

HM condolences to Bahrain King

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, on the death of Shaikha Noura bint Salman bin Hamad al Khalifa. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sympathies and prayed to Allah the Almighty to rest the departed soul in peace in paradise and grant her family patience.

MUSCAT HM THANKED BY PARTICIPANT'S

The participants at the ninth meeting of the GCC Anti-Corruption Ministerial Committee, hosted by the Sultanate of Oman, sent a cable of thanks and appreciation to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. They expressed their sincere thanks and appreciation to His Majesty for the warm welcome and excellent hospitality they received, praying to Allah the Almighty to grant His Majesty good health and well-being and to protect the Sultanate of Oman and perpetuate the bounties of stability and prosperity on it. — ONA

SOUTHERN RUNWAY OF AIRPORT READY

The Civil Aviation Authority has announced the successful completion of the rehabilitation of the southern runway at Muscat International Airport, effectively enabling a significant ramp-up of domestic and international air traffic at Oman's principal international airport. With the southern runway back in operation, Muscat International Airport will be able to handle multiple take-off and landings, while also contributing to noise mitigation experienced by residents of neighbourhoods located in the vicinity of the airport. The Authority indicated that the runway is currently being prepared to begin the movement of aircraft after obtaining the necessary certificates in accordance with safety requirements and regulations for the start of landing and take-off of aircraft. SEE P13

Before HM, ambassadors take oath



Before His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Khalid bin Salim Bamkhalif, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Morocco, took the oath of office at Al Barakah Palace on Monday.

MUSCAT: Before His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, a number of ambassadors took the oath of office at Al Barakah Palace on Monday. They were Khalid bin Salim Bamkhalif, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Morocco; Ahmed bin Mohammed al Araiimi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the French Republic; Assayida Wafa bint Jabr al Busaidiyah, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Uzbekistan; Mal Allah bin Mahmoud al Balushi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Hungary; Shaikh Fahd bin Abdulrahman al Ojaili, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Jordan; Fahd bin Sulaiman al Kharousi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan; Nasraa bint Salim al Hashimiyah, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Kenya; Saif bin Rashid al Jahwari, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Turkiye; and Sayyid Ammar bin Abdullah al Busaidy, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the State of Qatar. The oath taking ceremony was attended by Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy. — ONA

SEE ALSO P3

NO APPEALS AGAINST ELECTORAL PROCESS

64% VOTER TURNOUT CONSTITUTES A GOOD INDICATOR

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@Afrahalbalushia

The Supreme Committee of the Majlis Ash'shura 10th Term Elections affirmed that it did not receive any appeals about the electoral process. It announced that there is still time to submit such appeals.

This was revealed during a press conference held on Monday on the Majlis Ash'shura's 10th Term Elections that took place on Sunday in all parts of Oman via "Intakhib" app.

Shaikh Al Mukhtar bin Abdullah al Harthy, Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Court and Chairman of the Supreme Committee of the Majlis Ash'shura's 10th Term Elections, said that period set for submission of appeals begins on Monday and lasts for 10 days. The appeals can be filed via the designated electronic system as the committee will make decisions on the appeals within 15 days from the date filing claims.

Al Harthy stressed that the electoral process proceeded with utmost transparency and that an initial sorting of the candidates and the votes they obtained took place. A team from Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) followed up the elections and the whole process that was carried electronically, without any human intervention, thereby realising full transparency, said Al Harthy.

Mohammed bin Said al Balushi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information and Chairman of the Media Committee, thanked all



The officials addressing the press conference on Monday.

64% of winners are new faces

The Supreme Committee of the Majlis Ash'shura 10th Term Elections affirmed that voting went successfully, noting that 64 per cent of the winners elected on Sunday are new faces while the percentage improved to over 65 per cent. Speaking about gender-based participation, men constituted 52 per cent of the voters, while 48 per cent were women. "There was an increase in the voting percentage, and in some wilayats, it was more than 95 per cent," it was revealed. Meanwhile, the number of female voters in Dhofar Governorate stood at 35,000. The members highlighted the first-of-its-kind Intakhib application, noting that it has reduced the cost involved in the election process.

media sections (print, audio and electronic media) for the excellent coverage of the event.

This coverage, he added, showcased the novel electronic voting experience through the "Intakhib" application.

Al Balushi also lauded the efforts exerted by the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Interior to keep citizens updated about the electoral process. He observed that the 64 per cent voter turnout constituted a good indicator and an evidence of public awareness about the importance of participating in the election.

Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and

Information Technology, Chairman of the Technical Committee, said that the general evaluation of the electoral process was satisfactory. He added that all plans have been implemented and goals achieved in general. Technology facilitated the electoral process, showing that 100,000 votes were registered during the first hour of voting, he added.

Dr Al Shaithani pointed out that technical solutions offered by "Intakhib" app were strongly present, irrespective of the challenges, and that the app helped cut down the cost of the electoral process. He added that close observation of the app showed that it fared well, with hardly any significant anomalies reported.

TURN TO P4

Israeli ground forces push deeper into Gaza

GAZA: Israeli troops and tanks attacked Gaza's main northern city from both sides on Monday, three days after they began a major ground offensive in the Palestinian enclave that has drawn more international appeals for civilians to be protected.

Israel's military said it had struck more than 600 targets over the past few days as it expanded ground operations in the Gaza Strip, where Palestinians are in dire need of fuel, food and clean water as the war enters its fourth week.

Israel renewed warnings for civilians to move from the north of the tiny, densely populated enclave to the south as it began an advance into Gaza late on Friday.

Many Palestinians have stayed put for fear of becoming homeless like previous generations, and alarmed by Israeli aerial strikes further south.

Fadi, who lives in the Jabalia refugee camp on Gaza City's northern outskirts and declined to give his last name, said the area was now in mortal danger from Israel's ground offensive with tanks rumbling on its fringes. But he vowed not to flee.

"The entire place here is full of people. No one in the entire neighbourhood has left. We are staying," he said by phone. "Whether tanks or planes, there will not be another displacement (of Palestinians). That is our decision even if that will mean our martyrdom (death)." On Monday, residents said Israeli forces carried out dozens of air strikes on Gaza City's eastern side, with some reporting the roar of tanks rolling in amid exchanges of fire. A social media post appeared to show one tank on the main Salahudeen Road that connects the city to the enclave's south. SEE ALSO P6&7



Palestinian girls carry bags of bread in the Nuseirat refugee camp, in the central Gaza Strip on Monday. — AFP

OPINION

P8

Hyesha Barrett

Give yourself time during the grieving process

P16

Dr Yousuf Hamed al Balushi

Duqm sustainable growth

OVERUSE OF SKIN PRODUCTS HARMFUL



In an age when the market is flooded with a plethora of creams promising radiant and flawless skin, users find it difficult which products are genuine. Using too many skincare products with powerful active ingredients can cause dryness, redness, and irritation. DETAILS ON P4



Future planning to get smarter with Greater Muscat project

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

As part of the The Greater Muscat project, the capital's future planning will include the presence of hotels, commercial establishments, and government buildings like ministries side by side, with the aim of increasing activity and vitality in the region. This will also help in designing plans to avoid random distribution of residential and commercial areas with concepts of transportation, housing, and the environment expected to undergo significant changes in the coming years. The gradual implementation of the project will take off in 2024 with a special focus on developing the transport system (including Muscat Metro Project), promoting infrastructure and environment protection. Public transport is expected to contribute to reducing greenhouse emissions by nearly 44 per cent. Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning (MoHUP) said the project highlights the natural

blending of environmental, transportation, and economic factors in the Governorate, which will include the Wilayat of Barka in the future. He said development of modern cities and the potential economic impact of major cities on the economy of the Sultanate of Oman, emphasising their contribution to population growth and job creation. Speaking to the Observer, an official at the ministry said, "We are in the process of involving active discussions and inviting feedback from the public by involving all stakeholders in the discussion." According to estimates, the number of people living in Greater Muscat, including Barka, will increase to 36 per cent from 28 per cent by 2040, and contribute around 49 per cent to the national GDP by 2040. Around 48 per cent of the workforce in 2040 will be based in the Greater Muscat Region. The businesses will focus on service and financial centres, hospitality and commerce, dry freeports and carbon neutral technologies.



The gradual implementation of the project will take off in 2024 with a special focus on developing the transport system



HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, presided over the Omani Youth Day celebration

Omani Youth Day celebrated

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, presided over the Omani Youth Day celebration held at Al Mouj Walk, on Sunday. The winners of the fourth Youth Excellence Competition were feted during the event. The accompanying exhibition, opening to the public until October 30, showcases youth's experience.

The exhibition screens also display leading personalities who are sources of inspiration for younger generations in the artistic, cultural, sports, scientific, research and economic fields. The event witnessed the signing of sever agreements including for the establishment of the Youth Centre in the Wilayat of Sur in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate with the support of Oman LNG, a

funding agreement for establishing a public library within the Youth Center with the support of the Saud Bahwan Charitable Foundation (SBCF), an agreement for supporting youth programmes and activities of the Youth Center with the support of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI). Also feted at the event were the best three youth start-up enterprises

and the sponsors of the youth sector for the year 2023 namely: Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), Oman LNG, Occidental Oman, Vodafone Oman, Al Madina Real Estate Company, Oman Oil Marketing Company, ITHCA Group, Audi Oman, CC Energy Development Oman and Al Mouj Muscat. — ONA



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Experts discuss urban planning technology

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 30

The second day of the 'October Urban Conference and the First Gulf Housing Week' at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre attracted participation from diverse national and international sectors, including government, private, academic, and community entities, with international representation also present. The event featured a series of informative sessions. The proceedings began with a panel discussion titled 'Urban Resilience and Lessons Learned from Climate Conditions in the Sultanate of Oman' under the auspices of Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance. The panel included the ministers of Housing and Urban Planning, Transport and Communications and information Technology, Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Chairman of the Public Services Regulatory Authority, and the Assistant Inspector General of Police and Customs for Operations. This session discussed urban strategic policies and planning standards for

managing areas exposed to flood and climate risks. It emphasised the importance of preparing riverbeds to reduce flood risks and discussed policies for responding to and recovering from the effects of climate conditions. Additionally, the participants discussed the role of the National Emergency Management Committee and the cooperation between government agencies in combating climate conditions. Several working papers were presented in this context, covering topics such as creating unified government maps for riverbeds, flood protection efforts through dam construction, and geographical data. In the field of housing and urban planning, topics such as urban monitoring and the importance of modern technology and smart cities in making cities more resilient and sustainable were discussed. The session also focused on developing partnerships between the public and private sectors in housing projects, housing market challenges, and proposing mechanisms to enhance private sector participation in these



The proceedings began with a panel discussion titled 'Urban Resilience and Lessons Learned from Climate Conditions in Oman' under the auspices of Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance. — ONA

projects. Working papers were presented on innovations and modern applications, the framework for integrating geographical data and the importance of improving geographical data integration in Oman. Rural housing applications and their importance in building accurate databases were also discussed during the sessions. The participants also discussed how modern technology and artificial intelligence can enhance urban planning and improve urban quality and monitoring. The third day of the event is set to feature a panel discussion among dignitaries

on 'Housing Projects and Plans in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries.' The participants include Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning; Minister of Energy and Infrastructure in the United Arab Emirates; Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and Housing in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; Minister of Social Development and Family Affairs in Qatar; Minister of Housing and Urban Planning in the Kingdom of Bahrain; and Director-General of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare in Kuwait. Jassim Mohammad al Bedaiwi, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, will moderate this panel.



Before HM, ambassadors take oath of office



Ahmed bin Mohammed al Araini, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to France



Assayida Wafa bint Jabr al Busaidiyah, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Uzbekistan



Mal Allah bin Mahmoud al Balushi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Hungary



Shaikh Fahd bin Abdulrahman al Ojali, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Jordan



Fahd bin Sulaiman al Kharousi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan



Nasraa bint Salim al Hashimiyah, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Kenya



Saif bin Rashid al Jahwari, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Turkiyi



Sayyid Ammar bin Abdullah al Busaidy, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the State of Qatar



Muttrah waterfront brimming with tourism season



The big ships that are expected to call at the Port Sultan Qaboos are AIDAcosma, MSC Virtuosa, and AIDAprima

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Muttrah Waterfront and Souq areas of the capital are brimming with visitors with the beginning of the cruise and the regular tourism season, which started last week.

Speaking to the Observer, businesses at the Souq said there is a high turnout of foreign tourists for this time of the year compared to the past few years.” An owner of a shop selling collectibles said, “We had just one cruise ship last week, but overall the tourist footfall at the waterfront is picking up. Weather in the evenings is also getting pleasant, but the problem is business is not the same across the board. Some food joints are generally doing well because the number of quality food joints is limited. Regarding souvenir shops, visitors are spoilt for choices, and it has been tough the past few

months.” The extended summer and heatwaves also kept away local visitors from the Souq.

CRYSTAL SYMPHONY SHIP

With the Sultanate of Oman hosting several conferences this year, the waterfront has also been receiving several foreign and VIP delegates.

The Port Sultan Qaboos (PSQ) received the Crystal Symphony ship on October 24, but the ships to arrive in the next few days are AIDAbella (October 28) and Azamara Journey (November 11).

The big ships that are expected to call at the Port Sultan Qaboos are AIDAcosma (over 6,000 passengers), MSC Virtuosa (over 5,700 passengers), and AIDAprima (over 3,000 passengers). The Khasab Port will receive its first ship on November 1. The Port Sultan Qaboos attracted 74 cruise ships and 149,000 passengers in 2022,

contributing around RO4 million. These ships also contributed to the recovery of the tourism sector in the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman through various tour packages that were sold on ships.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) has been conducting a study with an international company on the readiness of the ports of the Sultanate of Oman to receive more cruise ships and private yachts, as cruise tourism has the potential to generate millions of riyals annually. According to Haitham bin Mohammed al Ghassani, Director-General of Tourism Promotion at MoHT, the ministry is working to make the Sultanate of Oman one of the most important destinations in the world to attract cruise ships by investing in the coastal areas of the country, spread over 3,165 square kilometres.

Overusing products in pursuit of flawless skin is harmful, say experts

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 30

In an age when the market is flooded with a plethora of creams promising radiant and flawless skin, users find it difficult to which products are genuine.

From cleansers to toners and serums, there is a diverse range of skincare products. Some claim to do everything, from removing impurities to moisturising your skin or even eliminating fine lines and wrinkles.

Using too many skincare products with powerful active ingredients can cause dryness, redness, and irritation. According to Dr Mariam al Hadrami, a dermatologist, people tend to assume that more is better when it comes to skincare products for their face, but doing so can actually lead to “irritating your skin to a degree it can’t tolerate.”

Dr Al Hadrami cautioned against using skin-lightening products that many especially women buy in an attempt to lighten their skin. She explained that using skin-lightening products has a harmful effect on the skin, especially since they are chemical compounds. She noted that there are specific cases in which the use of lightening creams is allowed.

Dr Al Hadrami emphasised that conditions like pregnancy and vitiligo (autoimmune disorder that causes patches of skin to lose pigment or colour) require the use



Using too many skincare products with powerful active ingredients can cause dryness, redness, and irritation

of skin-lightening products with specific concentrations of certain substances to even out skin tone. She added that using certain products for a long time can contribute to premature skin aging.

Furthermore, Dr Al Hadrami emphasised that skin-lightening products are primarily pharmaceutical compounds designed to treat skin pigmentation problems resulting from medical conditions. Indiscriminate use of these

products can lead to unintended side effects.

In her advisory, Dr Al Hadrami recommended several practical steps for a balanced skincare routine. She advocated for the use of sun protection creams to shield the skin from harmful UV rays and discouraged the use of skin-lightening products, cautioning against their promotion.

“If you feel discomfort in your skin after cleansing your face and using other exfoliating products, it’s a sign that you are overusing products. Washing your face too often or using harsh facial cleansers can strip your skin of its natural oils, leading to dryness. This might prompt you to use a range of serums and moisturisers in an attempt to hydrate your skin. However, it’s not guaranteed to achieve the desired benefit,” Dr Al Hadrami added.

Dr Al Hadrami says multiple skincare products can make your skin more sensitive and prone to irritation. Inflammation can be caused, depending on the combination of products used. For example, products like vitamin C serum and retinol should not be used at the same time. This combination is unsuitable for most skin types.

Dr Al Hadrami advised that a daily skincare routine should only consist of 3 or 4 products, including a moisturiser, sunscreen, and a gentle cleanser. Additionally, she suggested the use of spot treatments for those with acne-prone skin.



The drill seeks to enhance the preparedness of establishments to deal with electronic risks and threats. – ONA

9th national cybersecurity drill kicks off

MUSCAT: The 9th national cybersecurity drill, organised by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, kicked off with the participation of a large cross-section of government departments and infrastructure establishments.

The ministry is represented by the National Computer Emergency Readiness Team (CERT).

The event kicked off under the slogan of ‘Consolidating the efficiency of defence teams through security assessment of electronic systems.’

The drill seeks to enhance the preparedness of establishments to deal with electronic risks and threats. It highlights the best ways to handle security incidents. It also focuses on coordination and cooperation between the CERT and government departments. The drill raises awareness about the mechanisms and procedures used in handling adverse situations, besides training national human resources in the management of emergencies and security risks. — ONA

No appeals against electoral process

FROM P1

On his turn, Talal bin Ahmed al Saadi, Secretary of the Main Committee, said that there was an increase in the voting percentage and that in some wilayats participation exceeded 95 per cent, with a small gender margin.

Al Saadi pointed out that 1,500,000 citizens were entitled to vote, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). He added that 753,000 registered in the recent elections, comprising 50 per cent of total entitled voters. He said that registration in the electoral register is optional and not mandatory.

Commenting on the fact that no female candidate won a seat in the Majlis Ashshura’s 10th Term membership, Al Saadi said that the “quota” is not foreseen at the present time. He added that, in Dhofar Governorate, the number of female voters stood at 35,000. He affirmed that women constitute a basic driver in the electoral process

and that there was a certain level of parity between men and women in the voting percentage (52:48 in favour of men).

Gender and age demographics demonstrated a more balanced participation in the elections, with a strong representation of various segments of society who met candidacy requirements. The extensive pre-election awareness campaigns successfully engaged citizens, creating a robust democratic movement culminating in the election process.

The Sultanate of Oman achieved a global milestone in digitalising the electoral process through the “Intakhab” application, emphasising the country’s innovative use of technology for efficient and accessible elections. This transformation resulted in a remarkable increase in voter participation, with a turnout of 65.88 per cent compared to 49 per cent in the previous 2019 elections.

■ PREPARATORY MEETING FOR GCC CHIEFS OF STAFF BEGINS



MUSCAT: Deliberations of the preparatory meeting for the Supreme Military Committee of the GCC Chiefs of Staff was held in Muscat on Monday. The meeting was held at Al Shafaq Club of the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF) under the chairmanship of Brigadier Hamid bin Abdullah al Balushi, SAF Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations and Planning, in the presence of Air Vice Marshal Issa bin Rashid al Mohannadi, Assistant Secretary for Military Affairs at the GCC Secretariat General and Maj Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Maamari, Head of the Operations and Training Unit at the Unified Military Command. It discussed areas of military cooperation among the GCC countries. It also touched on various topics of concern to the GCC countries. – ONA



Minister discusses role of media with UTAS students

AMAL AL RIYAMI

NIZWA, OCT. 30

Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, spoke to staff and students of University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Nizwa on Monday.

The session was attended by Dr Said bin Hamad al Rubaie, head of the University.

Dr Al Harrasi said the future vision of the Ministry of Information is to enhance the presence of Omani values and culture in various media and to improve media content to keep pace with the global technological developments.

“We seek through the cultural programmes to convey a true image of our values and culture to a broader



Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, speaks to staff and students of UTAS in Nizwa on Monday.

audience. Omani documentaries and films have earned many awards and many have praised their content. We are in the final stage of producing documentary films that will be unique in their content and will enrich the Omani cultural landscape. It will be accompanied

by a book that tells this history.”

The information minister spoke about the Omani media achievements presenting data and statistics from the ministry's presence across multiple communication channels. He said the main goal of the ministry is to



reinforce ethical standards within the media profession based on Oman Vision 2040.

He also reviewed the important roles performed by the Ministry of Information. It includes supervision of radio, television, print and digital media.

The Information Minister spoke about the principles of freedom of opinion and expression. He pointed out that freedom is available to all, but it must be within the bounds of constructive and purposeful criticism and not for the sake of criticism. He pointed out that

freedom should be for the purpose of social development within defined boundaries.

The minister said graduates of UTAS are valuable resources for all government ministries. These ministries are committed to appointing qualified individuals to inform Omani society about their plans, policies, and the implementation of their initiatives and services. He pointed out the role played by the Government Communication Center in serving as a central platform in informing the public with all current developments.

Following the session, the minister inaugurated an exhibition, which included various scientific and artistic presentations of UTAS students.

Cities largest consumers of world's resources

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

@lakshmioman

Despite occupying a minuscule one per cent of the total world's area, cities are the largest consumers of resources.

The facts regarding people living in cities using all possible resources came for discussion on the opening day of the ISWA 2023 World Congress - Global Action Towards a Net-Zero Future, which began on Monday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The International Solid Waste Association (ISWA) 2023 World Congress host is be'ah. Ahmed bin Hamed al Subhi, Chairman of be'ah delivered a welcome remark, while Dr Mansoor bin Talib al Hinai, Chairman of the Authority for Public Services and Regulation, addressed the gathering and welcomed the delegates.

In his opening address, ISWA President Carlos Silva Filho said, “Our common goal must be to lessen the impact, reduce the waste and mitigate our footprint on the planet.”

He said October 31 marks World Cities Day, “We need to be aware that the current pattern will bring more people to the urban centres and the



Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, OIA Chairman, at the ISWA conference in Muscat on Monday. – ONA

solutions are much needed. The destruction of the natural resources continues and has not been more efficient with technological advancement implemented by the industry.”

He added, “Our cities occupy 1 per cent of the total world's area, 50 per cent of the people live in the cities, and cities consume 78 per cent of the total energy produced. So we cannot continue with the current

practices, and we cannot continue business as usual.”

In his keynote address, Dr Simon Baptist, Global Chief Economist, The Economist Intelligence Unit, Singapore, pointed out that how the world uses physical materials has never been more critical.

“Long-term prosperity will be impossible without achieving sustainable economies, including combating climate

change and more efficient use of physical resources. Recent years have seen high volatility, high prices and, in some cases, shortages of key materials, and how to make the most of material resources is at the centre of the agenda from boardrooms to foreign ministries. Bold action in improving waste management would be a major contributor to solving these global problems.”

Oman Book Lovers Club takes part in EduTrac expo

MUSCAT: The Oman Book Lovers Club (OBLC) took part in the EduTrac Oman - Education, Training & Career Expo, held from October 22 to 24. OBLC's dedicated team enhanced the expo experience by hosting an engaging booth and insightful panel discussions.

At EduTrac Expo 2023, OBLC hosted a reading corner and engaging panel discussions to connect with readers and raise awareness about their library. The booth attracted visitors from all walks of life, and the presence of calligrapher Mohammed al Rawahi added artistic flair to the event.

The highlight of the Expo was the panel discussions. The first, ‘Writing as a Career’, featured fiction author Vaishali Hamlai and novelist Ammar al Naaimi, discussing the evolving landscape of writing professions. The second panel, ‘How Important Reading is for Teens?’ highlighted the significance of reading



Mohammad Al Rawahi with Divya Narang and OBLC founder Anisha Bansal

in a teenager's life, with insights from Divya Narang, Mohammed al Rawahi, and Haylie Saunders.

OBLC's role in promoting literature and education was evident at EduTrac Oman Expo, aligning with Oman's vision for a knowledge-based society. Their engagement showcased the cultural wealth and importance of reading in Oman.

TENDER NOTICE

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

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

Tender No.	Description	Tender documents price (R.O)	Class	Last date for collection of documents	Last date for Submission of documents
953/2023/MAFWR/HQ-101	Rehabilitation and Improvement of Shadait Falaj in Shadait Village Jabal Alqor at Wilayat Bahla at AL-Dhakliyah Governorate	25/-	Fourth	Sunday 12/11/2023	Thursday 30/11/2023

- Interested Companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- Preference will be given to companies whose bid includes the largest percentage of Omanization and possible purchase of national products.
- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration (regarding the exemption from submitting a bid bond in tenders).
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24402200 or etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

Over 10,000 seedlings planted in Khasab



KHASAB: The Environment Department in Musandam Governorate planted 10,100 seedlings of Sidr and Ghaf at Khor Al Najd area of Khasab on Monday. The drive was organised with support from Sohar Aluminum

Company, as part of the initiative to plant 10 million trees across Oman. The campaign aims to increase vegetation cover in pastoral and degraded natural areas. This initiative coincides with Arbor Day, which falls on October 31.



Announcement of the tender TND GSI BV 15/10/2023 for the supply of safety shower & eye wash unit

GS INIMA (BARKA) LLC now in phase of commissioning of Barka V Desalination Project in Oman, for the Oman Power and Water Procurement Company SAOC.

Omani companies are invited to quote their most competitive price for the **supply of safety shower and eye wash unit**.

To participate to bidding please send copy of CR, copy of VAT certificate and copy of SME card if any, to e-mail: barka.v.site@inima.com, subject: **TND GSI BV 15/10/2023** within **2nd November 2023** 1:00 PM.

A reply with bid documents will be reverted to candidate same working day.

Bid closing date: **6th November 2023** 1:00PM

National Real Estate Development and Investments Co. (SAOG)

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

DIRECTOR'S REPORT FOR THE NINE MONTH ENDED 30th SEPTEMBER 2023

Respected shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I present herewith the result of National Real Estate Development and Investments Co. (SAOG) for the first Six-month period ended 30th September 2023.

Operational Result

The Company recorded an un-audited net loss of RO. 18,312 up to the 3rd quarter ended Sep 2023 versus (2022: RO. 12,808 loss). There was no revenue and no volume up to 30th Sept. 2023.

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

For the Board of Directors
Chairman.

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

UNAUDITED & PROVISIONAL BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30th SEPTEMBER 2023

	2023 RO	2022 RO
EMPLOYMENT OF FUNDS:		
Non Current Asset	8,500,000	8,500,000
Current Assets	82,494	104,522
Current Liabilities	3,819	1,025
Net Current Assets	78,675	103,497
	8,578,674	8,603,497

FUNDS EMPLOYED:

Share Capital	1,762,500	1,762,500
Legal reserve	587,500	587,500
Revaluation reserve	7,637,254	7,637,254
Retained earnings	(2,682,488)	(2,657,665)
	7,304,766	7,329,589
Non-current liabilities	1,273,908	1,273,908
	8,578,674	8,603,497

UNAUDITED & PROVISIONAL PROFIT & LOSS ACCOUNT FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY TO 30th SEPTEMBER 2023

	2023 RO	2022 RO
Sales	-	-
Cost of Sales	-	-
Gross Profit	-	-
Other Operating Income	1,929	2,129
Expenses before Depreciation	(20,241)	(14,937)
Profit before Depreciation	(18,312)	(12,808)
Depreciation	-	-
Net profit/(loss) after Depreciation	(18,312)	(12,808)



Ground battles rage in Gaza and Lebanon

GAZA: Ground battles raged inside the northern Gaza Strip on Monday and Israeli tanks were seen on the outskirts of its largest city.

Israel's intensifying land and air campaign has heightened fears for the 2.4 million civilians trapped inside besieged Gaza, where the ministry says more than 8,300 have been killed.

Dozens of Israeli tanks rolled into the fringes of Gaza City, eyewitnesses said, after a night of heavy clashes in nearby areas.

The Israeli land forces are supported by heavy fire from fighter jets, drones and artillery that the army said had struck more than 600 targets within 24 hours.

Concern has surged about the widening humanitarian disaster, with fears centred on Gaza hospitals where medics warn that many patients cannot be moved.

Israeli tanks were spotted on the edges of Gaza City, usually the most densely populated urban area but now emptied of many residents.

A witness said that the Israeli tanks blocked the strip's major north-south road and had been "firing at any vehicle that tries to go along it".

Israel has for weeks warned Palestinians civilians to flee the northern half of the Gaza Strip, while also cutting off normal supplies of water, food, fuel and other essentials to the long-blockaded territory.

According to the UN, all 10 hospitals in northern Gaza have received evacuation orders — despite sheltering thousands of patients and about 117,000 of the displaced.

Among those being treated are intensive care patients, infants and elderly people on life support systems.

The head of the World Health Organization said calls to evacuate Al-Quds hospital in Gaza City were "deeply concerning".

"We reiterate — it's impossible to evacuate hospitals full of patients without endangering their lives," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus wrote on X.

Mohamed al-Talmas, who has taken shelter in Gaza's biggest hospital Al-Shifa, said "the ground shook" there with intense Israeli raids.

UN chief Antonio Guterres has warned the situation was getting "more desperate by the hour" and warned against the "collective punishment" of Palestinians.

US President Joe Biden stressed in a call with Netanyahu that it must do so "in a manner consistent with international humanitarian law that prioritises the protection of civilians".

And the International Criminal Court lead prosecutor Karim Khan warned Israel on Sunday that preventing access to humanitarian aid could be a "crime".

Limited aid has entered Gaza from Egypt, but its volume has fallen far short of the hundreds of trucks a day aid agencies say are needed. — AFP



A picture shows smoke rising during Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip. — AFP

LEBANON PM SAYS HE'S WORKING TO AVOID 'WAR' WITH ISRAEL

BEIRUT: Lebanon's caretaker prime minister said on Monday he was working to ensure his country does not enter the war, even amid exchanging cross-border fire.

Najib Mikati said he feared an escalation, with the border skirmishes stoking concerns that it could open a new front with Israel.

"I am doing my duty to prevent Lebanon from entering the war" raging further south, Mikati said in an interview.

"Lebanon is in the eye of the storm," he added.

Mikati said that he has no "clear answer" about whether war loomed ahead, adding that "it depends on regional developments".

In 2006, Lebanon and Israel encountered a bloody conflict that left more than 1,200 people dead in Lebanon, mostly civilians, and 160 in Israel, mostly soldiers.

"For now we have managed the situation rationally and wisely, and the rules of the game have remained constrained to certain limits," Mikati said.

"But at the same time I feel like I cannot reassure Lebanese" because



Mediation almost succeeded last Friday, but was disrupted when the Israelis began ground operations in Gaza

NAJIB MIKATI
Lebanon's caretaker PM

the situation is still developing, he added.

The cross-border violence has killed at least 62 people in Lebanon, mostly Lebanese combatants but also four civilians including Reuters journalist Issam Abdallah.

Israeli officials have reported four deaths, including one civilian.

Mikati said any escalation could extend beyond Lebanon.

"I cannot rule out an escalation because there is a race to reach a ceasefire before escalation spreads in the entire region," Mikati said.

"I fear that... chaos could engulf the entire Middle East," he also said. Allied Palestinian factions in Lebanon have exchanged fire with Israel almost daily since October 7.

Lebanon witnessed a flurry of diplomatic activity at the start of the escalation, with high officials visiting the country and Mikati going on an official trip on Sunday to Qatar — which is mediating peace efforts in the war.

Qatar was playing "an important mediation role," Mikati said.

"Mediation almost succeeded last Friday, but was disrupted when the Israelis began ground operations in Gaza," he said.

Mikati, who heads a caretaker cabinet with limited powers, urged Lebanese lawmakers to "elect a president as soon as possible".

"Lebanese have had enough of wars," Mikati said. — AFP

Israeli hostage families fight to keep spotlight on captives

GAZA: On Monday a video was released showing three women from the more than 230 people Israel says were abducted and taken to Gaza since the October 7.

The women appeared in the 76-second video, but it was not immediately possible to verify their identities.

Sitting on plastic chairs against a white tile wall, one of the women urges Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to agree a prisoner exchange for the release of all captives.

Speaking in Hebrew, she becomes very agitated and starts shouting, almost screaming by the end, as the other two sitting either side of her remain silent. The hostages were seized when hundreds of gunmen stormed across the border into southern Israel and attacked kibbutz communities, towns and military bases.

Authorities believe they are being held in a giant network

of underground tunnels built in the besieged territory.

The Israeli government made no immediate comment on the video.

Some support an Israeli invasion of Gaza, others want a prisoner swap, but relatives of the seized ones said on Sunday they were united in demanding Israel's government end their nightmare.

On Saturday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held a hastily arranged encounter with other relatives who had threatened to organise protests over the lack of contact from the government.

The families said they had secured a commitment to give more frequent updates about efforts to release the captives.

The Palestinian group's military wing has said that "about 50" of them had died in Israeli strikes.

Gaza's health ministry says more than 8,300 people,

including thousands of women and children, have been killed in Israeli air and ground strikes since.

The relatives of the hostages said no open calls for a ceasefire or prisoner release were made at the meeting.

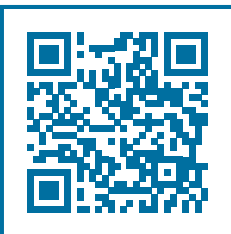
Palestinian fighting leaders have demanded the release of some 5,200 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, in exchange for the October 7 hostages.

Some families back a prisoner exchange. Some relatives said they would want to see more efforts from the Israeli government and other nations.

Ronen Karavany, a lawyer whose nieces Sharon Kunyo and Danielle Aloni were seized, said Israel should seek help from the United States and Qatar, which helped mediate freedom for the four hostages to return so far.

They also plan their own campaign to make sure that the captives are not forgotten.

— AFP



as concern grows for hospitals



A Palestinian man carries his injured daughter at the Najjar hospital following an Israeli air strike on a home in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip. – AFP



Palestinians carrying belongings walk on a road as they flee the Nuseirat refugee camp, in the central Gaza Strip. – AFP

Five killed in West Bank during Israeli raids

RAMALLAH: Israeli forces killed five Palestinians in the West Bank on Monday, said health officials in the occupied territory, as violence has escalated amid Israel's war in Gaza. The army said its forces encountered explosive devices in a raid on Jenin and labelled another incursion, near Hebron.

The Palestinian health ministry said four people aged 23 to 28 were killed during the Israeli early morning raid on the northern city of Jenin.

According to the official Palestinian agency Wafa, "more than 100 military vehicles and two bulldozers" took part.

The raid targeted Jenin and its refugee camp, a stronghold of Palestinian armed groups and the target of frequent military incursions.

Another nine people were wounded, a ministry statement said.

Military drones hovered over the area and army snipers were positioned on buildings around Jenin's main hospital, Wafa said.

Part of the hospital's perimeter wall was demolished by armoured military bulldozers.



Palestinians survey the destruction following an Israeli military raid on the Jenin Palestinian refugee camp, in Jenin, northern the West Bank. – AFP

The Israeli military said its troops uncovered "explosive devices that were planted under the roads in order to attack the forces" during the raid in Jenin.

Later on Monday, the Palestinian health ministry said a 23-year-old man was shot dead by Israeli forces in Yatta city near Hebron.

The Israeli military said its forces had "conducted operations

in the area to apprehend wanted suspects".

The Palestinian health ministry also confirmed on Monday that another 23-year-old man died after being shot by a settler days ago in Ras Karkar, northwest of Ramallah.

The deaths came a day after five Palestinians were killed by army fire during several military incursions into the West Bank.

The health ministry says around 120 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank since war stormed in Gaza on October 7.

Israel has hit with a relentless bombardment that has killed more than 8,300 people, more than half of them children, the health ministry says. In recent days, Israeli ground forces have entered Gaza. The West Bank was already a hotbed of tension before the Gaza war, with frequent Israeli army raids, a surge in attacks by Israeli settlers and Palestinian attacks on settlements.

Israel occupied the West Bank during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and its forces regularly carry out raids on Palestinian militants there. — AFP

Give yourself time during the grieving process



Hyesha Barrett
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The writer is a life coach and NLP practitioner

We have all experienced some degree of loss in our lives; it’s sadly part and parcel of our human experience. Whether you have suffered the loss of a loved one, a job, a relationship or been affected by a significant change, grief is a natural response. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution for processing grief, there are several steps you can take to navigate this challenging journey.

Give yourself time to go through the emotions of grief. These are usually shock, denial, guilt, anger and depression before we are even willing or capable to enter acceptance. Until then, there will be a feeling of void and hopelessness. The stages are not linear and everyone experiences grief differently, there is no time frame we can impose on how long we will process the emotions.

Acknowledging your feelings is vital in understanding where you are right now. Honour your sentiments, allowing them to surge through and over you like waves until you feel calmer. Understand that healing is not a linear process

and there will be continual waves upwelling throughout your life. We need to accept the unpredictable nature of grief, however over time the waves will be more manageable and less triggering.

Expressing your emotions in a healthy way can be cathartic through writing, art or simply talking. Also creating a grief ritual is a virtuous way to find solace. Rituals such as lighting a candle in memory of your loved one, planting a tree in their honour or writing a letter to them can help you connect with your emotions and provide a sense of closure.

Seeking support is crucial for your overall emotional and mental well-being. Support groups can provide a sense of community and understanding that is essential during a grieving process. Sharing your experiences with others who are also grieving can be both comforting and healing. Confiding in family members and friends who are capable to listen to your thoughts and feelings without judgement is key. In some cases, grief can be overwhelming. If you find it challenging to cope, consider seeking

CHERISHING THE GOOD TIMES AND THE POSITIVE MEMORIES CAN HELP BALANCE YOUR PERSPECTIVE.

professional help from a therapist or grief coach.

Grieving can take a toll on our physical and mental health. Make sure to prioritise your self-care by ensuring to focus on eating nutritious meals, drinking lots of water, getting regular exercise and enough sleep. We can easily spin into a downward spiral if we allow ourselves to. During these tough times, it is even more crucial to focus on your oxygen mask while practicing deep breathing and meditation to calm your body and mind.

Acceptance allows us to look back on the past fondly. Cherishing the good times and the positive memories can help balance your perspective. While you will always carry the memory of your loves ones, staying open to new experiences is an important part of healing.

Remember, processing grief is a unique journey for everyone. By acknowledging your emotions, seeking support and practicing self-care, you will move forward towards a restorative place. While some nostalgia may always remain, it can become more manageable with time, patience and self-compassion.

Sudan talks bring no respite for Darfur

Sudan’s rival generals have returned to the negotiating table in Saudi Arabia, but the fighting shows no sign of easing as they wrestle to control the country’s second-largest city. In six months, the war of attrition between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), has killed more than 9,000 people and displaced nearly six million.

Despite the carnage, neither side has managed to seize a decisive advantage. In Khartoum, the air force has failed to dislodge the RSF, which still controls the capital’s streets while the army holds the country’s east. On Thursday, peace talks resumed in the Saudi city of Jeddah, which Riyadh and Washington said on Sunday were aimed only at securing a ceasefire deal and the delivery of humanitarian aid.

“The talks will not address broader political issues,” statements from both the Saudi foreign ministry and the US State Department added.

To break the stalemate at the exact moment negotiations restarted, the RSF claimed it had captured Nyala, the South Darfur state capital and the largest city in the massive western region of Darfur — the RSF’s traditional stronghold.

With much of Sudan’s already fragile infrastructure destroyed in the war, Nyala — with an airport, railway and a key highway intersection — could be essential for resupplying forces in the area.

The paramilitaries have held the Om Dafouq border post with the Central African Republic for the past three months and have reportedly taken control of additional supply routes to Khartoum, 1,000 kilometres (620 miles) to the northeast.

In taking Nyala, the RSF would cement its hold on Darfur, where ethnically motivated killings by the RSF and allied militia have triggered a new probe by the International Criminal Court.

The ICC has since the 2000s been investigating war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in Darfur, committed by the forerunner of the RSF, the Janjaweed militia. Beyond its military strategic importance, Nyala is also the economic heart of Darfur — a region the size of France that is home to around a quarter of Sudan’s 48 million people.

The city “has economic ties with Chad, the Central African Republic and South Sudan, extending even as far as Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo” which has a consulate in the city, local journalist Ezzeldin Dahab said.

On Thursday, as representatives from both sides met with US and Saudi mediators in Jeddah, the RSF released footage of Daglo’s brother and deputy Abdelrahim Daglo — on whom the United States has imposed sanctions — leading troops into Nyala.

— AFP



Alex Brown

Is there a better way?

There are probably many like me who are finding it difficult to watch the news at the moment. Whatever your preferred source of information, even the most balanced coverage provokes rage and dismay every few minutes. That could be the case with any conflict or wide-scale suffering. They rise up and fall down the news agenda not according to their severity, but by their novelty and perceived importance. It is a long time since we heard about Yemen, Dhafur or the Rohingya or the Uighurs – names we might have come to know only by their misfortune.

But, of course I am no exception in talking about Gaza and Israel. Not only is this the blanket headline around the world, even a week after this unprecedented round of inhumanity began, but it will always be seen as the most visceral of conflicts. For the Arab world there is natural affinity, but also around the globe where many countries have Arab, Palestinian, Jewish and Israeli citizens in their millions. Some of us have friends and relatives, a few like me used to visit friends in Palestine once upon a time. Gaza feels real and close. Perhaps as we watch this horror, Oman has a special reason to wonder what 2.3 million lives and livelihoods are worth. That number is not too far away from the size of Oman’s own native population, yet Muscat alone is almost exactly ten times the size of the Gaza strip. We all have our own comparisons and references to imagine the suffering.

There is a saying that the first casualty of war is truth, and we are certainly seeing a lot of claims and counter-claims in this conflict. I would say that truth is second - it is sanity that dies first. In a conflict that is really a century old (or a millennium depending on your point of view) the idea that an outbreak of mass violence could be a solution is clearly ridiculous. But, the call of this madness is strong. When I watch terrible scenes of death and destruction it is easy to give in to the basic instinct that provokes us to anger. But that is not a rational reaction – especially from my comfortable sofa. More importantly, it is not a useful one.

Whatever your perspective, the most extreme and murderous on either side are always essential to each other.

Without the degrading treatment of Palestinians by Israel’s Government, Hamas would have far less popular support. Without the rockets and the other attacks, Netanyahu would have struggled to form yet another precarious coalition government.

How did it come to this? It is sixteen years since there was any meaningful discussion of Palestinian statehood. First Ariel Sharon and then Netanyahu have continued to provoke just enough violence to keep themselves elected, while dehumanising and delegitimising the Palestinian cause for self-determination. Painting the Palestinian cause as violent religious extremism (how ironic!) makes winning over international sympathy so much easier. It is a manifest disaster that those

OMAN HAS A PROUD HISTORY OF STEPPING UP, CRITICISED OR NOT, TO OFFER A CALM WORD AND HELP PUT ENEMIES AT A TABLE INSTEAD OF A BATTLEFIELD.

outside Palestine who claim to support Palestinians are so eager to encourage the same picture. I can understand anyone who lives the life of a Gazan wanting to take up arms against their oppressor, to a point. What is devastating for the Palestinians is how external actors are more interested in seeing them fight and die that to find a real solution.

Sadly, while extremists on both sides are in charge, not a single square foot of Palestinian land will become independent, and Israeli spokesmen and lobbyists will continue to successfully sell the false narrative that “we cannot make peace with terrorists”. In the mean time Gaza will shrink more, just like it did six years ago. The extreme goal of the Israeli right of forcing all Palestinians to leave the West Bank and Gaza will get

a bit closer, and some will still cheer naively when a masked man waves a Kalashnikov. Nobody works harder for Benjamin Netanyahu than they do, whether they mean to or not.

The UN and other well-meaning actors used to refer to the 1967 borders as a basis for peace, and that remains the basis for the current legal status of the occupation. Others still want to talk about 1946 or 1948 as if those old wrongs can still be righted. It’s harsh to say, but that ship sailed fifty-six years ago. For many years the Oslo accords have been “the only game in town”, and I have always prayed for a return to that process.

Realistically, so much damage has been done in settlement building, political atrophy and spilled blood that I can no longer pretend that Oslo is alive. From the earliest days of hope when Yasser Arafat held his olive branch at the United Nations general assembly, to the surreal reality of watching him share a joke with Yitzhak Rabin and Bill Clinton at Camp David, a journey was made. It was a journey of vision and imagination, patience and perseverance.

Few people could have the insight or the influence to hope to start a new peace process and see it through to the end. Certainly, neither Hamas nor the Likud seem interested and the other voices are hard to hear in this chaos. I doubt Joe Biden has the years or the political will to be Clinton in this scenario. There is no Arafat and no Rabin. What I am sure of though, is that most people around the world want to wake up in the morning, have breakfast, drop their children at a good school, earn a decent living and look forward to the weekend. Palestinians, Israelis, all of us. Someone needs to speak for those people.

After the Oslo accords, many criticised Oman for daring to join in the peace-making process. When times are tough, some engage and try to broker peace or help the needy. Some posture at the UN with fake ceasefire resolutions that are only designed to undermine the actual discussions. Some point fingers and are quick to criticise others while doing nothing themselves. Oman has a proud history of stepping up, criticised or not, to offer a calm word and help put enemies at a table instead of a battlefield.

Waste is a resource...

WE hear a lot about circular economy. Whenever we hear about the word 'economy' we think it has nothing to do with us.

Economy is something we leave for the governments and businesses to deal with it. But when you think about it each individual is part of the economy. And especially when it comes to circular economy.

So what is circular economy? It is an economic system based on the reuse and regeneration of materials or products, experts explain.

Now this is especially important - continuing products in a sustainable or environmentally friendly way. Circular economy also means keeping wastage to minimum. Some companies have been taking it up in a serious manner. The concept is attractive for companies because it makes economic sense.

But what about individuals? We are different because we want to keep up trends and promos.

How many times have you bought things just because it was on sale? How many clothes are there in our wardrobe that haven't been worn for months or years? And this is from personal experience. When we shop impulsively most of the time we really don't think on long-term basis.

The topic of circular economy came up while attending the opening ceremony of ISWA 2023 (International Solid Waste Association) World Congress - Global Action Towards a Net-Zero Future.

The objective is not just about the government achieving this objective by 2050, it is also about us individually.

We order food for take away and we have contributed to waste. The packages are becoming fancy and creative. But they are in your hands just for few minutes. And soon it would end up in the trash. Our contribution doesn't end with dropping them in the bin. The waste management company would collect it and the process goes on.

Is the waste disposed off in a landfill? From the point of collection we do not think about much. Sometimes the waste is just laid around the bin or adjacent.



Lakshmi Kothaneth @lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

IT IS AN ECONOMIC SYSTEM BASED ON THE REUSE AND REGENERATION OF MATERIALS OR PRODUCTS

Once I came across a lady who collected cans as a side hustle. At that point there was sympathy towards her as she was a bit elderly. Now when I think of her I am quite proud of her because she found a need, a waste that become a resource to her and most importantly she was also doing a service by segregating the waste and what she collected is going to be recycled. The waste which others were throwing away was actually being converted to wealth for her.

Buy a perfume and you are stuck with the packaging material. One of the perfumers had said, "If you bring back the bottle for refill I will give it to you for half the price."

That was a good sales pitch... not only did he make me feel that I got a good deal but took the burden of feeling the guilt of wasting the package.

So would glass and metal bottles come back to use and become popular again.

Was watching few goats at a picnic spot and they came in a group with a purpose in mind and after studying the surroundings one of the first things they picked up were tissue papers. Now is that healthy for goats? Not sure because after all it must have gone through some chemical processing, but the goat didn't spare a thought and one was not adventurous enough to pull it away from her, which would have been futile anyway. But the tissue papers disappeared and they wiped the area clean.

Environmentally we have been aware about the usage of plastic bags and it's impact on wildlife. But now it has to not just make economic sense, because if we are to consume reusables imagine the money everyone would save.

At the conference there was a video from Prof Muhammed Yunus, Nobel Laureate from Bangladesh. He presented his concept of three zeroes. He said it could start with five youngsters and groups of them and the idea will expand in all directions.

What are the three zeros? A world of three zeros will consist of the new economics of zero-poverty, zero unemployment and zero-net carbon emissions. So can you and I zero in too? We can start with the thought and then move into action.

PERCHED ON A TRUNK



A grey heron (Ardea cinerea) perches on a trunk in lake Max-Eyth in Stuttgart, southwestern Germany, on Monday. – AFP

UK hosts global leaders as concerns grow over AI

THE UK government will welcome foreign political leaders, tech industry figures, academics and others this week for a two-day summit billed as the first of its kind on artificial intelligence (AI).

The gathering, set to be attended by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, US Vice President Kamala Harris, EU chief Ursula von der Leyen and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, will focus on growing fears about the implications of so-called frontier AI.

The most advanced generation of AI models, they have prompted concerns around everything from job losses and cyber attacks to humans losing control of the systems they have designed.

Sunak and other leaders have increasingly joined the industry itself in arguing current knowledge and regulation of frontier AI is likely insufficient for the challenges it will pose.

"My vision, and our ultimate goal, should be to work towards a more international approach to safety where we collaborate with partners to ensure AI systems are safe before they are released," the British leader said in a speech earlier this week.

"We will push hard to agree the first-ever international statement about the nature of these risks," he added, proposing the creation of an



CLARA LALANNE

The writer is a journalist with AFP

WHILE THE POTENTIAL OF AI RAISES MANY HOPES, PARTICULARLY FOR MEDICINE, ITS DEVELOPMENT IS SEEN AS LARGELY UNCHECKED

international expert panel similar to one formed for climate change.

London, which initiated the gathering, has insisted it is taking the lead on AI at the behest of US President Joe Biden, and because the two countries have some of the leading companies in the sector.

But it has reportedly been forced to scale back its ambitions around certain ideas, such as launching a new regulatory body, amid a perceived lack of enthusiasm.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni is one of the only world leaders flying in for the conference, which starts on Wednesday.

Sunak's spokesman told reporters this week that "getting all the right people around the table to discuss this important issue" represented "an enormous achievement in itself".

The summit will be held at a deliberately symbolic location: Bletchley Park, where top British codebreakers cracked Nazi Germany's "Enigma" code, helping to hasten the end of World War II.

From smartphones to airports, AI is already ubiquitous in everyday life, but its progress has accelerated in recent years with the development of technologies such as the ChatGPT conversational

robot. "It's clear to me that what's going to happen in this year, in these next two, three years, in 200 years, (is that) historians will have a name for this period," Aldo Faisal, an AI and neuroscience professor, said at a briefing this month. While the potential of AI raises many hopes, particularly for medicine, its development is seen as largely unchecked.

In his speech, Sunak warned AI did have the potential to destroy thousands of jobs in various sectors, including the arts and media, alongside cyber, disinformation and fraud threats.



The conference will focus on growing fears about the implications of so-called frontier AI.

He stressed the need for countries to develop "a shared understanding of the risks that we face", which is currently lacking. However, the lack of world leaders, particularly from G7 countries, has dominated discussion of the summit in Britain.

Sunak's spokesman insisted "the right group of countries, the right businesses" would be present.

China will be present, but it is unclear at what level. News website Politico reported London invited President Xi Jinping, to signify its eagerness for a senior representative. Beijing's

invitation has raised eyebrows amid heightened tensions with Western nations and accusations of technological espionage.

Sunak has said a "serious strategy" requires "all of the world's leading AI powers" being engaged.

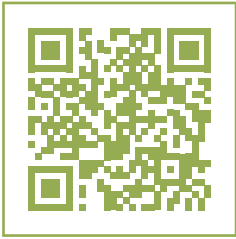
Although the UK sees itself as the driving force behind international cooperation on AI, its emphasis on potential disasters has dismayed some players in the sector. They would prefer to stress existing AI issues, such as a lack of transparency in the models designed by companies and their racial or gender bias, rather than the more alarmist fears noted by Sunak. Detractors have also noted that the common ethical principles that the UK wants to establish are also likely to come up against the interests of AI labs and tech giants, which are predominantly Chinese and American.

That could limit the likelihood of anything meaningful emerging from this week's summit.

More than 100 UK and international organisations, experts and campaigners published an open letter on Monday to Sunak, branding the summit a "missed opportunity" and too tailored towards "big tech" firms.

sport

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Zeeshan leads Oman to opening win

MENDIS' MEN BEAT MALAYSIA BY 32 RUNS IN ASIA QUALIFIER FINAL

MUSCAT: Oman's skipper Zeeshan Maqsood displayed an exceptional all-round performance, leading his team to a remarkable 32-run win over Malaysia in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Asia Qualifier Final, which commenced with style in Kirtipur, Nepal on Monday.

In a Group A clash among the eight-nation qualifiers, Oman took the crease first and posted a score of 153/6. The bowlers then put up an outstanding performance, restricting Malaysia to 121/8, despite an unbeaten 57-run effort by Virandeep Singh.

Oman's opening pair, Kashyap Prajapati (25) and debutant Pratik Athavale (12), made a rapid start, reaching 39 runs within five overs. Nonetheless, the quick dismissals of both openers within two balls, along with Aqib Ilyas and Shoaib Khan's failure to contribute significantly, put Duleep Mendis' team in a precarious position at 65/4 in the 12th over.

Maqsood then emerged as the saviour with a counter-attack knock that included five boundaries and two maximums, resulting in an unbeaten 56 runs off 46 balls. Mehran Khan chipped in with 15 runs off nine balls, including two sixes. A crucial unbroken 47-run partnership between Maqsood and the seasoned Mohammed Nadeem, guided Oman to a total of 153. Nadeem's contribution of an unbeaten 21 runs off 11 balls was punctuated by two fours and



Oman's Zeeshan Maqsood receives the player of the match award.

a six.

Left-arm spinner Virandeep Singh was the most successful bowler for Malaysia, picking up three wickets for 24 runs.

Oman's pacer, Bilal Khan, got his team off to a dream start by dismissing opener Syed Aziz on the very first ball of Malaysia's innings. Bilal claimed his second victim by dismissing Mohammed Amir in his next over, leaving Malaysia at 17/2.

As spinners Shakeel Ahmed and Maqsood picked up wickets, Malaysia were soon reduced to 36/4. With spinners creating difficulties for the batters, Ayaan Khan and Aqib Ilyas also joined the wicket-taking spree, leaving the opposition in tatters at 68/6 in the 13th over.

Maqsood secured his second wicket, and Malaysia struggled to score, with only Virandeep managing to push the scoring, staying unbeaten with a 53-ball 57.

Oman are set to face Singapore

on Tuesday.

After the initial round of matches, Nepal top Pool A with a superior net run-rate of 1.659, as compared to Oman's 1.600. Nepal secured an easy eight-wicket win over Singapore earlier in the day, with Singapore being restricted to 145/9, and Nepal reaching the target with 16.3 overs to spare, finishing at 147/2. Kushal Bhurtel contributed significantly with 74 runs, and skipper Rohit Paudel remained unbeaten on 35.

In Group B, Hong Kong and UAE both earned two points with victories over Kuwait and Bahrain, respectively. UAE won against Bahrain by five wickets, while Hong Kong triumphed by 16 runs.

The ICC Men's T20 World Cup next year will see two teams secure their spots during this seven-day event in Nepal. The teams are divided into two groups, with the top two from each advancing to the semifinals. The winners of those semifinals will secure a place at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup next year, with the grand final set for November 5.

The 2024 Men's T20 World Cup is the first edition to feature 20 teams.

BRIEF SCORES: Oman 153/6 (Zeeshan Maqsood 56*, Kashyap Prajapati 25, Mohammed Nadeem 21*; Virandeep Singh 3/24) defeated Malaysia 121/8 (Virandeep Singh 57*; Bilal Khan 2/32, Zeeshan Maqsood 2/13, Ayaan Khan 1/11, Aqib Ilyas 1/16, Fayyaz Butt 1/25, Shakeel Ahmed 1/21).



Oman captain Zeeshan Maqsood plays a shot.



Oman's Bilal Khan and Aqib Ilyas celebrate a wicket.

427 players from 64 countries to compete in Oman

WORLD AMATEUR CHESS TO BEGIN ON THURSDAY

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 30

The World Amateur Chess Championship 2023 competitions are set to commence on Thursday, November 2, and will be hosted by the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Oman Chess Committee (OCC), at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher from November 1 to 11. It will feature the participation of 427 players from 64 countries, including 356 male players and 71 female players.

The first round of the championship will begin on November 2 under the auspices of Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary for Culture at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

The OCC revealed its readiness from all organisational, technical, and administrative aspects to host the most significant continental event, the World Amateur Chess Championship 2023. This announcement was made during a press conference held at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex, attended by OCC Chairman Ahmed bin

Darwish al Balushi and various media outlets.

Ahmed al Balushi outlined the committee's commitment to creating an unforgettable experience for participants and spectators alike. He emphasised that the initial rounds of the championship will be sponsored by partners and CEOs of sponsoring companies.

The presidents of Arab, Asian and International Chess federations will arrive in Muscat during the tournament, Al Balushi said.

The OCC chief disclosed that an array of special activities and tours have been meticulously designed to allow participants to explore the highlights of the Sultanate of Oman. These initiatives include an international coaching course conducted throughout the championship.

Furthermore, there will be daily activities tailored for schools and children in the morning to attract approximately 100 children daily and promote their interest in chess.

The championship will receive comprehensive coverage, both



OCC Chairman Ahmed bin Darwish al Balushi (R) addresses a press conference.

from local media and through live broadcasts on several official channels, including the International Chess Federation channel. To enhance the coverage and interaction with the championship, a dedicated YouTube channel has been launched. This channel will feature specialised commentators in Arabic and English, as well as technical experts and trainers from various teams to analyse the matches daily and highlight the top boards.

Elaborating on the championship's format, Al Balushi

revealed that the tournament will adopt a Swiss system, encompassing 9 rounds, with each player allotted 90 minutes plus a 30-second increment for each move.

In conjunction with the main event, the OCC in cooperation with the Oman School Sports Association, will host the School Chess Festival on November 2. This festival targets more than 1,000 male and female students from first-grade classes representing nine educational directorates in various governorates, including Al Dakhiliyah, Al Dhahirah, Al

Buraimi, Dhofar, Al Sharqiyah South, Al Sharqiyah North, Muscat, and Al Batinah North. The festival will be held at the directorate level, aiming to enhance national loyalty while encouraging chess practice for improving developmental and cognitive skills in students, stimulate creative and innovative thinking and promote a different and distinctive way of thinking. The festival in the governorates will include various accompanying events, including face painting, children's favourite performances, visual displays, plays, student shows and diverse competitions, all with the aim of introducing chess in a unique way.

THREE LEVELS

The competitions in the World Amateur Chess Championship are divided into three levels.

In the '1700' rating category, 270 players, including 210 male players, are participating. In the '2000' rating category, 74 players, including 96 male players, are taking part. In the '2300' rating category, 74 players, including 69 male players, will compete. The

extensive participation of these numbers of players highlights Oman's reputation in hosting tournaments, and it reflects the wide interest and importance of this global championship.

Through hosting this championship, the OCC aims to enhance the chess community in the country by attracting more players and referees and encouraging new clubs to enter this intellectual and strategic game. They also aim to raise the international ranking of some of their players, contributing to the development and growth of chess in Oman.

The Oman Chess Committee is making every effort to provide a unique experience for participants and the audience and to strengthen its position as a leading global sports destination in the world of chess. The hosting of the championship in Oman is a culmination of the efforts made and reflects the confidence of the International Chess Federation in the capabilities of the OCC to organise and succeed in this global championship.

CITY EASE TO WIN MANCHESTER DERBY

ANDY JALIL
MANCHESTER, OCT 30

In a dominating display, which included a brace in goals by Erling Haaland, Manchester City inflicted an embarrassing 3-0 defeat on their rivals from across the town.

City manager Pep Guardiola, commenting on the double strike by Haaland who scored 52 goals in all competitions last season said: “He could have scored four, he moves incredibly well in the box, we are lucky to have him. I know he scored 50 goals and people expect him to score 70. He’s a top, top player.”

The man-of-the-match award went to City’s Bernardo Silva and Guardiola had praise for him too. “He is an incredible player. He loves to play at Old Trafford. He has played here as a false No 9 for us in the past. He is so intelligent. Everybody loves him and he played another exceptional performance. He is one of the best players I’ve seen in my life for how intelligent he is.”

He added: “The players always give their best for our fans and we know what it means for them. The first ten minutes we lost easy balls but after that we took control.”

City opened the scoring after 26 minutes with a penalty which came from a free-kick incident when Rasmus Hojlund held back Rodri and brought him down. There was no stoppage until the referee was called by VAR to go and check. He then returned and pointed to the spot. Haaland took the spot kick and sent the goalkeeper the wrong way with his 12th goal of the season.



Manchester City's Erling Braut Haaland scores their second goal against Manchester United at Old Trafford. – Reuters

United missed a chance to level the score on the stroke of half-time. Marcus Rashford made a fine pass to Hojlund but the striker’s shot was palmed away by Ederson.

Haaland too missed a chance to double his score in added time in the first half when his header went straight to the hands of Andre Onana.

But just four minutes into the second half, Haaland doubled the lead. After a fine move involving

two passes, Rodri found Julian Alvarez who then sent the ball wide to the left for Jack Grealish. The winger advanced further before feeding Bernado Silva whose perfect cross to Haaland, unmarked at the back post, was easily headed in past Onana.

United made substitutions but it made little difference as City had control on the game with their opponents heading toward their fifth defeat in their first ten league

games – their worst return at this stage in 37 years.

Haaland missed a chance for his hat-trick in the 71st minute by a save from Onana. Finally, with ten minutes of normal time remaining, it was all over for United as City added a third goal. Rodri’s firm drive could only be pushed away by Onana and Haaland having got the ball crossed it to the left for Phil Foden to tap into the net.

United manager Erik ten Hag

said: “The three games before this we won and the spirit is very good. We are on the way up. When injured players are back, we will be stronger.”

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS ON SUNDAY:

West Ham 0 Everton 1 (Calvert-Lewin 51)
Aston Villa 3 (McGinn 17, Diaby 49, Lockyer 62-og) Luton 1 (Martinez 83-og)
Brighton 1 (Ferguson 26) Fulham 1 (Palhinha 65)
Liverpool 3 (Jota 31, Nunez 35,

Salah 77) Nottingham Forest 0 Manchester United 0 Manchester City 3 (Haaland 26-pen, 49, Foden 80)

Played on Saturday
Chelsea 0 Brentford 2 (Pinnock 58, Mbeumo 90+6)

Arsenal 5 (Nketiah 28, 50, 58, Vieira 88-pen, Tomiyasu 90+6) Sheffield United 0

Bournemouth 2 (Semenyo 22, Billing 76) Burnley 1 (Taylor 11) Wolves 2 (Lemina 36, Hwang 71) Newcastle 2 (Wilson 22, 45+4-pen)

Friday
Crystal Palace 1 (Ayew 90+4) Tottenham 2 (Ward 53-og, Son 66)

World No 1 Sabalenka feels ‘disrespected’ by WTA at ‘unsafe’ Cancun finale

CANCUN, Mexico: World number one Aryna Sabalenka said she feels “disrespected” by tennis’ governing body and claimed the hastily-built court being used for the WTA Finals at the Mexican resort of Cancun is “not safe”.

Sabalenka eased past Greece’s Maria Sakkari 6-0, 6-1 in her group-stage opener on Sunday but that didn’t prevent her from taking aim at the organisation.

“I have to say that I am very disappointed with the WTA and the experience so far at the WTA Finals,” the 25-year-old from Belarus wrote on Instagram.

“As a player I feel disrespected by the WTA. I think most of us do. This is not the level of organisation we expect for the Finals.

“To be honest I don’t feel safe moving on this court a lot of the time.”

Sabalenka claimed players were not allowed to practice on the court until the day before the opening.

“It’s just not acceptable to me with so much on the line and with so much at stake.”

Cancun was only confirmed as the host city of the prestigious season-ending championship on September 7 after Saudi Arabia had reportedly been lined up to stage the event.

That possibility sparked criticism from US legends Martina Navratilova and Chris Evert among others.

Instead, the tournament has returned to Mexico for the second time in three years, after



Aryna Sabalenka eased past Greece’s Maria Sakkari in her group-stage opener.

Guadalajara hosted in 2021.

Sabalenka said her criticism of the event was aimed at the WTA, not local organisers.

“I definitely want to show my appreciation for the local tournament organisers, everyone that built the court at the last minute, and everyone that’s working here at the event,” she wrote.

“I know it’s not their fault.”

On court on Sunday, Sabalenka, who captured this year’s Australian Open title, fired six aces and 17 winners while saving all five break points she faced to dispatch Sakkari.

Sakkari saved three match points to hold serve in the penultimate game but fell after 74 minutes.

American Jessica Pegula defeated Kazakhstan’s Elena Rybakina 7-5, 6-2 in 83 minutes in the other singles group stage match at the \$9 million outdoor hardcourt showdown.

Two groups of four players will compete in round-robin matches through Friday with the two top finishers in each group advancing to Saturday’s semifinals. The final will be next Sunday.

Sabalenka is trying to hold off second-ranked Iga Swiatek, the reigning French Open champion from Poland, to claim the year-end number one ranking.

Sabalenka can clinch the year-end top spot by going 2-1 in the group stage and reaching the final no matter what Swiatek does.

The triumph by Sabalenka ensures Swiatek must win the title to have a chance at the year-end top spot.

Sabalenka was the runner-up in the US Open and reached the semifinals at Wimbledon and the French Open. She also won WTA titles this year at Madrid and Adelaide.

She became world number one after her run to the US Open final in September, ending Swiatek’s 75-week rankings reign.

Monday’s opening matches in the other group send Swiatek against reigning Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova of the Czech Republic and 19-year-old American Coco Gauff, the US Open champion, against Tunisia’s Ons Jabeur. — AFP

Local referees undergo intensive training for VAR system

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 30

As many as 15 main referees, 15 assistant referees, three referees from Bahrain and four operators of Video Assistant Referee (VAR) system took part in the second stage of VAR training sessions ahead of executing the VAR system in the domestic football league later this season. The training sessions began on Sunday under organisation of Oman Football Association (OFA) in presence of International certified lecturer and OFA umpiring expert Ali al Turaifi in coordination with Hawk-Eye company which will manage and operate VAR system.

The one week training course will feature different sessions as the umpires will learn some scenarios based on simulation system for complicated off-side cases and other footballing decisions. The purpose of these scenarios is to enable the referees to take the right decisions using the VAR tool. The OFA had taken crucial steps for ensuring the readiness of the domestic umpires to begin using VAR system soon in the local events. The first training courses began in early October and was followed by another week of training in October end.

The OFA had signed a strategic deal with Hawk-Eye in September to establish a

training contract for the referees to prepare them for the VAR technology. The aim of this partnership was to ensure fair competition in the local football competitions and also to improve the efficiency and automation of officiating in different OFA events.

The company had started to set up their services in some venues including some proposed locations in Seeb Stadium. The OFA in coordination with the company started organising some training courses for the referees in October.

The leading technology provider will shape Omani referees on offering the desired solutions and guidelines on certain technical arrangements that are required for the setting up of the VAR system in the venues in full accordance to the Fifa rules and guidelines. Hawk-Eye Company is one of the leading international entities and they are specialised in providing training and operation of VAR system.

The OFA officials had stated ahead of the existing season of Omantel League start that the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) will take place in different phases this season. The VAR system will be treated as a trial run ahead of expected full implementation in the forthcoming seasons.



A VAR training session in progress.



Afghanistan ambush Sri Lanka for third win

PUNE: A spirited Afghanistan upset another former champion on Monday when Hashmatullah Shahidi's men defeated 1996 winners Sri Lanka by seven wickets to continue their memorable campaign at the 50-over World Cup.

Their bowlers had laid the foundation of their third win in six matches when they bowled out Sri Lanka for a below-par 241 in 49.3 overs.

Three of their top five batters, including Shahidi, then produced half-centuries in a clinical chase which they accomplished in 45.2 overs to move to the fifth place in the points table.

Azmatullah Omarzai (73) scored the winning run with Shahidi (58) looking on from the other end.

Afghanistan, who registered one win in the 2015 World Cup and none in 2019, now have an outright chance of making the last four in India.

"Quite happy and proud of the team," Shahidi said.

"The chase was very professional and I am very happy about it."

Shahidi and his men had stunned holders England and 1992 champions Pakistan earlier in the competition and they proved those were no flukes with yet another impressive display against Sri Lanka.

Put into bat, several Sri Lankan

SCOREBOARD	
SRI LANKA	
P Nissanka c Gurbaz b Omarzai	46
D Karunaratne lbw b Farooqi	15
K Mendis c sub b Mujeeb	39
S Samarawickrama lbw Mujeeb	36
C Asalanka c Rashid b Farooqi	22
D de Silva b Rashid	14
A Mathews c Nabi b Farooqi	23
D Chameera run out (Ibrahim Zadran)	1
M Theekshana b Farooqi	29
K Rajitha run out (Gurbaz)	5
D. Madushanka not out	0
Extras (lb2, w9)	11
Total (all out, 49.3 overs)	241
Fall of wickets: 1-22, 2-84, 3-134, 4-139, 5-167, 6-180, 7-185, 8-230, 9-239	
Bowling: Mujeeb Ur Rahman 10-0-38-2, Fazalhaq Farooqi 10-1-34-4, Naveen-ul-Haq 6-3-0-47-0, Azmatullah Omarzai 7-0-37-1, Rashid Khan 10-0-50-1, Mohammad Nabi 6-0-33-0	
AFGHANISTAN	
Rahmanullah Gurbaz b Madushanka	0
Ibrahim Zadran c Karunaratne b Madushanka	39
Rahmat Shah c Karunaratne b Rajitha	62
Hashmatullah Shahidi not out	58
Azmatullah Omarzai not out	73
Extras (lb1, w9)	10
Total (3 wickets, 45.2 overs)	242
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-73, 3-131	
Bowling: Madushanka 9-0-48-2, Rajitha 10-0-48-1, Mathews 3-0-18-0, Chameera 9-2-0-51-0, Theekshana 10-0-55-0, De Silva 4-0-21-0	
RESULT: Afghanistan won by seven wickets	

batters got their eyes in but could not quite capitalise on those starts.

After the fall of Dimuth Karunaratne in the sixth over, Kusal Mendis (39) forged half-century partnerships with Pathum Nissanka (46) and Sadeera Samarawickrama (36) to steady the innings.

At 134-2 in the 28th over,

Sri Lanka looked well placed to reach the 275-mark but the plucky Afghans struck at regular intervals to peg them back.

Angelo Mathews and Maheesh Theekshana raised 45 quick runs for the eighth wicket but Sri Lanka still fell short of the 250-mark.

Afghan left-arm quick Fazalhaq Farooqi claimed 4-34, which fetched him player-of-the-match award.

Afghanistan lost Rahmanullah Gurbaz in the first over but Rahmat Shah (62) and Ibrahim Zadran (39) calmed the nerves with a 73-run partnership.

Kasun Rajitha dismissed Rahmat but not before the batter had brought up his second successive fifty of the tournament.

Shahidi and Omarzai mixed caution with occasional aggression in their unbroken century stand to take Afghanistan closer to the target.

With victory in sight, both decided to play their shots and Azmatullah scored the winning run when he attempted to hit a six and was dropped at deep midwicket.

"I think we were a little bit short of runs," Sri Lanka captain Mendis said after their fourth loss in six matches.

"We needed 280 or 300 on this pitch. I think the bowlers did well in the first 10 overs but it was tough after that." — Reuters



Afghanistan players celebrate after beating Sri Lanka in Pune.

Anxious Gill needs to give himself time

WHEN the World Cup began, all eyes were on Shubman Gill, the new prince of India. He was in great form having got 1,248 runs, the highest by any player in this World Cup. Fans were expecting a run feast from the new heir to Virat Kohli. But as fate would have Shubman fell sick due to a viral dengue fever and had to be ruled out for the first two games.

But fans were happy Gill recovered and was fit for the big clash against Pakistan in Ahmedabad. India had bowled out Pakistan cheaply for 191



ANIS SAJJAN



and Shubman started well scoring four boundaries and looked in full flow but was caught brilliantly by Shadab Khan for 16. In his next game against Bangladesh, Gill got in his groove and scored a half century before throwing it away going for a big shot. In his third game against the Kiwis, Shubman again looked good scoring a brisk 26 but got out going for a slash at third man.

On Sunday, in the game against England, Gill was anxious to score and was trying to step out every second ball. He could not get going on a sluggish pitch and played a loose shot to Chris Woakes leaving a gap

between bat and pad and was knocked over for just 9. This is not the Gill we know who was in prime form before the World Cup.

Thankfully for India, Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli's good form has bailed made India chase down all targets in their first four games. But on Sunday, India were batting for the first time after Jos Butler put India in. Gill had the time to get set as Rohit had given India a flying start but

was eager to get quick runs and lost his wicket.

Four innings and just 113 runs which is not the Gill fans and he himself would have wanted in this

World Cup. India have been placed well in the World Cup with six wins out of six games and hence Shubman's form has gone unnoticed. But India would need big runs from Gill come the big games which will be in the knockout which India are expected to make it. But for that Gill needs to give himself time and get in his groove to get big runs. He does not look out of form, it's just the eagerness to get quick runs which is costing him his wicket. All the fans will be hoping Gill gets his mojo back as he had before the World Cup and help India win this World Cup which is the most coveted and elusive trophy.





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Refurbished runway to boost Muscat International Airport’s capabilities

MUSCAT: The Civil Aviation Authority has announced the successful completion of the rehabilitation of the southern runway at Muscat International Airport, effectively enabling a significant ramp-up of domestic and international air traffic at Oman’s principal international airport.

With the southern runway back in operation, Muscat International Airport will be able to handle multiple take-off and landings, while also contributing to noise mitigation experienced by residents of neighbourhoods located in the vicinity of the airport.

The Authority indicated that



The rehabilitated southern runway will be brought back into operation once the certification process is completed.

the runway is currently being prepared to begin the movement of aircraft after obtaining the necessary certificates in accordance with safety requirements and regulations for

the start of landing and take-off of aircraft.

An official explained that the licensing process includes an actual examination of the runway and taxiways by specialists at the Civil Aviation Authority, in accordance with the requirements of the International Civil Aviation Organization.

In addition, updated plans to include the airport’s landing and take-off runways will be published and distributed to all airlines for use.

The Authority stated that the new devices are being tested and operated in parallel with the operational readiness phase, including automated landing and air monitoring systems, in coordination with the airport operator and other service providers.

This helps air traffic controllers at the airport become familiar with and train new settings and procedures for operating the two runways.

Use of the southern runway of Muscat International Airport was halted in mid-2022, pending the recertification of the landing strip in line with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) guidelines.

Upon the completion of the certification process, the runway will be brought into operation.

— ONA

Oman chairs 9th meeting of GCC Anti-Corruption Ministerial Committee

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the State Audit Institution (SAI), chaired the 9th meeting of the GCC Anti-Corruption Ministerial Committee, which was held at Al Bustan Palace Hotel in Muscat yesterday, in the presence of the GCC Secretary General.

The meeting discussed the joint manuals in the field of integrity and anti-corruption, namely the Financial Declaration Manual, the Manual of Disclosure and Making Media Content available to the authorities and institutions responsible for promoting integrity and combating corruption in the GCC states.

Furthermore, the proposed topics pertaining to the 2024 annual event were also reviewed during the meeting.

TURN TO P15

International congress highlights MENA’s leading role in waste management

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, OCT 30

The 39th International Waste Association Congress (ISWA), which began in Muscat on Monday, highlighted best practices in waste management in the MENA region.

Hosted by Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be’ah), the three-day forum encompassed multiple panel sessions, over 20 breakout sessions, and a parallel exhibition under the theme of achieving Net Zero emissions.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Dr

Mohab bin Ali al Hinai, Vice President of Sustainability and Circular Economy at be’ah, shared the following, “Today marked the opening ceremony of the 39th International Solid Waste Association World Congress.

We’ve drawn over 1,000 delegates from all around the world, including numerous international companies and regional players, to highlight Oman’s initiatives in resource management and the circular economy.”

According to Al Hinai, this theme was chosen in alignment with the world’s pivot towards



The opening ceremony of ISWA 2023 World Congress was graced by Abdulsalam al Murshidi, President of Oman Investment Authority. Picture ©be’ah

reducing emissions and achieving net neutrality, specifically in light of the emissions produced by the waste management sector.

The event is the first of its kind in the Middle East region. “In the context of the Middle East region, the Government of Oman was among the early pioneers in establishing both private companies and state-owned enterprises to manage waste in an economically and environmentally sustainable way.

This is why ISWA recognised these efforts and sought to showcase them as a role model for what has been achieved so far,” Al Hinai stated.

Saudi Investment Recycling Company (SIRC) CEO Engineer Ziad al Shiha expressed a similar sentiment, “We are very proud of our colleagues in be’ah for hosting this conference.”

Al Shiha shared that the congress will allow key players in the region to address the main issues and challenges in the region.

Breakout sessions and technical workshops of the conference will focus on four main subthemes: Protecting human health and the quality of the environment; Mitigating climate change; Driving resource efficiency and the circular economy; and new Technologies adoption and sector transformation towards a circular economy.

Oman’s logistics sector poised for growth amid global trends

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, OCT 30

In a recent speech, Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Oman’s Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, highlighted the importance of international trends and their potential impact on Oman’s logistics sector.

Speaking to an attentive audience at the Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS), the minister emphasised the need for students and young professionals to be aware of these trends in order to seize the opportunities they present.

With a keen eye on technological advancements, Al Maawali articulated the impact of rapid developments in technology and its effect on job markets. He stressed that the changing technological landscape will create



Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali (left), Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology with Dr Moosa al Kindi, Dean of MCBS.

new jobs, while also making certain jobs more important than others.

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and the development of new mobility technologies like flying taxis were cited as examples. The minister

urged students to prepare themselves for these changes and ensure that Oman benefits from the gains brought about by these advancements.

Moreover, the minister highlighted the shifting balance of global economic power from west to east. He emphasised the need to closely monitor emerging economies such as China, India, Mexico, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Bangladesh. With their large populations, these countries are expected to play significant roles in future economic trends.

The minister encouraged young Omanis to seek opportunities and collaborations with these nations to drive economic growth and development.

He also addressed the importance of identifying Oman’s unique strengths and finding a clear mission for the country.

TURN TO P15

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OMAN

OAB, CBO
raise awareness
on FATF



OAB headquarters in Muscat.

MUSCAT: In an effort to enhance readiness for the Financial Action Task Force Mutual Evaluation (FATF), Oman Arab Bank (OAB), in collaboration with Arab Bank (AB) and the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), conducted an awareness session for financial institutions operating in Oman, showcasing best practices within the sector.

The collaboration is a proactive step aimed at ensuring that Oman is well-prepared for the upcoming FATF assessment in 2024 and is set to help the country meet international standards for Anti-Money Laundering/Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT).

During the session, Arab Bank shared its experiences regarding the FATF assessment and the potential impact of the assessment outcome.

The FATF's Mutual Evaluation assessment will determine the country's level of deployment and compliance with the FATF's 40 recommendations, which are set as the international AML/CFT standard.

Omran Group participates in ITB Asia 2023 conference

MUSCAT: Demonstrating its commitment and support to promoting the Sultanate of Oman's international tourism presence, Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) attended ITB Asia 2023 in Singapore.

The event provided an invaluable platform to present Oman as a must-visit destination and the Group's diverse portfolio to some of the world's leading travel experts at the ITB Asia convention.

This marked Omran Group's, the leading tourism development company in Oman, inaugural presence at ITB Asia 2023 in Singapore.

At the conference segment of the event, Omran Group spoke on the rich tapestry of experiences that Oman offers.

From its breath-taking landscapes and cultural riches to the warmth of its Arabian hospitality, Oman is poised to captivate the hearts of global travellers.

Additionally, the company discussed its strategic initiatives to develop top-tier tourism infrastructure and immersive experiences that cater to the demands of the international market, specifically targeting the preferences of Asian travellers.

Reflecting on this significant milestone, Mohammed al Eissa, Chief of Corporate Planning and Communication at Omran Group, stated, "Our active participation in ITB Asia 2023 in Singapore is a cornerstone of our strategic efforts



Mohammed al Eissa, Chief of Corporate Planning and Communication at Omran Group, speaks during the conference.

to position Oman as a premier destination in the global tourism landscape.

This is particularly pivotal as Oman gears up to host the World's Leading Travel Trade Show, ITB Berlin, in 2024.

We are fully committed to forging strong partnerships with international key stakeholders that have participated in this event."

He added, "We are on a mission to highlight Oman's rich diversity through our extensive portfolio of hotels, resorts, and destinations that cater to various tastes and

demographics.

Our commitment to upholding the highest standards of service and hospitality, combined with our focus on curating new and exciting tourism products and experiences tailored to the Asian market, will undoubtedly enhance our appeal in the region.

This includes cultural tours, adventure activities, and wellness retreats that promise an immersive Arabian experience."

ITB Asia 2023 in Singapore attracted more than 13,000 attendees, bringing together a

diverse range of international exhibitors and buyers from the MICE, leisure, corporate and technology segments of the travel industry.

With an unwavering commitment to excellence and in line with the Oman Vision 2040 and the National Tourism Strategy, Omran Group is confident that its participation in ITB Asia 2023 in Singapore will significantly bolster Oman's appeal in the Asian market and attract potential partners and visitors.



Sohar International launches new corporate mobile banking app

MUSCAT: Demonstrating its unwavering dedication to continually improving and expanding its services to better serve corporate clients, Sohar International introduces its latest addition to the suite of its corporate Internet banking services revealing its new corporate mobile banking app.

This innovative app is tailored to cater to the unique requirements of the corporate world, enabling clients to run and grow their businesses effortlessly.

The new corporate App is designed to provide unmatched convenience, speed, and cost-effectiveness to a diverse corporate audience, including large corporations, government entities, SMEs, and retail businesses.

This innovative app responds to the growing demand for remote banking, enabling businesses to manage financial transactions and accounts from anywhere at any time.

The Corporate Banking Mobile App offers a suite of features tailored to businesses, including statement checks, salary transfer, fund transfers, and bill payments.

To ensure security, the application is fortified with two-factor authentication, providing the choice of static and dynamic passwords, as well as advanced biometric authentication options like fingerprint or Face ID.

Ahmed al Musalmi, Chief Executive Officer at Sohar International, emphasised the paramount significance of modernised digital tools for contemporary businesses.

Al Musalmi stated, "In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, companies are increasingly drawn toward digital solutions that offer efficiency, convenience, and utmost security.

With the introduction of our innovative and feature-rich application, our primary objective is to empower our corporate clientele with enhanced control and deeper financial insights.

OQ wins personal empowerment award in Middle East

MUSCAT: OQ, the global integrated energy group, won the first-place award in personal empowerment in the Middle East granted for companies and organisations that establish the culture of distinguished corporate personal empowerment in the Middle East.

This award acknowledges the efforts exerted by the group in different areas of human development, qualification of workers, and supporting the community in the areas of personal empowerment aimed at individual and organisational development.

The award was presented to OQ during a ceremony held recently in



OQ delegates receive the award during the ceremony.

Muscat.

On this occasion, Olivia al Farsi, Vice President for People and Culture at OQ said: "This award acknowledges the continued

efforts aimed at advancing the institutional coaching culture according to international standards of human resources qualification and developing

competencies entertaining global skills in this field."

"OQ contributed to empowering 530 male and female employees, in addition to 80 leaders by providing them with personal coaching skills during the period from 2021 – 2023.

The group conducted 1775 coaching hours and trained 49 coaches including 6 coaches who received an international accreditation so far," she added.

It is worth mentioning that OQ enhances the personal empowerment culture through its partnership with Takatuf, OQ's development partner by qualifying and empowering

leaders at the Group. Through this partnership, OQ trained 3 batches of its employees as part of the professional personal empowerment programme.

It also provided orientation sessions for graduates to fulfil the accreditation requirements by the International Coaching Federation (ICF). The ICF is the largest organisation in the world that leads the global development of professional coaching. It enhances the role of coaching as an integral part of prosperous societies.

Established in 1995, the ICF has currently over 55000 members in more than 150 countries and territories.

2024 Chevrolet Captiva arrives in Oman

MUSCAT: Chevrolet announced the much-anticipated arrival of the new 2024 Captiva to the Sultanate of Oman.

Following the regional success of the completely reinvented 2021 edition, Chevrolet further raises the bar with the 2024 model, defying expectations of what an SUV should be.

A big car for an affordable price, with seven comfortable seats and large cargo space, plush interior, great fuel efficiency, superior technology and impressive safety features, the 2024 Chevrolet Captiva is the ideal SUV for the region's busy families.

Suzie Guzzo, Chief Marketing

Officer, General Motors Africa and Middle East, commented:

"We are excited to bring the 2024 Chevrolet Captiva to the Middle East, a region known for its big family culture and values.

The appetite for affordable SUVs in the region has always been strong and we have no doubt the 2024 Captiva will cater to that.

With its cutting-edge styling, enviable interior space with up to seven seats, high fuel efficiency and advanced technologies, Chevrolet Captiva is the perfect match for the region's busy families looking for the ultimate companion at an affordable price.

We are confident the new



Captiva will continue to claim its territory as a firm favourite amongst our valued Middle East

customers."

Captiva builds on Chevrolet's global SUV experience, delivering

on the brand's '3S' concept of the modern SUV:

Stylish, spacious and smart. Spaciousness is one of the main features that distinguish the 2024 Chevrolet Captiva.

A family car by all means, the 2024 Captiva can comfortably accommodate seven passengers.

Not just that, the Captiva is equipped with dual-tone seats, six-way power-adjustable driver seats, foldable second and third-row seats, catering to the driver and passengers' different needs.

Additionally, with the flat rear floor and multiple cargo configurations, the compact SUV can easily be adjusted serving

various purposes.

In addition to its seven-seater configuration, the interior is thoughtful in its design and outfitting.

The Captiva comes with an adjustable steering wheel with control buttons, gear shift lever, glovebox, front centre armrest with cupholders, sun visors, rear view mirror, and rear AC vents.

Infotainment options include a 10.4-inch diagonal colour touchscreen display, Apple CarPlay / Android Auto, USB ports, 3.5 inch driver information display, Bluetooth, 4-speaker sound system and keyless entry are available as standard features.



WIPO and MoCIIP host key workshop on intellectual property



A speaker addresses the workshop on intellectual property on Monday.

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, OCT 30

In a significant collaboration, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), in partnership with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), has organised an innovative workshop centred on intellectual property and competition protection.

The three-day workshop, which commenced on Monday, October 30, 2023, witnessed the presence of key figures, including Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Commerce and Industry Under-Secretary at MoCIIP. Zahran bin Salim al Mahrouqi, Director General of the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention at MoCIIP, hailed this workshop as a pioneering initiative by WIPO, marking its debut in the Arab region.

The event's core objective is to underscore the critical significance of safeguarding fair competition and preventing monopolistic practices. It aims to leverage international expertise to elevate the knowledge and professional standards of all attendees.

Oman's commitment to regulating economic activities and promoting market principles that ensure price freedom without stifling free competition is exemplified in the enactment of the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Law under Royal Decree 67/2014.

The workshop's comprehensive agenda delves into a wide range of pivotal topics, providing participants with practical insights and actionable takeaways. It taps into WIPO's extensive knowledge base while sharing Egypt's valuable experiences in assessing non-competitive agreements.

The program places a strong emphasis on intellectual property, evaluating market dominance, complaint resolution procedures, and the assessment of economic

concentrations. Additionally, it explores the intricate intersection of intellectual property and competition, with specific relevance to the pharmaceutical and digital platform industries.

The workshop also sheds light on the enforcement of competition law. Nasra al Habsi, Assistant General Manager of the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre at MoCIIP, detailed the centre's overarching objectives and responsibilities.

These encompass the regulation of economic activities, the establishment of equitable market rules, and ensuring price freedom without inhibiting fair competition.

The centre plays a pivotal role in enforcing laws and regulations related to competition protection and monopoly prevention, actively researching harmful competition practices, and managing complaints related to anti-competitive conduct.

Speaking to *Observer*, Giovanni Napolitano, the Head of the Intellectual Property and Competition Department at WIPO, emphasised the need to initiate discussions on competition and the pivotal role of intellectual property in this context.

He underscored the importance of establishing a robust partnership with the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre to enhance the competitiveness of local and global businesses operating in the market.

Rana Khoweiled, the Head of the Mergers and Acquisitions Department at the Egyptian Competition Authority, stressed the importance of competition protection and monopoly prevention laws within the broader economy.

She highlighted the workshop as a significant part of ongoing cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Arab Republic of Egypt across diverse fields.

Oman tenders first phase of Rub Al Khali road dualisation

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 30

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has announced a tender for the Phase 1 dualisation of the landmark carriageway that cuts through the Rub Al Khali (The Empty Quarter) to the newly launched land border between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The announcement comes amid concerted efforts by the two neighbours to strengthen trade, economic and investment ties, coupled with cross-border flows of people and goods that leverage the new road link between the two countries.

Opened late in 2021, the 725-km desert road starts on the Oman side at Ibri roundabout in the Governorate of Al Dhahirah and extends 161 km to the Rub Al Khali checkpoint on the international border.

From the Saudi side, the blacktop begins at Al Bat'ha junction and ends at the border checkpoint after covering a distance of 564 kilometres.

Phase 1 of the dualisation covers a modest stretch on the Oman side of the carriageway. It starts from the Governor's Roundabout and extends to the Tanam Roundabout in the governorate, covering a distance of 5.159 km.

In addition to the dualisation of this stretch, a further 10 km



View of a section of the Oman-Saudi road cutting through the expansive Rub Al Khali desert.

of service roads will also be constructed on either side.

Furthermore, the selected contractor will be required to design and construct a pair of smart signalise junctions elsewhere along the main highway.

A wadi crossing and other improvements to the Ibri-Hafeet carriageway are also envisioned as part of the tender package.

Significantly, the Rub Al Khali road, which now features a full-fledged border checkpoint, will also serve as a principal conduit for passenger and cargo flows

between the two countries when a mammoth new integrated economic zone is brought into operation in multiple phases in Al Dhahirah Governorate.

The Economic Zone at Al Dhahirah (EZAD), planned for development on a sprawling 388 sq km area of the governorate, will serve as a new economic growth engine in a strategically important part of the country.

Located just 20 kilometres from the Rub Al Khali border crossing, EZAD will leverage its advantageous proximity to the massive Saudi market to target

manufacturing, mining, oilfield, logistics, renewable energy and a host of other investments.

Significantly, EZAD grew out of agreements signed by Oman and Saudi Arabia in February this year, setting the ground for a new wave of economic cooperation between the two neighbours.

It included a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to finance the infrastructure development of EZAD at a cost of RO 100 million. Technical and commercial bids for Phase 1 of the dualisation project are due in by December 10, 2023.

Oman's logistics sector poised for growth amid global trends

FROM PAGE 13

He stressed the significance of the logistics sector and its potential to contribute to Oman's economy. He said that the sector already contributed approximately RO 2 billion to the GDP in the previous year, but emphasised the possibility of achieving even greater success.

One of the main focuses mentioned by the minister was the optimisation of Oman's ports, airports, and road connections.

He said, "The aim is to ensure seamless cooperation between these key transportation hubs and foster stronger linkages." The minister also highlighted the need to explore new opportunities in the import-export market,

especially in regards to fresh produce and commodities.

By leveraging Oman's favourable geographic location and by developing strong partnerships with neighbouring countries like Pakistan, India, and the UAE, Oman can position itself as a central hub for logistics and trade in the region.

The minister also touched upon the importance of fostering entrepreneurship and innovation in the logistics sector.

He noted successful initiatives, such as the support given to start-ups in the metalworks industry, which have led to significant job creation and helped diversify Oman's economy.

Additionally, the minister

highlighted the government's focus on developing IT skills, with a particular emphasis on areas like AI, big data, and cybersecurity, which he believes will be crucial for future job growth.

In addition to academic prowess, Al Maawali urged students to focus on sharpening vital social skills and cultivating adaptability.

Recognising the highly competitive nature of the job market, he encouraged students to distinguish themselves as exceptional candidates by going beyond what is expected and seizing opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Building robust professional networks was also emphasised

as a key factor in advancing career prospects while cautioning against the misuse of connections.

The minister underscored Oman's unwavering commitment to positioning itself as a prominent player in the ever-evolving logistics sector. By vigilantly monitoring global and regional trends, Oman aims to capitalise on emerging opportunities and align its logistics industry with the changing needs of global trade.

The government's commitment to fostering collaboration, expanding infrastructure, and optimising logistics operations showcases its dedication to propelling Oman's logistics sector as a key driver of the nation's economic transformation.

Oman chairs 9th meeting of GCC Anti-Corruption Ministerial Committee

FROM PAGE 13

In addition, the meeting addressed the strategic manual for coordination and cooperation between the GCC authorities, institutions and ministerial committees.

It also reviewed updates of the GCC accession as a regional organisation to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. The agenda also included a review of the joint Gulf programme for awareness in the field of education, prepared by SAI in light of the proposals submitted by the member SAs and guided by the regional and international experiences.

The agenda discussed the action plan to activate cooperation



The meeting was held at Al Bustan Palace Hotel in Muscat yesterday.

and coordination between the departments of cooperation and international relations of the GCC Anti-Corruption institutions and authorities. It also reviewed the topic of supporting the Draft

Resolution of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the measurement of corruption, which will be submitted to the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption.



Shaikh Ghuson bin Hilal al Alawi (**pictured**), SAI Chairman, pointed out that integrity and anti-corruption are amongst the main pillars in achieving sustainable development goals and building confidence between various institutions of the state and the community.

Thus, the great attention devoted by the member states towards this aspect can be clearly

seen, as they follow the values of the Islamic religion and the national legislations in line with the relevant agreements at the regional and international levels to reflect the principles of transparency, integrity, justice and supremacy of law.

He emphasised the Committee's interest in areas related to the exchange of expertise and experiences, as the experience gained by member SAs through their internal activities and practices, as well as their joint programmes with peer institutions and specialised professional organisations, is a cornerstone in implementing the competencies and achieving the goals efficiently and effectively.

Al Alawi further stressed

the utmost care devoted by the Committee towards providing necessary support and empowerment to reach the highest level of knowledge transfer and experience sharing through various activities.

Jassim Mohammed al Budaiwi, GCC Secretary-General, stressed the keenness of the Secretariat General to support the efforts of the member SAs in the areas of joint action, in order to enhance their national roles in raising the efficiency of resource use.

This step reflects the wise vision of the GCC leaders, by laying the foundations of transparency, integrity, principles of justice and the rule of law. — **ONA**

Opportunity Oman: Duqm sustainable growth and green opportunities



DR YOUSUF HAMED AL BALUSHI
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www.omaninvestgateway.com

WITH A RESOLUTE FOCUS ON CO-INVESTMENT, DUQM IS POSITIONED TO BECOME A GLOBAL HUB FOR GREEN INITIATIVES. COLLABORATIONS WITH STEEL MANUFACTURERS, DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PRODUCTION OF DIRECT FURNACES AND GREEN METALLIC ELEMENTS LIKE HBI, DEMONSTRATE A COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES.

H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports, and Youth, recently presided over the opening ceremony of the First Duqm Economic Forum, underscoring the significance of this transformative event.

Taking Oman Vision 2040 as its foundation, the Duqm Economic Forum, organised by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones & Free Zones (OPAZ), convened on October 16 and 17, 2023.

The forum brought together a multitude of international companies, entrepreneurs, and individuals who eagerly signed contracts and committed investments in the Duqm city project. This resounding vote of confidence in Duqm stems from the belief that it is poised to become one of the premier cities in the world, leading the charge in Oman's transition to a green economy.

The two-day forum was purposefully structured to emphasise the economic landscape and investment potential not only in the Sultanate of Oman at large but also, specifically, within the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

At the heart of this discussion lies the monumental potential of Duqm's green hydrogen as a clean energy solution for heavy industries, promising substantial decarbonisation and propelling manufacturing towards a more

sustainable future.

Global leaders in renewable energy, manufacturing, petrochemicals, and logistics are converging on Duqm, attracted by an ecosystem of drivers and the promise of harnessing Duqm's renewable energy resources.

Oman, aligned with its National Energy Strategy and the core tenets of Oman Vision 2040, has embarked on ambitious renewable energy projects.

Among these is the export-oriented Hyport Duqm – a proposed 500MW green hydrogen and ammonia plant poised to establish Oman as a leading global producer and exporter of zero-carbon fuels.

This pivotal DUQM23 panel illuminates the green energy companies establishing roots in Duqm, highlighting the robust infrastructure and expertise supporting them, the consumer trends that drive them, and the opportunities propelling their success.

Notably, the demand for petrochemicals, essential in a myriad of industries including plastics, fertilisers, packaging, electronics, medical equipment, and more, is set to surge by 40% by 2030, nearly doubling by 2050.

Furthermore, petrochemicals are instrumental in the production of key components for modern renewable energy systems.

The Duqm Refinery project and the Markaz Crude Oil Storage Terminal, the largest oil storage and export project in the Middle East, represent



An overview of Duqm Refinery project. Image for illustration only.

substantial investments, offering opportunities for petrochemical manufacturers targeting burgeoning markets tied to the green energy transition.

In the pursuit of sustainable development and green energy opportunities, the Duqm Economic Forum emerges as a beacon, showcasing Duqm's potential to lead Oman into a greener, more prosperous future.

The forum, an initiative of OPAZ, aims to create a lasting impact by exploring innovative partnership opportunities and spotlighting the enticing green investment prospects within the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

Among the distinguished participants that played a pivotal role in the Duqm Economic Forum, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) held a prominent position. Functioning as a non-profit development institution, the IFC exhibited

an unwavering dedication to bolstering Oman's efforts in expediting a diverse array of development projects, while also providing extensive financial support.

This support takes on multifaceted dimensions: it encompasses the facilitation of funding solutions for projects within the Oman Free Zone (OPAZ) and the industrial estates, contingent on the projects' alignment with the rigorous criteria set forth by the IFC.

Furthermore, the IFC extends a financial conduit for private sector ventures keen on investing in OPAZ and the industrial estates, with a specific emphasis on infrastructure and climate change-related undertakings.

This strategic approach is indicative of the IFC's overarching commitment to sustainable development and economic growth within the region. With a

resolute focus on co-investment, Duqm is positioned to become a global hub for green initiatives. Collaborations with steel manufacturers, directed towards the production of direct furnaces and green metallic elements like HBI, demonstrate a commitment to sustainable practices.

This collective effort, guided by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones & Free Zones, aims to establish Duqm as a cornerstone in the global transition towards green energy.

In conclusion, the Duqm Economic Forum of 2023 served as a pivotal moment, unveiling the immense potential of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

With a strategic focus on sustainable growth, renewable energy, and green initiatives, Duqm is poised to lead Oman and the world into a future defined by economic prosperity and environmental stewardship.

The case for a career in bond investing



FELIX MARTIN

The writer is an economist, fund manager and author. He manages and advises on funds investing in bond, currency, and credit markets globally at publicly listed asset managers, leading private firms, and his own independent boutique.

Last week, I was tasked with convincing a class of brilliant young MBA students at one of Europe's leading business schools that they should consider a career in bond investing. It was not an easy sell.

Bonds, I explained, traditionally serve three purposes. First, they deliver a positive income. That prompted polite guffaws. I should not have been surprised. In 2022, the aggregate US market for fixed income securities notched up its worst annual performance since 1871, and US Treasury bonds are currently on track for three consecutive calendar years of negative returns – something that has never happened before.

Bonds contribute capital stability, I parried, in contrast to flighty equities. More sniggers at the back. I sensed familiarity with the recent fate of fixed income benchmarks such as Austria's hundred-year government bond. That security, which was issued in 2017, is down around 75% from its peak valuation in late 2020.

There was still fixed income's trump card. Its third traditional function is as ballast: an asset class whose negative correlation with equities can diversify a portfolio and reduce overall risk without giving up returns. Then I remembered that in 2022 equities and bonds dropped in tandem, resulting in the worst performance for the classic 60:40 balanced portfolio since 1974.

The private equity session was about to start down the hall. Some of the more ambitious students were beginning to slink towards the door. It was time for a change of tack.

It is true, I admitted, that being a bond investor has been tough for much of the past 15 years and positively traumatic over the past two. But you should not choose your future career by looking in the rear-view mirror. The three fundamental drivers of fixed income returns that distinguish them from equities imply that the immediate future is likely to be very different from the past.

The first is interest-rate risk. That has certainly been a handicap for investors over the past two years as rising yields battered the market value of long bond positions.

Yet the result is that yields today are at far more attractive levels. The yield on nominal 10-year US Treasury notes touched 5% this week, while their inflation-protected cousins are yielding 2.5%. This means even the plainest vanilla assets in the global system provide income sufficient to fund medium-term liabilities again.

That's a welcome change on its own, but it comes with an even more important kicker. The income and capital payments on bonds are contractually fixed, unlike the cash flows provided by equities.

For this reason, when bond yields are low, the sensitivity of



A worker arrives at his office in the Canary Wharf business district in London. – Reuters

capital prices to inflation and interest rate shocks is high, and vice versa. This critical property of fixed income securities – “convexity” in the jargon – means that as bonds sell off, their downside risk mechanically falls. That is quite a contrast to the dynamics affecting equity values.

Precisely because of the carnage of the past two years, the cushion of convexity already makes a material difference to the risk-reward ratio in global government bonds.

And if current expectations for growth, inflation and policy interest rates turn out to be too bullish, its effect will swing into reverse: falling yields will deliver capital gains from rising bond prices at an accelerating pace. Don't let anyone tell you that bond maths can't be fun.

The second potential source of return in fixed income is credit

– the reward for bearing the risk that the bond issuer defaults. The picture here is admittedly less clear-cut. While underlying government yield curves have adjusted materially, many credit spreads have moved much less.

Nevertheless Torsten Slok, chief economist at Apollo Global Management, points out that the upward shift in the US Treasury curve alone means that the yield on BBB-rated US corporate bonds is now two and a half percentage points higher than the earnings yield of the S&P 500.

Since the latter metric measures the totality of profits available for distribution to shareholders, that suggests bonds issued by investment-grade US companies are now better value than their equities, after more than a decade in their shadow. In more esoteric parts of the global credit universe, valuations now look healthy in

absolute terms as well. The US dollar-denominated bonds of emerging-market governments are a case in point. The yield of the benchmark JPMorgan EMBI-GD index is close to 4.5% above US Treasuries. But fund manager GMO's emerging debt team calculates that recent ratings upgrades imply expected credit losses of only one third of that differential.

If historical averages prove a reliable guide, that suggests an annualised return for emerging-market sovereign debt of nearly 5% over US Treasuries over the coming two years.

For those brave enough to make event-driven bets on today's chaotic geopolitical environment, potentially greater opportunities await. Look no further than Venezuela for proof.

After the US eased sanctions last week, its dollar-denominated bonds nearly doubled in price. Finally, there is the third engine of returns for global fixed income investors: currency risk. No one would pretend this is a game for the faint-hearted – or that valuation alone is a sure-fire route to success.

Yet it is hard to ignore that of 54 global currencies monitored by the Economist for its Big Mac index, all but seven are currently cheap when compared to the US dollar. The appreciating greenback has been a drag on much of the global fixed income universe for the past decade.

— Reuters

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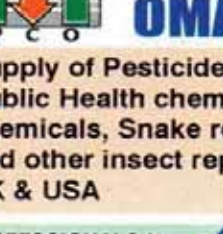
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MEMORIES

Photographer Suleiman holds the camera to document memorable moments for the participants at Al Din Festival. — Muscat



KIDS THEATRE

A group photo of the Kazakh team that presented the children's show entitled " Why the swallow has the tail with little horns". — Muscat

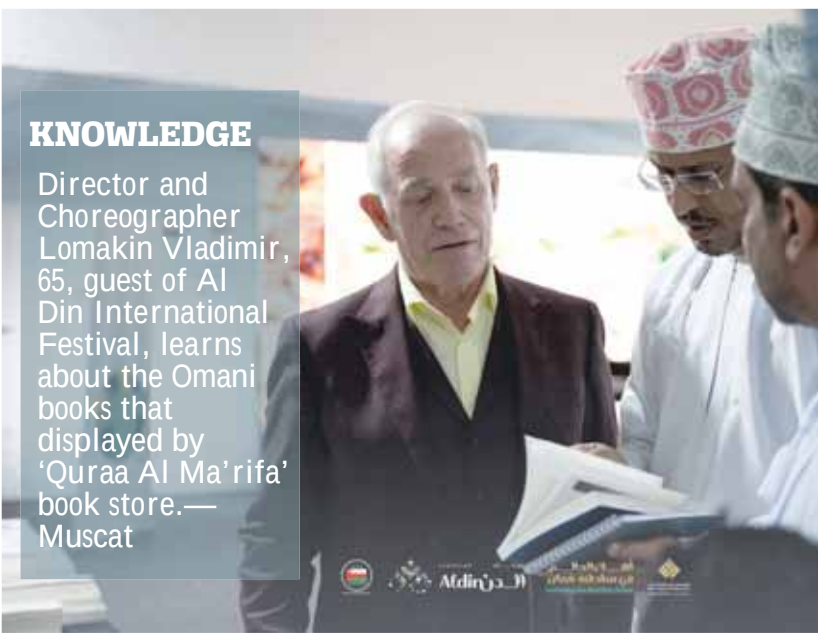


STREET THEATRE

The Iraqi actor who played the street theatre entitled "VIP Citizen". — Muscat

KNOWLEDGE

Director and Choreographer Lomakin Vladimir, 65, guest of Al Din International Festival, learns about the Omani books that displayed by 'Quraa Al Ma'rifa' book store.— Muscat



ADULT THEATRE

A scene from the play "Fear" is one of the stories that was acted out in a popular Omani style. — Muscat



art & life

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Trees are important for environment and humanity



BY ASEELAH AL KIYUMI

Tree Day, which is known also as Arbor Day, underscores the significance of trees and their preservation. This annual event serves as a reminder of the pivotal role trees play in safeguarding our environment and human well-being.

The Sultanate of Oman has undertaken a commendable initiative to plant 10 million trees, a project conceived in continuation of the Environment Agency's ongoing efforts to instil awareness among the community about preserving native vegetation, combating desertification, and expanding green spaces within the country. Launched on January 8, 2020, in collaboration with the Petroleum Development Oman. This initiative embodies a holistic approach, drawing support from various sectors, including government, private enterprises, and civil society.

Trees are quintessential to life on Earth, offering an array of benefits to both the environment and humanity. Tree Day serves as a poignant reminder of air quality improvement as trees play a pivotal role in absorbing harmful gases like carbon dioxide and, in turn, releasing life-giving oxygen. This natural process aids in purifying the air, mitigating environmental pollution,

and fostering improved human health.

They are agents of environmental and climate regulation. Forests and trees act as nature's climate regulators, maintaining ecological equilibrium. They help moderate temperatures, reducing the heat during summer, and absorb rainfall, minimising flood risks.

They are equally important factor for biodiversity conservation. Forests and trees serve as habitats for diverse wildlife, providing shelter and sustenance to a plethora of species. This is instrumental in preserving biodiversity on our planet.

They also work as natural resource provider. Trees offer us a myriad of natural resources, including wood, fruits, and medicinal herbs. Additionally, they play a pivotal role in the natural water cycle, safeguarding arable land.

They are important agents of aesthetic and tranquil landscapes. Beyond their practical benefits, trees enhance the aesthetics of our surroundings, offering a source of natural beauty and tranquillity. Sitting under a tree on a serene summer day can be an immensely relaxing experience.

Despite the irreplaceable value of trees, contemporary times bear witness to the relentless deforestation and logging, fuelled by industrial expansion and unsustainable agriculture. Arbor Day assumes a



critical role in raising awareness about tree preservation and the environmental challenges we face.

There are three primary categories of trees, each with its unique attributes. Fruit trees, such as citrus trees bearing oranges and lemons, almond trees yielding almonds, and pomegranate and apple trees, provide nourishment for people worldwide.

Ornamental trees come in a variety of forms, carefully selected to suit different climates and environments. These include conifers, juniper, hawthorn, and woody trees. Notably, these trees maintain their leaves year-round, offering not only visual appeal but also psychological comfort. Their importance extends beyond sustenance to nurturing the soul, stimulating the mind, and fostering creativity.

Forest trees, planted in areas unsuitable for fruit-bearing trees, offer an invaluable contribution by enhancing landscapes and preventing the land from remaining barren. This is particularly important in rugged and rocky terrains.

Caring for all these tree types is essential to preserving their species and prolonging their lifespan. It is crucial to refrain from causing harm to these trees through cutting or polluting the soil in which they grow, as the repercussions of such actions extend to all of humanity.

We must collectively make a concerted effort to protect trees and forests, thereby safeguarding the health of our planet. Arbor Day serves as a poignant reminder of the need to cherish nature and harness its resources judiciously and responsibly.



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Scratch my back, I'll scratch yours: Baboons wily cooperators

LIKE HUMANS, baboons are able to cooperate with another of their kind for the common good — or punish them if they don't reciprocate, a study said on Friday.

Scientists have long debated whether animals other than humans are capable of this complicated tit-for-tat interaction known as "strategic cooperation".

For example, imagine a student who helped out an absent schoolmate by lending them their notes from class.

The student might expect that schoolmate to return the favour next time — and if they did not, seek out someone else more willing to play ball.

To find out if baboons — which are particularly sociable monkeys — are capable of this level of sophistication, researchers conducted an experiment at a French primate centre.

Eighteen Guinea baboons were paired off and put opposite each other, separated by a transparent partition, so they could watch their partner's behaviour.

Each baboon had its own touchscreen, which they were accustomed to from previous research at the centre.

One of the baboons was then presented with several images on their touchscreen. Pressing one image would release a tasty treat — a few

grains of wheat — just for themselves.

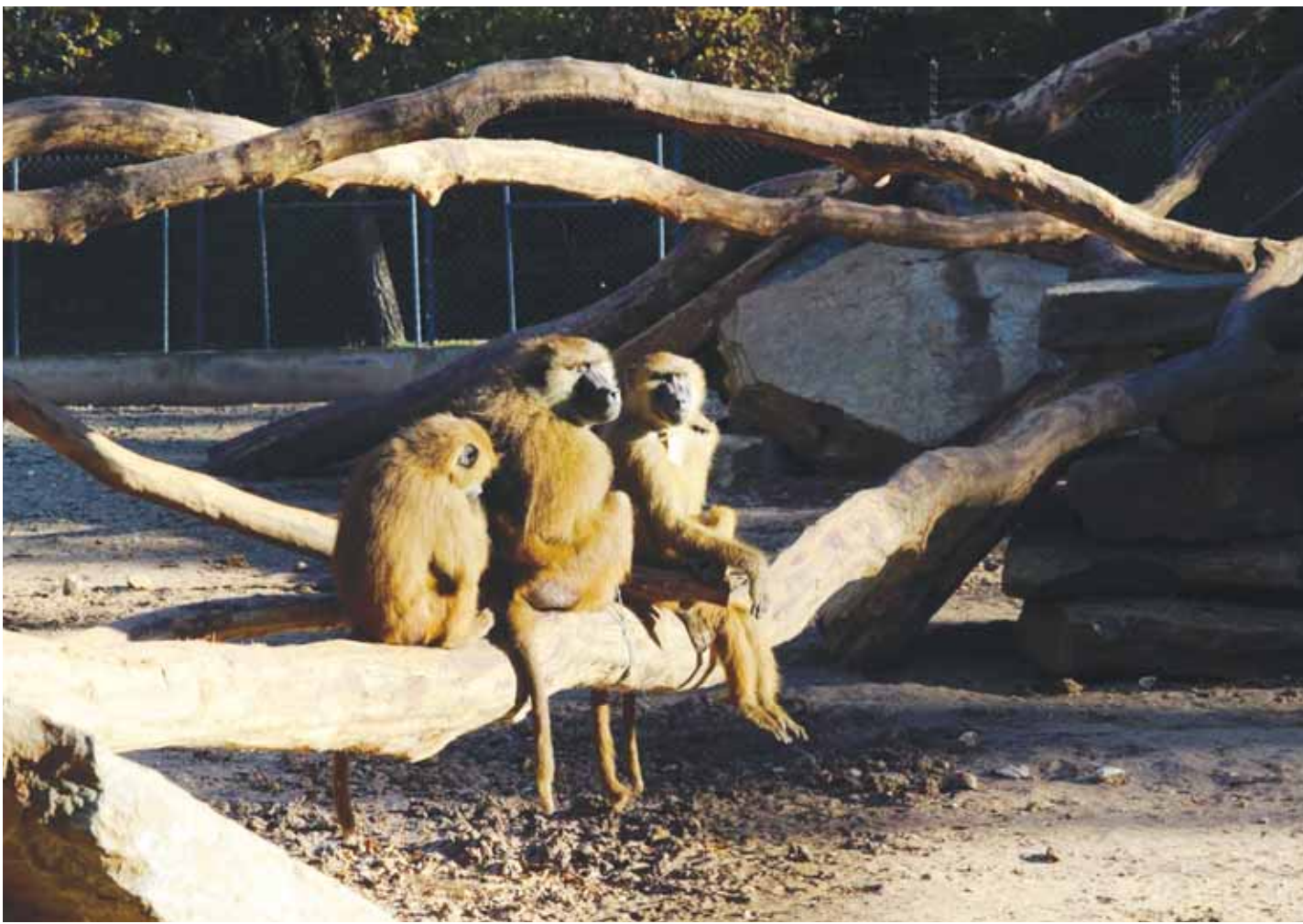
But pressing another image would give both baboons a treat — a decision the partner on the other side of the screen would see.

Ten of the baboons were swiftly sacked because they did not understand the task.

For the remaining eight, the researchers conducted nearly 250,000 tests on random pairings over 95 days.

PUNISHING THE 'SELFISH'

In almost all of the interactions, the baboons selected "the image that rewarded



them both", said Anthony Formaux, an expert in animal

psychology and the lead author of the study in the

journal Science Advances.

The baboons made the decision out of a "sense of the general interest", Formaux said.

Then the researchers increased the difficulty. The baboons were given two options: one gave a treat to the monkey on the other side of the screen, while the other did nothing.

"No longer able to reward themselves, they watched their partner much more carefully," Formaux said.

Baboons who gave treats to their comrades were more likely to receive some later in return.

But if a baboon made the "selfish" choice of not reward-

ing its partner, the partner would later punish it, potentially by wondering off to find another monkey at a different screen.

The baboons would only dish out punishment sometimes, "as a little reminder to control the partner in order to strengthen cooperation", Formaux said.

"It was incredible!" he said. "They adapted their strategy according to difficulty and the costs imposed on them."

The researchers suggested that this capacity for strategic cooperation was potentially inherited from a common ancestor of both humans and baboons at least 30 million years ago. — **AFP**

FILM

Scary 'Freddy's' film scores big N.America opening

NEW HORROR FILM "Five Nights at Freddy's" shot to the top of the North American box office this pre-Halloween weekend, taking in an estimated \$78 million — a frighteningly good opening for a film also available via streaming.

"This opening is fantastic," analyst David A. Gross said, adding that the film looks likely to rank just behind two Stephen King "It" movies among domestic horror-film openings.

"Freddy's" take, reported by industry watcher Exhibitor Relations, made it an instant winner for Universal Pictures and Blumhouse Productions, which spent just \$20 million to make the video game-based film — which is also streaming on Universal's

Peacock service.

Josh Hutcherson stars as a down-at-the-heels security guard working nights at an abandoned family entertainment centre, where creepy animatronic characters spring murderously to life after dark.

Down a notch after leading the box office for two weeks was "Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour," at \$14.7 million.

The film, chronicling three of the superstar's concerts, has taken in \$149.3 million in North America and \$53 million abroad, making it the first concert film ever to pass the \$200 million mark globally.

In third place, also down one spot from its debut last weekend,



was Martin Scorsese's history-based epic "Killers of the Flower Moon," at \$9 million. Leonardo DiCaprio, Robert De Niro and Lily Gladstone star in the dark story about the 1920s murders of Native Americans by evildoers coveting their oil wealth.

The faith-based documentary "After Death," which looks at people's near-death experiences, took in \$5.1 million for Angel Studios. The film comes only months after the small Utah-based studio released its first big hit, "Sound of Freedom," which has grossed more than \$230 million.

In fifth, down two spots, was Universal's horror film "Exorcist: The Believer," at \$3.1 million. Leslie Odom Jr. and Ann Dowd star in this sequel to the 1973 original.

Rounding out the top 10 were: "Paw Patrol: The Mighty Movie" (\$2.2 million), "Freelance" (\$2.1 million), "The Nightmare Before Christmas" (\$2 million), "Saw X" (\$1.7 million), "The Creator" (\$1.1 million) — **AFP**



FOOD

Cheeses face the heat at Raclette World Championships

UP IN THE Swiss Alps, the air hangs thick with the funk of hot cheese as the planet's best melt away the competition at the inaugural Raclette World Championships.

The Swiss native dish dates back centuries to a time when mountain herds-men would heat their cheese on an open fire and scrape off the melted part to keep them going.

But never before have cheesemakers, experts and restaurateurs come together under one roof to determine which cheeses make the world's finest raclette.

Nearly 90 cheeses were put to the test in Morgins, a village in Wallis — the south-western region considered the home of raclette.

"All these guys are small-scale producers who go up into the mountain pastures with their cows at the start of summer," said the event's founder Henri-Pierre Galletti.

"It's a way of validating their work, which is a hard job but a truly beautiful one," he said.

Morgins — more than 1,300 metres up in a wooded valley before the Alpine pass reaches France — welcomed more than 10,000 raclette enthusiasts who joined in the festivities and sampled the wares.

The three-day event culminated on Sunday with the winners crowned champion.

SMOOTH AND CREAMY

In the village hall's kitchen, cheese half-wheels are grilled under electric raclette heaters. The grilling can take from 30 seconds upwards, depending on the cheese.

The cooking is done by eye, with a feel for how each cheese melts. Once it bubbles up — but just before it starts to brown — the melted cheese is scraped onto the plate, then whisked out to jurors.

"The taste is in the fat," said racleur Jean-Michel Dubosson as he scraped off another serving with the back of his knife.

"It's important not to heat it too quickly."

While the kitchen is bustling, the tasting hall is a place of reverent silence.



Judges, many wearing traditional black with a red neckerchief, twirl the cheese around the fork before tasting. The atmosphere is slow, relaxed.

"We are looking for a raclette that is creamy, smooth, has a nice appearance, a nice colour," said Eddy Baillifard, known as the "pope of raclette" and one of the supreme jury final round judges.

"And in terms of taste: a nice texture, no thread, no strings, no gum."

Judges sample a maximum of 15 cheeses in a sitting, after which the sense of taste will have peaked — plus, in a 40-gramme serving, there's only so much cheese one can handle.

Between raclettes, hot black tea or sliced red apples neutralise the palate.

The judges rank each cheese from one to five on appearance, texture, taste and aroma, and overall impression.

GOOD COMPANY

Most of the cheeses were from Wallis, and if not then from the neighbouring French Alps. However, cheeses from the rest of Switzerland, plus Belgium, Canada, Italy and Romania were also in contention.

Producers from Britain, Japan, Norway, Sweden and Kyrgyzstan are interested in coming next time.

"To be here representing Romania, it's a big thing for us," said Narcis Pinte, 34,



who learned his craft in Switzerland before taking his skills back home.

The championships had three categories.

Alpage de Tanay, from Wallis, won the most hotly-contested crown for raclette with raw Alpine milk, a category only open to cheeses made in Alpine pastures between June 15 and July 15.

Fromagerie Le Pont, also from Wallis, won the title for best raw milk raclette.

Fromagerie Seiler Selection by Wyssmuller Maître Fromager, from the Obwalden region in central Switzerland, took the final crown for other raclette cheeses.

A giant Saint Bernard dog kept watch at the door, and in the festival tents outside, raclette lovers sampled numerous freshly-melted cheeses to the sound of a cowbell ringing team.

More than 30,000 raclettes were served to the public, accompanied by four tonnes of boiled potatoes and six pallets of gherkins and onions.

"A day without raclette is a day wasted," said Baillifard.

"There are several ingredients that make raclette so enjoyable, but the main thing is the people you share it with. When you're in good company, the raclette is already 80 per cent a success," he added. —AFP

AL DIN THEATRE FESTIVAL



Alexandru Condurache

"Discovering Oman Through Theatre"

I AM ALEXANDRU, a film and television director from Romania. I am currently coordinating the Digital Stage of the "Radu Stanca" National Theatre in Sibiu and the video production of the Sibiu International Theatre Festival. It's my first time in your country and after five days I feel exactly at home. I think the most important values I have discovered are hospitality and friendship. And the most unexpected and visually spectacular are the mountains. Shapes that seem to be painted on the sky, lines taken from the famous German painting "Wanderer above the Sea of Fog". The same graphic elements I also found, with the great joy of discovering a fabulous new space of our world, at the "The Oman Across Ages Museum". Built to provide generous spaces to future exhibitions and naturally conveying the full colour of light from the ocean shore, the project has been imagined with all the means of the present and the future and is equipped with an impressive technological arsenal for the visual representation of images and stories. My professional training made me pause for minutes in front of a giant cinema screen symbolically built with the values of Oman's national day (the sides of the video image are 18 meters by 11 meters). Inaugurated this year, I am certain that the museum will become one of the extraordinary engines for promoting the history, culture and vision of a nation opening up to humanity.

Since the first day of the Aldin International Theatre Festival I had the chance to watch all the productions of the three sections: children's theatre, street theatre and adult theatre. What I was pleased to notice, right from the start, was the professional atmosphere and the large number of volunteers I met. Even though this is the first edition of the event in Muscat, the level of preparation and involvement is very high. Another extremely important aspect in the development of the event is to attract a diverse audience by creating new sections: books, debates, seminars, workshops and, last but not least, involving the community by inviting local associations and producers to participate in the festival.

In the following, I will focus on some values related to technology and creativity in the visual field. A good first decision by the organisers was the choice of unconventional spaces as venues for the festival performances. The first one, dedicated to children, is an indoor sports hall. The second, both outdoor and indoor, is a year-round restaurant with traditional Omani cuisine called Rozna. Transforming spaces into hosts of culture and the arts is an extraordinary task for which I heartily congratulate those involved in organising and funding the first edition of the festival. In both venues, technology is put at the service of artists. Two large, modern stages equipped with intelligent lights, moving heads and high quality sound are at the disposal of guest artists from countries such as: Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Sultanate of Oman, Spain, Syria, Tunisia, UAE. The installation of ambient microphones on each of the stages provides a great acoustic comfort for the audience. Computer-controlled lighting often replaces the set elements and creates real visual spaces and universes. The performances are generally dominated by a minimalist visual discourse that gives the actors a chance to cut through the clutter and convey their emotion, story and message to the audience. An audience that filled the halls every night and reacted energetically at the end of each performance.

As a final thought, the success of an event is also measured by the number of smiling faces around you. From the first day I arrived in your country, I saw only smiling faces, only people happy to work or participate in the theatre festival. And theatre is the art that can bring the most happiness to those who watch it.