are well-equipped for smooth operation.

- Harnessing Credit Oman's Expertise: Attendees were exposed to Credit Oman's diverse range of insurance products, strategically designed to mitigate trade risks and safeguard exporters from payment uncertainties.
- Proven Strategies for Export

Success: Renowned experts shared practical insights and industry best practices, empowering businesses to develop winning strategies for conquering the global marketplace.

■ Fostering Meaningful Connections: The workshop provided a fertile ground for participants to network with industry leaders, government officials, and potential collaborators, paving the way for valuable partnerships.

This initiative coincides with Credit Oman's remarkable achievements in 2022. The agency achieved a significant 148% increase in its total insured sales volume for exports and local sales, reaching a value of RO 333.2 million.

This impressive growth was fuelled by a 135% surge in insured export sales (RO 187.8 million) and a 174% increase in insured local sales (RO 145.4 million).

Furthermore, Credit Oman

recently announced an 8% growth in insured Omani exports and domestic sales for Q3 2023, with a total value of RO 259 million.

This upward trajectory reflects Oman's thriving economy, driven by effective government initiatives and Credit Oman's innovative insurance services supporting local businesses.

Notably, the food and consumer goods sector led the charge in insured sales, followed by the petrochemical and plastic sector, which witnessed a remarkable 281% growth.

Despite slight declines in the clothing and packaging sectors, Credit Oman says it is committed to bolstering the Omani export system and empowering local businesses.

The Salalah workshop aims to equip Omani exporters with the necessary tools and knowledge to confidently enter the global arena and achieve lasting success.

Global trade to contract by 5 per cent in 2023



An aerial view shows containers and cargo vessels at the Qingdao port in Shandong province, China. – Reuters

GENEVA: Global trade is set to contract by 5% in 2023 compared to last year, the United Nations trade body said, with an overall pessimistic forecast for 2024.

In its Global Trade Update, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) projected that commerce this year would amount to approximately \$30.7 trillion.

Trade in goods is expected to contract by nearly \$2 trillion in 2023, or 8%, but services trade

should increase by about \$500 billion, or 7%.

UNCTAD attributed this contraction in global trade in part to an underperformance of exports from developing countries.

"Global trade has experienced a decline throughout 2023, primarily influenced by diminished demand in developed nations, underperformance in East Asia economies, and a decrease in commodity prices," UNCTAD said. — Reuters

Arab Opec ministers meet as COP28 discusses phasing out oil and gas

DOHA: Opec's top Arab energy ministers arrived in Doha on Monday for the 12th Arab Energy Conference as countries clash at the UN's COP28 climate summit over a possible agreement to phase-out fossil fuels.

Opec Secretary-General Haitham al Ghais in a letter dated Dec 6 urged Opec members to reject any COP28 deal which targets fossil fuels rather than emissions.

Countries in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) hold about 80 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves, most of which is concentrated among Middle Eastern members.

For the majority of those countries, oil revenue is the main source of income, so any message from COP28 aimed at slashing oil and gas demand becomes a question of survival.

Ministers from Iraq, Kuwait, Algeria, Libya and non-Opec member Oman arrived for the energy meeting, as well as Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz



Opec's Secretary-General Haitham al Ghais talks to youth during an event at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai. – Reuters

bin Salman who had been in Dubai for the UN climate summit.

United Arab Emirates Energy Minister Suhail bin Mohamed al Mazrouei was absent.

The UAE, the second Arab country to host the climate summit after Egypt in 2022 and an Opec member, has alongside other Gulf energy producers called for what they consider a more realistic energy transition

in which fossil fuels retain a role in securing energy supply while industries decarbonise.

Sultan al Jaber, who is chief of UAE state oil giant ADNOC, is president of COP28, and has maintained that a phase down of fossil fuels is inevitable and essential, but as part of a transition that takes into account the circumstances of each country and region. — Reuters

MoU signings to mark start of Green Hydrogen Summit

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 11

Several Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) are set to be signed on the opening day, Tuesday, December 12, 2023, of the Green Hydrogen Summit Oman (GHSO), hosted under the auspices of Eng Salim bin Nasser al Auqi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat.

The three-day event, highlighting the Sultanate of Oman's aspirations to become a leading global producer and exporter of renewable hydrogen and its derivatives, will kick off on Tuesday with the formal inauguration of a major exhibition showcasing technologies and

innovations from around the world.

Salim al Auqi, accompanied by local and international dignitaries, will tour various pavilions starting at 8 am before delivering a ministerial keynote at 9 am.

The highpoint of the opening session will be the signing of an agreement, as well as MoUs, by key entities, including Hydrom (the master planner and orchestrator of Oman's green hydrogen industry), ACME (an India-based group currently developing a green hydrogen project in Duqm SEZ), and Takhzeen (an Omani-Italian partnership specialising in energy storage solutions). Details about the MoUs will be shared at a media briefing planned at the venue soon after the keynote address.



A key highlight of the proceedings on the opening day is the launch of the 'Future Energy Leaders' competition, where local and international students will present solutions to some of the world's toughest energy challenges.

Dr Sausan al Riyami, Director

of Oman Hydrogen Centre (OHC), will provide an overview of the competition, with Dr Intisar al Busaidy of Sultan Qaboos University welcoming the contestants.

Taking centre stage on Day 1 of GHSO 2023 is an expo

featuring more than 40 exhibitors from China, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, Australia, the UAE, France, India, and The Netherlands, among other countries. Turnout over the course of the 3-day show is projected to surpass 5,000 visitors.

The main summit proceedings, commencing on Wednesday, December 13, will cover a wide spectrum of topics at the heart of Oman's energy transition and green energy future. Over 100 distinguished speakers will address the Summit and the Masterclass sessions.

Ensuring enriching content during GHSO 2023 are multiple 'side-events', notably the 'Energy Executive Circle (EEC)', a high-profile forum set to take place at 6

pm on December 13 at JW Marriott Muscat. The event will be attended by government ministers, C-suite officials, and energy leaders from across the globe.

GHSO 2023 has been organised by Birba, Oman's leading energy-centric events company, with the support of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals. Sponsorship support for the event has come from all key players slated to participate in Oman's green hydrogen economy.

The forum brings together industry leaders, policymakers, and innovators in joint discussion sessions to present the latest policies, legislation, and modern technology aimed at accelerating the pace of energy transition and promoting sustainable energy solutions.

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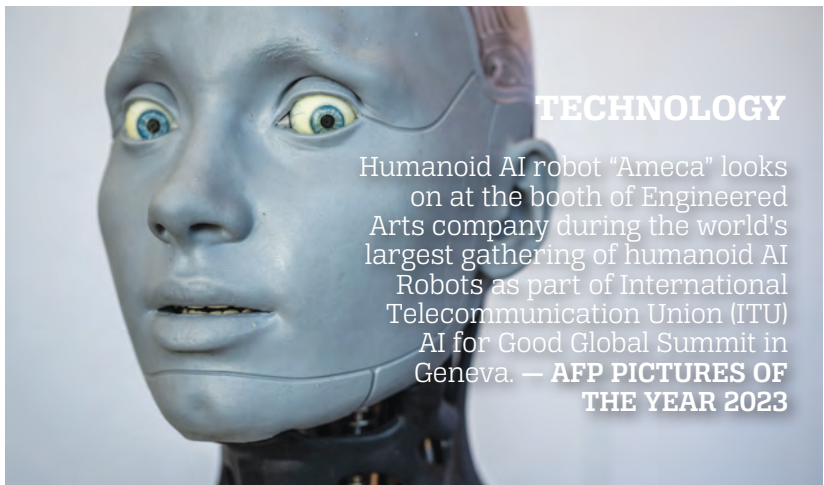
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TECHNOLOGY

Humanoid AI robot "Ameca" looks on at the booth of Engineered Arts company during the world's largest gathering of humanoid AI Robots as part of International Telecommunication Union (ITU) AI for Good Global Summit in Geneva. — AFP PICTURES OF THE YEAR 2023



CHANGING WORLD

A woman reacts standing in front of her earthquake-damaged house in the old city in Marrakesh on September 9, 2023. — AFP PICTURES OF THE YEAR 2023



ENTERTAINMENT

Bollywood actor Aamir Khan attends 'The CSR Journal Excellence Awards 2023' at Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) in Mumbai. — AFP



FASHION

Models present creations by Kenyan designer Morgan Azedy during the main fashion show during the Africa Fashion Week, at the delight technical college in Nairobi. —AFP



TRAVEL TALES

Workers build ice structures for the 25th Harbin Ice and Snow World in Harbin, in China's northern Heilongjiang province. — AFP

art & life

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Winter is the optimal time to do these activities

Winter in Oman entices with cooler weather, perfect for outdoor pursuits like hiking, camping, and cultural festivals. Diverse landscapes offer memorable experiences, attracting tourists to explore nature's wonders... P20



FASHION

Fashion world descends on UK's Manchester in Chanel show

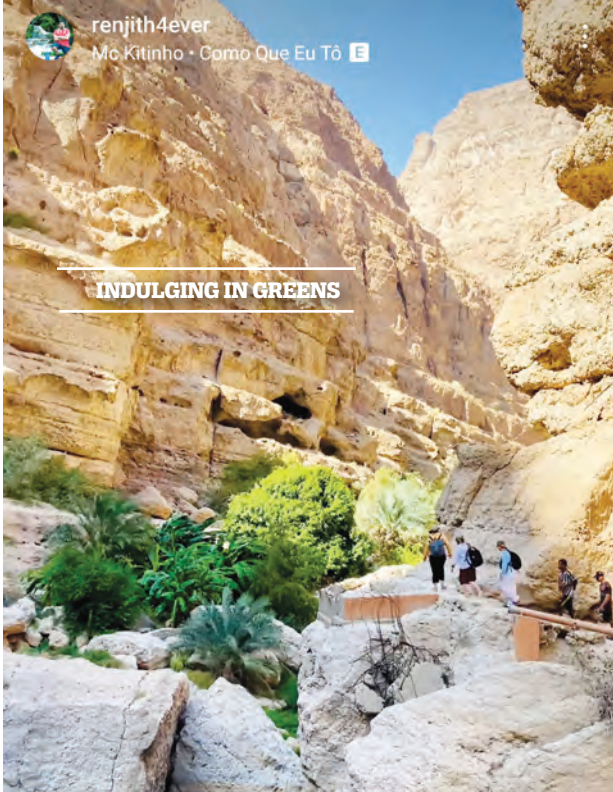
SCINTILLATING COLOURS AND celebrities lit up a gloomy Manchester on Thursday as the British city famous for its past textile industry flaunted the latest fashion in a prestigious

Chanel show. Lashed by rain and plunged into winter darkness from 3:30 pm, the city's gritty industrial heritage was not an obvious choice as the setting for the glitz and glamour of the French luxury group's Metiers d'Art event. But the show proved otherwise as models strutted down the catwalk sporting dazzling bermuda shorts, mini-skirts and eye-catching outfits under a temporary covering in a city-centre street. Tweed suits — a quintessential British classic — pearls and camelia also captured attention. Actor Hugh Grant, director Sofia Coppola, local football stars Ruben Dias and Luke Shaw as well as brand ambassadors Charlotte Casiraghi and Kristen Stewart were among the celebrities in attendance. "I loved the rock attitudes, the 60s looks," British actor Jenna Coleman said. The northern English city was a



hub of the 19th-century industrial revolution, processing half of the world's cotton in 1860. It has since reinvented itself as a centre for culture and sport, home to Manchester United and Manchester City football clubs and producing music icons including The Smiths, Simply Red, Oasis and Stone Roses. The English National Opera will soon leave London to call Manchester home. Chanel's creative director Virginie Viard said Manchester was the starting point for a musical culture that changed the world, inspiring her to bring the show there for its pioneering and creative spirit. The Manchester City Council welcomed the event as a "fantastic homage" to the city and the regard for it worldwide. "There are plenty of references to the city. Having a Chanel show here is amazing for the city," added Emma Kara, who lives in the region. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Archaeologists discover 'prison bakery' in ancient Pompeii

ARCHAEOLOGISTS EXCAVATING the ancient Roman city of Pompeii have uncovered a "prison bakery" where slaves and blindfolded donkeys were kept locked up underground to grind grain for bread, officials said this week.

Underneath a house in the ruins they found "a cramped room with no view of the outside world and with small windows high in the wall, with iron bars, to let the light in", the Archaeological Park of Pompeii announced on Friday.

Archaeologists deduced they had found a "prison bakery", the Unesco World Heritage Site near Naples, southern Italy, said on its

website.

They also discovered "indentations" in the floor "to coordinate the movement of the animals, forced to walk around for hours, blindfolded".

The house, on the 44-hectare site that is currently under excavation, was divided into a residential area "decorated with exquisite Fourth Style frescoes" and a "productive quarter", the bakery.

Three skeletons were discovered in one room of the bakery, showing that the house was inhabited.

The bakery, where slaves and animals were forced to perform



the backbreaking task of turning the millstones, had no doors or communication with the outside world.

SHOCKING SIDE OF ANCIENT WORLD

"It is, in other words, a space in which we have to imagine the presence of people of servile status whose freedom of movement the owner felt the need to restrict," wrote Pompeii director Gabriel Zuchtreigel in a scholarly article.

"It is the most shocking side of ancient slavery, the one devoid of both trusting relationships and promises of manumission, where

we were reduced to brute violence, an impression that is entirely confirmed by the securing of the few windows with iron bars."

The public can view more evidence of this harsh daily life in an exhibition called "The Other Pompeii: Ordinary Lives in the Shadow of Vesuvius" which opens at the Palestra Grande in Pompeii on December 15.

"(The exhibition is) dedicated to that myriad of individuals often forgotten by the historical sources, such as the slaves, who constituted the majority of the population and whose labour contribut-

ed in an important way not only to the economy, but also to the culture and social fabric of Roman civilization," the Pompeii authorities said.

Pompeii was devastated when nearby Mount Vesuvius erupted almost 2,000 years ago in 79 AD.

The ash and rock helped preserve many buildings almost in their original state, as well as forming eerie shapes around the curled-up corpses of victims of the disaster, thought to number around 3,000.

Pompeii is the second most visited tourist destination in Italy after the Colosseum in Rome. — AFP

LIFESTYLE

Epic Games, Lego join forces for latest 'Fortnite' game



TOY GIANT LEGO AND video-game leader Epic Games joined forces on Thursday to launch "Lego Fortnite" in a bid to grow a platform already used by hundreds of millions of people.

The game, which like prior Fortnite offerings is free to download, features the colourful animated landscape familiar to gamers but with figures who come from the Danish company's distinct universe.

While the setting resembles that of the original Fortnite game, first launched in 2017, the playable space in the Lego version is 19 times as big.

In the original Fortnite "Battle Royale," players win by eliminating competitors and remaining the sole survivor on the island.

The Lego game has two options, with the "survival" mode

pitting contestants against skeletons and menacing wolf-like figures and the more innocuous "sandbox" option lacking such threats and geared towards younger users.

Thursday's announcement marks the first significant project between Lego and Epic since the company announced in April 2022 that it, along with Sony, would invest \$2 billion in the North Carolina company.

The game's designers ensured that all the settings and characters who appear in the game could be built in the real world with Lego pieces.

"We are starting to build a real bridge between the physical and the digital world, which in a way... has never been done before," said Julia Goldin, chief product and marketing officer at Lego.

Lego also sees an opportunity to "invite a lot more committed digital players to experience the physical world of Lego bricks," Goldin said.

Adam Sussman, president of Epic Games, predicted broad interest for the game.

"This is really a product that is going to attract lots of kids but we also think it will attract teens and adults as well," Sussman said. Lego Fortnite will compete with massively popular video-games such as Minecraft or Animal Crossing.

"For the industry, it's great to have many hits, not a single hit," Sussman said. "When something is very popular, like this particular genre, the walls are very wide, (and) there's massive opportunities for innovation." — AFP

ENTERTAINMENT

RM and V of K-pop megagroup BTS to start mandatory military service



TWO MORE MEMBERS of K-pop phenomenon BTS, RM and V, were set to start mandatory South Korean military service on Monday, local media reported, with the final two members expected to enlist this week.

All able-bodied men in South Korea must serve at least 18 months in the military.

After a years-long debate about whether BTS deserved an exemption, Jin, the oldest member of the group, enlisted last year and his bandmates J-Hope and SUGA followed this year.

RM and V were set to begin their five-week basic training at an army boot camp in South Chungcheong province on

Monday, the Yonhap news agency reported.

RM — whose full name is Kim Nam-joon and is the leader of BTS — posted a message to fans late on Sunday, saying it will be "a time of learning and new inspirations".

"Goodbye for now. Let us be us, whenever and wherever! Let's meet in the future," he wrote on social media platform Weverse.

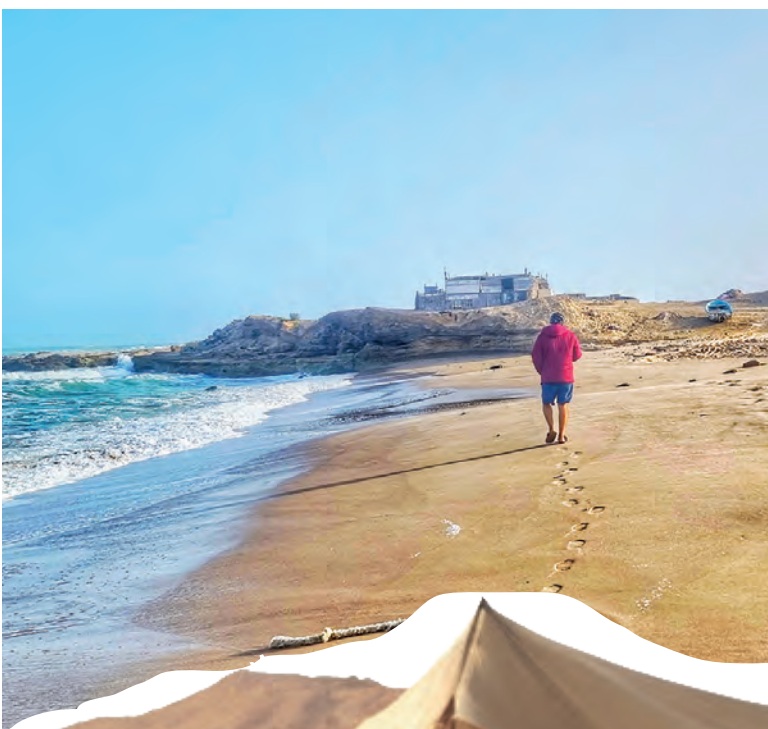
V — real name Kim Taehyung — shared selfies donning his newly shorn, military-approved buzzcut with sunglasses and a scarf.

"It has been a dream to wear sunglasses with a shaved head. I wanted to try it someday and

it worked out well," he wrote on Sunday on his Instagram account.

The septet has become a global cultural phenomenon, selling out stadiums around the world and dominating key US charts while raking in billions for South Korea's economy and building an international legion of fans known as ARMY.

Their label BIGHIT MUSIC had confirmed in November that the last four members of the group would enlist, but did not disclose additional details. The two remaining members, Jimin and Jung Kook, are due to enlist on Tuesday, according to local media. — AFP



Winter is the optimal time to do these activities

BY BALQEES AL ORAIMI

The Sultanate of Oman boasts a compelling case for tourists seeking an optimal time to explore its diverse landscapes and cultural offerings. Winter, spanning from November to March, emerges as the prime season for travellers to

Due to the favourable weather, outdoor activities such as hiking, camping, and discovering the country's natural wonders, including breathtaking wadis, majestic mountains, and captivating deserts, have become a trend. This is also the perfect time for vibrant cultural festivals and celebrations, and as such, visitors

such as Jabal Shams and Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, where temperatures drop below zero and there are opportunities for snow on some days. Some prefer camping in deserts like the Rub' al-Khalii desert. However, tourism in such places requires a guide, especially in the Bidiyah desert." Al Siyabi said that checking out



immerse themselves in the country's beauty for several compelling reasons. Winter ushers in cooler temperatures across Oman, particularly in governorates like Muscat and the mountainous terrains. The daytime weather becomes more agreeable, providing an inviting atmosphere for outdoor activities and sightseeing adventures.

can partake in traditional music, dance, and local customs, offering an immersive experience of the rich heritage of the country. For Ali bin Abdullah al Siyabi there are many places suitable for winter tourism in Oman. "It really depends on the interests and preferences of people. Some of them prefer places where temperatures drop significantly,

wadis during winter can be a challenge, and this is why not a lot of people visit because the water can get very cold, which strips the fun from the activities. "There are many fun activities one can do during the winter. For me, the variety is excellent. From hiking to camping, from fishing to riding bicycles, and from watching concerts or attending festivals,



8 Top Activities To Try This Winter

CYCLING
Explore scenic routes around towns or countryside areas on a bicycle. The moderate winter temperatures make it an enjoyable outdoor activity.

VISIT HISTORICAL SITES
Explore Oman's rich cultural heritage by visiting historical sites such as Nizwa Fort, Bahla Fort, or the ancient city of Sumhuram.

BIRD WATCHING
Oman's diverse landscape attracts various bird species. Winter is an excellent time for bird watching; visit places like Barr Al Hikman or Masirah Island for bird sightings.

DHOW CRUISES
Enjoy a traditional dhow cruise along the coast, especially in places like Musandam, to take in the scenic beauty and possibly spot dolphins.

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS
Check out local festivals and events happening during winter, such as the Muscat Festival or the National Day celebrations, to immerse yourself in Omani culture and traditions.

CAMPING
With cooler nights during winter, camping in Oman's beautiful deserts or mountainous regions like Jebel Shams can be a serene experience.

HIKING AND TREKKING
Explore various trails and mountain ranges like Jebel Akhdar or Wadi Shab. Winter offers more comfortable temperatures for outdoor activities.

BEACH VISITS
While it might not be typical for some colder countries, Oman's winter provides a comfortable climate for enjoying its stunning beaches. Visit places like Muscat or Salalah to relax by the sea.

there's always something fun to do with the family," Al Siyabi added. Maryam al Kharousi believes that the best time to enjoy domestic tourism is winter, which is the time that everyone waits to visit tourist places in Oman. Al Kharousi said that during winter, she ventures to different beaches as the weather is perfect for lounging on the shore. "We can be at the Bimmah Sinkhole in Qurayat in one day or Wadi Shab the next. Hiking around beautiful farms like those in Tiwi, or boating somewhere in Sur or nearby areas are fun activities to engage in," Al Kharousi shared. Al Kharousi also recommended Ras Al Jinz Turtle Reserve as a winter destination because of the educational and fun interaction with sea turtles. Exploring Bidiyah in winter stands out as an unforgettable trip. Camping amidst its

stunning sands remains a cherished memory for many who visited Oman. Winter tourism thrives, primarily in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, owing to its array of quaint towns and villages. Sur, especially in winter, offers a plethora of activities. Adventurers can tour Sur's beaches aboard grand ships, perfect for families and youths. Evenings in Ras Al Hadd and Ras Al Jinz, renowned for turtle reserves, promise enchantment. If you are planning to spend winter in Oman, remember that hotels especially good ones with access to beaches and mountains can be often full. If you are a nature lover, you would also enjoy spotting rare turtles, and dolphins, and diving to beautiful underwater spots. History enthusiasts can explore ancient sites, castles and museums.