

HM greets President of Kazakhstan

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent greetings to President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of the Republic of Kazakhstan on his country's Independence Day. His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Tokayev. His Majesty also wished the people of Kazakhstan further progress and prosperity.



HM, King of Bahrain hold talks



MANAMA: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, held an official session of talks at Al Sakhir Palace in Manama on Monday.

At the outset of the session, the King of Bahrain reiterated his heartfelt welcome for His Majesty the Sultan as a dear guest of Bahrain and its people.

He wished His Majesty the Sultan and his official delegation a happy stay. His Majesty the Sultan

reciprocated the kind sentiments, thanking the King and people of Bahrain for the warm welcome and sincere hospitality.

The two leaders reviewed the distinguished relations binding the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Bahrain and expressed appreciation for their deep-rooted historical bonds. They also explored various aspects of the existing bilateral cooperation in all fields and contemplated ways of consolidating the joint interests in

a manner that generates bounty and benefits to the two countries' peoples.

The session of talks was attended from the Omani side by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs; Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court; Gen. Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office; Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior;

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister; Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance; and Sayyid Faisal bin Hareb al Busaidy, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Bahrain.

It was also attended from the Bahraini side by Salman bin Hamad al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain; Shaikh Mohammed bin Issa bin Salman al Khalifa; Shaikh Abdullah bin Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa; Shaikh

Nasser bin Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa; Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa; Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Salman al Khalifa, Minister of the Royal Diwan; Field Marshal Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed al Khalifa, Commander-in-Chief of Bahrain Defence Force; Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah bin Khalid al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure; Gen. Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah al Khalifa, Minister of Interior (Head of the Mission

of Honour); Shaikh Ahmed bin Ateyatalla al Khalifa, Minister of Royal Court Follow-up; Dr Abdullatif bin Rashid al Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa bin Salman al Khalifa, Minister of Finance and National Economy; Dr Jumaa bin Ahmed al Kaabi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the Sultanate of Oman; and Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Khalifa al Khalifa, Governor of the Southern Governorate. — **ONA**



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa exchange gifts at Al Sakhir Palace on Monday.

Oman, Bahrain sign MoUs to boost ties

MANAMA: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, graced the signing of 10 memoranda of understanding (MoUs) and 7 executive programmes and agreements at Al Sakhir Palace on Tuesday. Present at the signing ceremony were officials from both sides.

The agreements covered the fields of security, shipping, ports, studies and research, the establishment of an Omani-Bahraini investment company, granting Oman the right of sovereignty over its subscriber data in the company's existing cloud computing centres in Bahrain, in addition to granting Oman the status of authorised partner accredited to the Global Freight Services (GAC).

The memoranda of understand-

ing and executive programmes covered the areas of information technology, municipal work, higher education, scholarly research, innovation, competition protection, prevention of monopoly, space science and technology, air navigation, social development, cultural and museum management, SMEs development, entrepreneurship, historical documentation, document management and archives and an executive programme between Oman's Foreign Ministry and Bahrain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, agriculture, livestock and fisheries fields, the scientific and educational fields, environment protection, youth, culture, heritage, tourism cooperation, remote dealings of brokerage companies through the electronic trading.

OMAN-BAHRAIN INVESTMENT COMPANY TO BE SET UP

PACT GRANTS OMAN THE RIGHT OF SOVEREIGNTY OVER SUBSCRIBER DATA IN CLOUD COMPUTING CENTRES IN BAHRAIN

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF OMAN AND THE BAHRAIN NATIONAL MUSEUM SIGN MOU

AN AGREEMENT WAS ALSO SIGNED ON ONLINE TRADING OF BROKERAGE COMPANIES

TURN TO P5



In honour of HM, King of Bahrain hosts dinner



MANAMA: King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain hosted an official dinner at Al Sakhir Palace in Manama on Monday evening in honour of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq on the occasion of His Majesty's visit to Bahrain. The dinner was attended by the official delegation accompanying His Majesty the Sultan, members of Bahrain's Royal Family and senior Bahraini officials. – ONA

HM, KING HAMAD EXCHANGE ORDERS, GIFTS



MANAMA: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain exchanged orders and commemorative gifts on the occasion of His Majesty's visit to the Kingdom of Bahrain, at Al Sakhir Palace in Manama. – ONA



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TUESDAY | OCTOBER 25 | 2022



HM accorded red carpet welcome



MANAMA: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik arrived in the Kingdom of Bahrain this afternoon, starting an official two-day visit.

Upon the arrival of His Majesty the Sultan at Sakhir Airbase, King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa of Bahrain, met him at the foot of the ramp, leading the welcoming party that received His Majesty the Sultan.

His Majesty the Sultan was also received upon his arrival by Prince Salman bin Hamad al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain, Gen Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah al Khalifa, Minister of Interior (Head of the Mission of Honour), Shaikh Mohammed bin Issa bin Salman al Khalifa, Shaikh Abdullah bin Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa, Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa, and Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa.

Then, the two leaders headed to the Hall of Protocols, passing between two rows of a guard of honour from Bahrain Royal Guard. His Majesty the Sultan shook hands with senior members of the welcoming party, who were:

Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Salman al Khalifa, Minister of the Royal Diwan, Field Marshal Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed al Khalifa, Commander-in-Chief of Bahrain Defence Force, Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah bin Khalid al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure, Gen Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah al Khalifa, Minister of Interior, Shaikh Ahmed bin Ateyatalla al Khalifa, Minister of Royal Court Follow-up, Dr Abdullatif bin Rashid al Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa bin Salman al Khalifa, Minister of Finance and National Economy, Dr Jumaa Ahmed al Kaabi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the Sultanate of Oman, and Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Khalifa al Khalifa, Governor of the Southern Governorate.

His Majesty the Sultan also shook hands with members of the Omani Embassy in Bahrain—with whom he exchanged cordial expressions, while King Hamad welcomed and shook hands with the official delegation accompanying His Majesty the Sultan.

After a short rest at the hall at the Hall of Protocols, His Majesty the Sultan, accompanied by the King of Bahrain, joined the motorcade which escorted them to Al Sakhir Palace.

At Al Sakhir Palace, official reception was accorded to His Majesty the Sultan. Folk bands that lined the two sides of the entrance to the palace's gate chanted lyrics and popular expressions of welcome.

When the motorcade of the two leaders entered the gate of Al Sakhir Palace, it was accompanied by a squad of cavalry, in a manifestation of warm welcome for His Majesty the Sultan. Then, the Royal motorcade was flanked by a troop of motorbikes and later a group of students greeted His Majesty the Sultan.

Then, in Al Sakhir Palace, the King of Bahrain accompanied His Majesty the Sultan to the dais of honour. There, the Royal Anthem of Oman and the Bahraini Royal Anthem were played, to the accompaniment of a 21-gun salute — fired by the artillery — for His Majesty the Sultan.

Then, His Majesty the Sultan and the King of Bahrain headed to the Majlis.



HM begins official visit to Bahrain

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq left here for the Kingdom of Bahrain on Monday.

The visit, made in response to an invitation by the King of Bahrain, will foster aspects of existing cooperation between the two countries in different spheres.

His Majesty the Sultan was seen off at the Royal Airport by HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers; HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs,

The visit, made in response to an invitation by the King of Bahrain, will foster aspects of existing cooperation between the two countries in different spheres

Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan; HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth; Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council; Nasr bin Hamoud al Kindi, Secretary-General of the Royal Court Affairs; Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed bin Nasser al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education; Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs; Lt Gen Said bin Ali al Hilali, Head of the Internal Security Service;

Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health; Vice Admiral Abdullah bin

Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF); Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO); Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hammad al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO); Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO); Maj Gen Musallam bin Mohammed bin Taman Jaaboub, Commander of the Sultan's Special Force (SSF).

HIGH-RANKING DELEGATION

His Majesty the Sultan is accompanied

during the visit by a high-ranking official delegation comprising HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs; Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court; Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office; Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior; Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister; Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance; and Sayyid Faisal bin Hareb al Busaidy, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Bahrain.



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HM and King of Bahrain grace signing of agreements, MoUs



FROM P1

The agreement on cooperation in the field of security was signed by Interior Minister Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy and his Bahraini counterpart Lt.Gen. Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah al Khalifa.

An agreement to establish Oman-Bahrain Investment Holding Company was inked by Eng Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), and Sameer bin Abdullah Nass, Chairman of Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The two countries also signed granting Oman the status of an authorised partner accredited to the GAC. It was signed by Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, and Assayyid Zayed bin Rashid Al Zayani, Bahrain's Minister of Industry and Commerce.

A cooperation agreement in the field of shipping and ports was signed by Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, and Mohammed bin Thamer Al Kaabi, Bahrain's Minister of Transport and Communications.

The two sides also signed a cooperation agreement between Sultan Qaboos University (the Centre for Omani Studies) and Bahrain Centre for Strategic, International and Energy Studies. The agreement, which provides for cooperation in the field of studies and research, was inked by Oman's Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy and Shaikh Dr Abdullah bin Ahmed al Khalifa, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Bahrain Centre for Strategic, International and Energy Studies.

An agreement granting Oman the right of sovereignty over subscriber data in the existing cloud computing centres in Bahrain was signed by Oman's Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy and his Bahraini counterpart Dr Abdul Latif bin Rashid al Zayani.

A memorandum of understanding was signed by Oman's Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and Bahrain's Information and e-Government Authority. The MoU, which covers cooperation in the field of information technology, was inked by Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy and Lt.Gen. Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah al Khalifa, Bahrain's Minister of Interior.

In the field of municipal work, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Government of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Interior, and the Government of Kingdom of Bahrain, represented by the Ministry of Municipalities and Agriculture. It was inked by Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior; and Dr Abdul Latif bin Rashid al Zayani, Bahrain's Minister of Foreign Affairs.

A memorandum of understanding was also signed between Oman's Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and Bahrain's Higher Education Council in higher education, scientific

research and innovation. It was inked by Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy and Dr Majid bin Ali al Nuaimi, Bahrain's Minister of Education.

A memorandum of understanding was signed between Oman's Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and Bahrain's Ministry of Industry and Commerce in competition protection and prevention of monopoly. It was signed by Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy and Assayyid Zayed bin Rashid al Zayani, Minister of Industry and Commerce.

In space sciences and technologies, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology of the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the National Center for Space, Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Technologies, and the National Space Science Authority of the Kingdom of Bahrain. It was signed by Al Busaidy and Mohammed bin Thamer al Kaabi, Minister of Transport and Communications.

A memorandum of understanding was also signed between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman represented by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain represented by the Ministry of Transport and Communications. It was signed by Al Busaidy and Al Kaabi.

The Ministry of Social Development of the Sultanate of Oman and the Ministry of Social Development of the Kingdom of Bahrain also signed a memorandum of understanding in the areas of social development. It was signed by Al Busaidy, and Osama bin Ahmed Khalaf al Asfour, Minister of Social Development.

In the field of cultural and museum work, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the National Museum of the Sultanate of Oman and the Bahrain National Museum. It was inked by Al Busaidy and Ramzan bin Abdullah al Nuaimi, Minister of Information Affairs.

A memorandum of understanding was signed between the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) and the Labour Fund (Tamkeen) of the Kingdom of Bahrain in the field of small and medium enterprise development and entrepreneurship. It was signed by Al Busaidy and Hamad bin Faisal al Malki, Minister of Cabinet Affairs.

A MoU was also signed between the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) of the Sultanate of Oman and the Isa Cultural Center of the Kingdom of Bahrain in the field of historical documentation and management of documents and archives. It was signed by Al Busaidy and Dr Shaikh Khalid bin Khalifa al Khalifa, Vice Chairman and Executive Director of Isa Cultural Center.

An executive programme was also signed between the Foreign Ministry of the Sultanate of Oman and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain during 2023-2024. It was signed by Al Busaidy and Bahrain's Dr Abdul Latif bin Rashid al Zayani, Minister of Foreign

Affairs.

On cooperation in the agricultural, livestock and fisheries fields, the government of the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and the government of the Kingdom of Bahrain, represented by the Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture, signed an executive programme for the MoU for the years 2023/2024. It was signed by Al Busaidy and Al Zayani.

An executive programme was also signed to activate the MoU between the Ministry of Education of the Sultanate of Oman and the Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Bahrain in the scientific and educational fields for the academic years 2022/2023 – 2023/2024. It was signed by Al Busaidy and Dr Majid bin Ali al Nuaimi, Minister of Education of Bahrain.

An executive programme was also signed for the MoU inked between the Environment Authority of the Sultanate of Oman and the Ministry of Oil and Environment of the Kingdom of Bahrain for cooperation in the field of environmental protection for the period 2023-2024. It was signed by Al Busaidy and Dr Mohammed bin Mubarak bin Dina, Minister of Oil and Environment.

An executive programme of cooperation was signed between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain represented by the Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs for the years 2022-2025. It was signed by Al Busaidy and Ayman bin Tawfiq al Moayyed, Minister of Youth and Sports Affairs.

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth of the Sultanate of Oman and the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities also signed an executive programme for the memorandum of understanding in the field of culture and heritage for the years 2023-2026. It was signed by Al Busaidy and Ramzan bin Abdullah al Nuaimi, Minister of Information Affairs.

On tourism, an executive programme of the memorandum of understanding was signed between the government of the Sultanate of Oman represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and the government of the Kingdom of Bahrain represented by the Ministry of Tourism for the years 2022-2026. It was signed by Al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and Fatima bint Jaafar al Sayrafi, Minister of Tourism.

An agreement was also signed on remote trading of brokerage companies through the electronic trading system (TABADUL HUB) between Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), Muscat Clearing and Depository Company and Bahrain Bourse and Bahrain Clearing Company. It was signed by Haitham bin Salem al Salmi, CEO of Muscat Stock Exchange, and Shaikh Khalifa bin Ibrahim al Khalifa, CEO of Bahrain Bourse.

The signing ceremony was attended by members of the official delegation accompanying His Majesty the Sultan, members of the Royal family of Bahrain and senior officials of Bahrain. — ONA

HM's visit to Bahrain affirms authenticity of historical relations

MUSCAT: "The visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Kingdom of Bahrain reflects the truthfulness of historical relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Bahrain, as well as the strong bonds of fraternity between the peoples of the two countries in all fields and at various levels, including political, economic and cultural spheres," Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, said here on Monday.

In a statement to the Bahrain News Agency (BNA), Dr Abdullah said that what sets bilateral relations apart is the fact that they date back to historical epochs of Majan and Dilmun. He added that "the first building blocks for the establishment of the GCC stemmed from common visions.

Dr Abdullah pointed out that the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Bahrain played a key role in formulating the visions, said the minister, adding that relations between the two countries kept growing for more than half a century. Those relations are based on honest and solid principles in dealing with various issues and events.

He explained that the presence of a joint Omani-Bahraini committee has been a great incentive to coordinate action towards the expansion of various aspects of cooperation between the two countries.

The panel aspires to develop



a concept of comprehensiveness serving the interests of the two countries' peoples, notably through the implementation of the visions of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa of Bahrain.

The minister said that discreet media policy espoused by the Sultanate of Oman contributed greatly to navigating a moderate course that spared it the pitfalls of generating unsatisfactory outcomes.

"The Sultanate of Oman addresses the world, and its Arab brethren in particular, in a manner that shows respect and appreciation for all," said Dr Abdullah. He pointed out that upon the outset of the modern Omani renaissance way back in the seventies of the last century, it founded its media message on the grounds that Oman remains a friend for all. This approach, he added, is confirmed by the Renewed Renaissance, the hallmark of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's leadership.

— ONA



Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Center

Tender Advertisement

Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Centre announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Site Visit Date	Last Date for Collection of Tender Document	Bid Submission Closing	Tender Fees
CCCCRC/ T/653/ 2022	Expansion of Existing Substation (Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of 1000 KVa Substation and Cable Laying 240 mm ² from Portacabin to Laundry Substation)	1/11/2022 09:00AM <u>Meeting Point:</u> SQCCRC Main Lobby	1/11/2022	9/11/2022	70 OMR

Qualified companies interested in participating in this tender shall collect the tender specifications from the date of this advertisement from the following address:

Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre – Purchase Department.

Biddings that meet the above requirements should be submitted in a sealed envelope (hardcopy & softcopy) and should be delivered and deposited in the tender box at SQCCRC.

Please note:

- Bids received after the deadline indicated above, for whatever reason, will not be considered.
- Queries/ clarifications should be submitted immediately, but not later than One week before the date of tender submission.
- For Queries you may Contact via e-mail: purchase@cccrc.gov.om
- The committee is not obliged to accept the lowest price of the bid or any other bid.



Awqaf minister takes part in international peace event

ROME: Assigned by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, is taking part in an international forum on peace hosted by the Italian capital, Rome.

The event will conclude on Tuesday with the participation of leaders, religious scholars and representatives of more than 40 countries.

The Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs said that the participation of the Sultanate of Oman affirms its approach and endeavours to disseminate the values of peace, tolerance and coexistence all over the world, noting that His Majesty the Sultan attaches his Royal attention to these common human values and the spread of peace and coexistence among



nations.

The meeting hosted by the city of Rome aims to bolster common human values in light of the ongoing turmoil in international

relations, the minister said, explaining that the Sultanate of Oman has always called for this approach based on harmony and coexistence among nations

and finding common ground for people to live together peacefully and on the basis of the exchange of benefits and common interests.

— ONA

Over million e-transactions processed by Sanad Centres

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT. 24

The number of transactions and services processed through 891 Sanad Service Centres across Oman till September 2022 stood at 1.315 million, the statistics issued by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority showed.

Muscat Governorate topped the number of services provided with more than half a million transactions. The number of services provided by Sanad Service Centres is 308, while the number of workers in these centres from the national workforce reached 2,581 until September 2022, of whom 1,053 are males and 1,528 females. Most of the workforce is in the age group of 20 to 39 years.

The authority clarified that the process of granting licenses to Sanad Service Centres will be carried out according to the needs of the governorates. The needs of each governorate will be studied based on population density and the size of economic activity, and a number of opportunities to open new licences will be announced as soon as the Centres Committee begins exercising its competencies stipulated in the regulation.

Recently, a new regulatory regulation was issued by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority by Ministerial Resolution No (443 / 2022) regarding Sanad Service Centres to keep pace with the quick developments in line with the government's digital transformation programme, and the required updating of the legislation regulating Sanad Service Centres, as it is a key window for providing e-government services.

Oman-UAE rail link to boost economy and create jobs

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The proposed Oman-UAE rail link, the MoU of which was signed recently, will generate more jobs and boost businesses, according to Emile Hoogstedan, CEO of Sohar Port and Free Zone (SPFZ).

Speaking to the Observer at the media round table organised by the SPFZ at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center, Emile Hoogstedan said, "It will be an opportunity galore for the Sultanate of

Oman in terms of employment , contribution to the economy and overall development of the country once the cross-border railway is operational.

It will be just a matter of time before the network can be extended to other parts of the country including Duqm, Salalah and other areas of importance."

"The project will give a major fillip to the tourism relations between the neighbouring UAE while strengthening the competitiveness of two countries in global trade and consolidate their positions as logistics hubs in

the region."

SPFZ has, earlier this year, signed 12 agreements of various nature to give the economy a boost and it varies from cargo expansion of cargo storage facilities to bunker lease agreement and from developing container freight solutions to glove packing factories.

An agreement to establish penicillin pharmaceutical manufacturing facility, and liquid fertiliser plant and warehousing were signed during 2022, according to Rashad al Wahaibi - Communications Adviser, SPFZ.

Focus on upkeep of natural springs in Dhofar

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 24

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources is working on plans to ensure water supply in the dry areas of the Governorate of Dhofar.

The governorate's mountains is home to more than 300 natural springs, which provide sustenance to livestock and people.

Ali bin Bakhit Bait Saeed, Director of the Water Resources Department at the General Directorate of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in Dhofar, said "Most of these springs flow throughout the year, while some are seasonal, depending on rains. The autumn season recharges these springs."

He mentioned too that the ministry pays attention to natural springs in water stressed areas of the governorate.

Among the most famous springs in the governorate are Ain Jerzeez, Ain Arzat, Ain Sahlanout, Ain Hamran, Ain Darbat, Ain Athum and Ain Tobruk, which run continuously throughout the year. The annual water flow from Al Ayoun is estimated at 10.38 million cubic metres.



Evening classes in schools suspended today over solar eclipse

VINOD NAIR

@vinot_nair

As the Sultanate of Oman is set for a two-hour partial solar eclipse on Tuesday with its peak at 3: 57 pm, the Ministry of Education has suspended evening classes, while morning classes will end after the sixth period in all schools.

According to the Oman Astronomical Society, the partial solar eclipse will begin at 2:50 pm (Oman time) and end at 5 pm.

The Astronomical Society has urged Observers to use welding helmets, solar telescopes and binoculars, while trying to observe the eclipse.

According to experts, "An eclipse occurs when the moon blocks the sun either in part or in totality, as seen from Earth. As the moon makes its orbit around Earth, and as Earth orbits around the sun, the moon gets caught in the middle and casts a shadow on Earth. Anyone standing in that shadow will be able to see the solar eclipse.

Experts also urged people to never look directly at the sun



as 'eclipses can be dangerous because the sudden changes do not give your eyes a chance to adapt.'

According to the Astronomical Society, it will be 36 per cent in Muscat, 22 per cent in Salalah, 35 per cent in Nizwa, 37 per cent in Suhar, and 41 per cent in Musandam.

Oman Astronomical Society, in cooperation with the Department of Astronomical Affairs at the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, will be organising mass observing events for the partial solar eclipse.

US Central Special Operations Commander received



MUSCAT: Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Monday Maj Gen Kevin Leahy, Commander of the US Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT), currently visiting the Sultanate of Oman.

The two sides exchanged views

and discussed a range of military topics of common interest.

The meeting was attended by Brigadier Sultan bin Mohammed al Maamari, Director General of Operations and Intelligence at RAO, senior officers, the Military Attaché at the US Embassy in Muscat and the delegation accompanying the guest.

— ONA

Omani Youth Day in Nizwa on Thursday

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, OCT. 24

The Department of Culture, Sports and Youth in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah intends to celebrate the Omani Youth Day at the Nizwa Cultural Center on Thursday. The event's attraction is Star of Science winner Sumaiya bint Said al Siyabiyah and the recipient of the 2021 Youth Excellence Award.

She has been invited to the event to inspire Oman's youths in science and to represent Oman in international forums.

Ishaq al Shariyani, Chairman of Bawareq Nizwa International

Board of Investment, will also speak to the youths on business and entrepreneurship.

In the evening, the programme will be limited to 50 participants. The participants will visit the Al Busaid neighbourhood in the Wilayat of Adam. This place is distinguished for its cultural and archaeological identity. The house of Imam Ahmed bin Said al Busaidy, which is surrounded by a green oasis of date palm trees, is located here. It has several wells and watchtowers.

The participants will visit the Al Busaid neighbourhood and present suggestions to make the area a tourist destination at the Nizwa Cultural Center.



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In brief

TEL AVIV



ISRAEL-LEBANON MARITIME DEAL TO BE SIGNED

A US-brokered maritime border deal between Israel and Lebanon will be signed on Thursday, Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid said on Monday. The deal marks a significant compromise between neighbours with a history of war and hostility, opening the way for offshore energy exploration and easing a source of tensions. The US mediator has said he hoped the deal would be signed.

A delegation headed by Lebanon's deputy speaker of parliament, Elias Bou Saab, is due to visit Syria on Wednesday to discuss delineating their maritime border, Lebanese President Michel Aoun said on Twitter. — **Reuters**

TOKYO



JAPANESE ECONOMIC MINISTER STEPS DOWN

Japan's economic revitalisation minister stepped down after growing criticism of his failure to fully explain his ties to a church group that critics say is akin to a cult, a move that will be a blow to Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

Daishiro Yamagiwa, the first person to resign from Kishida's government since he took power last year, became the highest profile political casualty.

His quitting is likely to further damage Kishida, whose support has tumbled to record lows amid revelations about connections between nearly half of the lawmakers of his ruling LDP and the Unification Church. — **Reuters**

STOCKHOLM



LOST 17TH-CENTURY WARSHIP FOUND IN SWEDEN

Swedish maritime archaeologists have discovered the long lost sister ship of the iconic 17th-century warship 'Vasa', which sank on its maiden voyage, the Swedish Museum of Wrecks said. Launched in 1629, 'Applet' was built by the same shipbuilder as the famed 69-metre 'Vasa', which was carrying 64 cannons when it sank. "Our pulses raced when we saw how similar the wreck was to Vasa," said Jim Hansson, maritime archaeologist.

The huge shipwreck was discovered in December 2021 in a strait off the island of Vaxholm just outside the capital, Stockholm. — **AFP**

Rishi Sunak to become Britain's next PM



New Conservative Party leader and incoming prime minister Rishi Sunak arrives at Conservative Party Headquarters in central London having been announced as the winner of the Conservative Party leadership contest. — **AFP**

Sunak, likely to be appointed prime minister by King Charles on Tuesday, told Conservative lawmakers in Westminster the party needed to tackle Britain's economic challenges after political turbulence hit borrowing costs and pushed mortgage rates higher.

He will also have to work hard to hold Britain's dominant political party together after some accused him of treachery earlier this year when he resigned

from the cabinet of former leader Boris Johnson, triggering a wider rebellion.

Others have accused him of being too rich to understand the day-to-day economic pressures building in Britain, and question whether he could ever win an election for a party that has been in power for 12 years.

"I think this decision sinks us as a party for the next election," one Conservative lawmaker told Reuters on condition of

anonymity.

The pound and British government bond prices jumped briefly on news of Sunak's win but soon returned to their previous levels.

Britain has been locked in a state of perma-crisis ever since it voted in 2016 to leave the European Union, unleashing a battle at Westminster over the future of the country that remains unresolved to this today.

Johnson, the face of the Brexit

Sunak becomes first UK leader of colour and may be appointed by King Charles on Tuesday

vote, led his party to a landslide victory in 2019, only to be driven out of office less than three years later after a series of scandals. His successor Truss lasted just over six weeks before she quit over an economic policy that trashed the country's economic credibility.

Historian and political biographer Anthony Seldon said that Sunak had the most difficult economic and political inheritance of any British leader since World War Two, and would be constrained by the mistakes made by his predecessor Truss.

"He would have no opportunity to capitalise on these being strange times because Truss has completely blown up that as an option. There is no leeway on him being anything other than extraordinarily conservative and cautious," he said.

He added that Sunak had shown the ability to instil confidence during tough times, however, such as when he became finance minister just as the Covid-19 pandemic hit Britain. — **Reuters**

Russia could plan 'dirty bomb' pretext

KYIV: Western countries accused Russia on Monday of plotting to use a threat of a bomb laced with nuclear material as a pretext for escalation in Ukraine, as Moscow evacuated civilians from a southern city in anticipation of a major battle.

With Ukrainian forces advancing into Russian-occupied Kherson province, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu phoned Western counterparts on Sunday to tell them Moscow suspected Kyiv of planning to use a so-called "dirty bomb".

In a joint statement, the foreign ministers of France, Britain and the United States said they had all rejected the allegations and reaffirmed their support for Ukraine Russia.

"Our countries made clear that we all reject Russia's transparently false allegations that Ukraine is preparing to use a dirty bomb on its own territory," they said.

"The world would see through any attempt to use this allegation as a pretext for escalation."

Russian news agencies

reported that Russian military Chief of General Staff Valery Gerasimov and British Chief of Defence Staff Tony Radakin spoke by phone on Monday to discuss the allegations.

In an overnight address, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said the Russian accusation was a sign Moscow was planning such an attack itself and would blame Ukraine.

"If Russia calls and says that Ukraine is allegedly preparing something, it means one thing: Russia has already prepared all this," Zelenskiy said.

"So when today the Russian Minister of Defence organises a phone carousel and calls foreign ministers with stories about the so-called 'dirty' nuclear bomb, everyone understands everything well.

Asked about the fact that others did not seem to believe Russian's accusations, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told a briefing on Monday: "Their disbelief doesn't mean there's no threat ... The threat is evident."

— **AFP**



Police and the Russian National Guard servicemen patrol Red Square in front of the Spasskaya tower of the Kremlin in Moscow as part of security reinforcement measures. — **AFP**

Invest in Ukraine as future EU member, says Scholz

BERLIN: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has put his weight behind Ukraine's EU membership at a business forum in Berlin focused on the reconstruction of Ukraine.

"As we rebuild Ukraine, let us do so with the goal of Ukraine as an EU member in mind," Scholz said.

The transport infrastructure as well as the logistics and transport sector should be developed in such a way that the country will be connected to the EU without any problems.

"Whoever invests in the reconstruction of Ukraine today invests in a future EU member state that will be part of our community of law and our internal market," said Scholz.

The chancellor pointed out that more than 2,000 German companies were active in Ukraine and were keen to return as soon as possible.

He appealed to the Ukrainian government to further improve the framework conditions for investment. He mentioned more rule of law, more transparency and an even more decisive fight against corruption.

Scholz also pledged further military assistance for Ukraine, especially to protect it from attacks from the air.

He was addressing the German-Ukrainian Business Forum that he opened together with Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmygal in Berlin.

For his part, Shmygal promised to create conditions for rapid investment.

"Ukraine needs European companies for the realisation of bold prospects," he said, according



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Prime Minister of Ukraine Denys Shmygal attend the German-Ukraine economic forum in Berlin to discuss the post war reconstruction of Ukraine. — **AFP**

to the official translation. Addressing the German government and people, he said, "You give us the opportunity to survive. We will be victorious in this war."

Shmygal put the cost of reconstruction at nearly \$750 billion though he also highlighted Ukraine's economic strengths, referring to its gas reserves, IT infrastructure and agriculture, among other strengths.

Meanwhile German Economy Minister Robert Habeck focused on the short-term challenges, identifying an acute need for winter aid in the form of generators, transformers and grid repairs. "This is an absolute priority," he said.

The president of the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce, Peter Adrian, underlined that German business stands by Ukraine.

Alongside urgently needed emergency aid, long-term prospects are also necessary,

he said. "We will not abandon Ukraine." Earlier, German businesses in eastern Europe called for Germany to play a leading role in the swift reconstruction of Ukraine.

The deputy chairman of the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations (Ostausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft), Hans-Ulrich Engel, said initial efforts should be "directed towards an efficient organisation of emergency aid, for example to rebuild destroyed infrastructure."

After that the focus should be on "targeted measures and suitable framework conditions for contributions of the economy in Ukraine," he said.

The post-war reconstruction of Ukraine will be a "generational mission" that requires a strategy on the level of the "Marshall Plan," Scholz and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen wrote on Sunday. — **dpa**

Celebrating Omani women in sciences and arts



Sandhya Rao Mehta

The writer is Associate Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, SQU

The recent celebration of Omani Women’s Day was especially precious as two major awards were won by Omani women, one in science and the other in literature. Sumaya bint Said al Siyabiyah bagged the first prize in the ‘Starts of Science’ programme which recognises innovation in the Arab world. In the same week Bushra bint Khalfan won the Katara Prize for Arabic fiction for her novel ‘Dilshad, the biography of hunger and satisfaction’. Both these prizes show the extent to which Omani women have been able to make use of the opportunities offered for self-growth and their tenacity, dedication and focus. But none of these qualities is enough without the presence of an encouraging environment which

values and takes pride in women’s achievements. Sustaining such achievements requires the participation of the entire community of family, teachers and other stakeholders. Innovation and creativity is the direct result of curiosity and a nurturing atmosphere. There is much that can be done to encourage young girls to go beyond their comfort zone to discover their interests and potential. Schools can have dedicated clubs and student groups that are involved in emerging technology like robotics and coding. Introducing them to guest speakers, establishing mentorship programmes and hosting regional competitions will expose young girls to the possibilities and rigour of the world of science.

THE OMAN AWARDS SHOW THE EXTENT TO WHICH OMANI WOMEN HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MAKE USE OF THE OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED FOR SELF-GROWTH AND THEIR TENACITY, DEDICATION AND FOCUS

There is much discussion now about adapting STEAM as the route to education, rather than restricting to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). Of course, the ‘A’ in STEAM refers to Arts. In recognising arts as an important component in the world

of ideas, we learn to focus on all the various aspects of life that make us human. These include who we are, what we believe in, and where we are headed. In education, the focus on Arts also suggests an emphasis on life skills like empathy and collaboration. It also teaches students to make improbable connections and encourage them to think outside the box. Numerous studies show the links between math or science to photography, music or even theatre. Girls are still typically raised to be empathetic, nurturing and compassionate. This typically takes them into careers which feed into such qualities, usually teaching, nursing or other services.

Encouraging them to explore other options while respecting cultural and personal priorities will open worlds of opportunities for them. The biggest barrier to success is often self-doubt. This is the result of social conditioning as much as a personal predilection. As most entrepreneurs say, believing in yourself is the first step towards success. But this belief cannot come in a vacuum. Girls need to be told, or be made to feel, that they can succeed, or more importantly, that the world wants them to succeed. Female empowerment is not just a cliché but a way in which women’s voices are heard, encouraged and recognised. The award winning women of Oman are showing the way forward.

Heat, then floods ruin Pakistani farmers’ livelihoods

EMMA CLARK AND ASHRAF KHAN

Generations of Rahim Buksh’s ancestors have laboured in the rice paddies and wheat fields surrounding Pakistan’s hottest city, no strangers to intense summers or monsoon rains. But this year Jacobabad lurched from record heatwaves in May to an unprecedented deluge of rain in August that drowned crops. The floods forced tens of thousands of people to flee for makeshift camps and relatives’ homes, leaving them doubting the future of farm work despite their deep connection to the land. “We would move to the cities and take up manual labour work if somebody helped us to get out of here,” said Buksh, whose mud-brick home was flooded, like much of the surrounding farmland. Even before the destruction, Jacobabad and dozens of nearby villages were crippled by poor infrastructure. Most of the district’s million-plus population are itinerant farm workers, earning a daily wage tending crops for major landowners. Poverty, debt and the unequal distribution of land have made their livelihoods precarious, but the rise of extreme weather events linked to climate change has deepened the insecurity. This year’s crops were first scorched by temperatures that reached 51 degrees Celsius in May, only to be drenched by monsoon rains that affected a third of the country — a scale never seen in Pakistan. “We have to live with it all,” said 25-year-old Zamira, who fled with her husband and children to a makeshift camp. “It will be months before we can work again. We’re abandoned.” The agriculture sector is by far the biggest employer in Pakistan, accounting for more than 40 per cent of the labour force, the majority being women. Community NGO worker Jan Odhano, who has provided emergency relief to victims of both the heatwave and floods, said the “double disasters” left farm workers desperate for a way out. “They think can get work in the big cities more easily. Men can work in the factories,” he said, adding that a wider range of work opportunities are also available to women. Many of the flood-displaced in southern Sindh province have sought shelter in urban centres, including tens of thousands recorded at relief camps and many more in the homes of relatives or rental properties. — AFP

Among seniors, a declining interest seen in boosters



Paula Span

The writer is a veteran journalist and former *Washington Post* reporter

Linda Brantman, a retired membership salesperson at a health club in Chicago, was paying attention last month when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended the new bivalent booster that protects against two variants of Covid-19. She went online and reserved an appointment at a Walgreens near her home. Brantman, 65, who was already vaccinated and boosted twice, has grappled with asthma on and off for years; she keeps an inhaler handy, even for an ordinary cold. If she were sick with Covid, she said, “I would definitely have breathing problems.” Within two weeks of the CDC announcement, she had received the latest booster — and public health officials hope all Americans over age 5 will also roll up their sleeves again. But many older Americans have responded more like Alan Turner, 65, who lives in New Castle, Delaware, and recently retired from an industrial design firm. He received the initial two doses of the vaccine but stopped updating his immunity after the first recommended booster. “I’ve become such a hermit,” he said. “I have virtually no contact with people, so I haven’t gotten around to it. I don’t see any particular need. I’m biding my time.”

YOUNGER PEOPLE HAVE ALSO BEEN LESS LIKELY TO RECEIVE BOOSTERS THAN THE ORIGINAL VACCINATIONS, AND ONLY ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF PEOPLE OF ALL AGES HAVE RECEIVED ANY BOOSTER

Although Americans over 65 remain the demographic most likely to have received the original series of vaccinations, at 92 per cent, their interest in keeping their vaccinations up to date is steadily declining, data from the CDC shows. To date, about 71 per cent have received the first recommended booster, but only about 44 per cent have received the second. Younger people have also been less likely to receive boosters than the original vaccinations, and only about one-third of people of all ages have received any booster, The New York Times vaccine tracker indicates. But seniors, who constitute 16 per cent of the population, are more

vulnerable to the virus’s effects, accounting for three-quarters of the nation’s 1.1 million deaths. “From the beginning, older people have felt the virus was more of a threat to their safety and health and have been among the earliest adopters of the vaccine and the first round of boosters,” said Mollyann Brodie, the executive director of public opinion at Kaiser Family Foundation, which has been tracking vaccination rates and attitudes. Now Kaiser’s most recent vaccine monitor survey, published last month, has found that only 8% of seniors said they had received the updated bivalent booster, and 37 per cent said they intended to “as soon as possible.” As a group, older adults were better informed than younger respondents, but almost 40 per cent said they had heard little or nothing about the updated bivalent vaccine, and many were unsure whether the CDC had recommended it for them. “The messaging on boosters has been very muddled,” said Anne N Sosin, a public health researcher at the Rockefeller Center for Public Policy and the Social Sciences at Dartmouth College. Partly as a result, she added, “older people are entering the winter with less protection than at earlier points in the pandemic.” Sosin and other experts noted that older Americans have several reasons to be on guard. Their immunity from previous vaccinations and boosters may have waned; mitigation policies like mandatory masking and vaccination have largely disappeared; and public testing and vaccination sites have shut down. Early on, Sosin said, many older adults changed their behaviour by staying at home or masking and testing when they went out. Now they face greater exposure because “they’ve resumed their pre-pandemic activities.” “Many are no longer concerned about Covid,” she said.



Saul Pashkoff rolled up his sleeve before receiving his second dose of the Covid-19 vaccine at a senior-care facility on Staten Island.

— *New York Times*

Sports can influence mental health

It seems exercising is not just good for physical fitness but for mental health as well.

It can keep one away from depression. We know when we do exercise we feel rejuvenated. There are times when a walk alone gets your thoughts fall into place and creativity flows in the place of stressful thoughts. According to Dr Hamed al Sinawi, our guest on Observer podcast, GreenMent, studies have shown that people who exercise frequently are less likely to suffer from health problems like anxiety, depression and sleep disorders. Also studies have proven that sports can also keep kids and teenagers away from using drugs.

This is because sports like football, cricket, volleyball etc give one a sense of cohesion. With sports, you learn to have long lasting relationships. He explained that one learns to have self-discipline because a person has to follow a certain diet, stick to a regular exercising regime. So in general, all this is good for your mental health.

If this is the case it shows how important it is to introduce physical education and introduce sports in schools at a young age. However, this also does not mean everyone has to be in competitive sports and in teams. Dr Hamed explained in the podcast what is important is to move, which means something that one can fit into the daily routine, suitable for one's age and physical capacity.

When we watch children we can see how they love moving and it is almost impossible for them to sit still. As we grow older we become conscious of our surroundings and people. Of course we cannot overlook the fact that people will come to their own conclusions if we tend to move and hop around like children.

So now we have gadgets to count our steps and other data, which can be motivating but it seems there is a danger of getting obsessed with it just as some get hooked on gyms and weightlifting as well as calorie counting.

The senior psychiatrist said it is just a matter of initiating movement because staying still, especially with modern



Lakshmi Kothaneth @lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

SO EXERCISING IS NOT TO IMPRESS OTHERS BUT TO BRING BALANCE IN OUR BRAIN AND BODY. THAT WOULD BE THE BEST ACHIEVEMENT IN LIFE. SO BE SELFISH WHEN IT COMES TO MOVING FOR FITNESS

life, most of us work in offices. We have very limited exercise time.

We of course like being appreciated and that adds to our motivation.

pparently, once you set the pattern, it's difficult to give it up because of the feel good factor.

In the past people naturally walked for running errands unlike today we rush to the supermarket and look for the closest parking and if we don't find one we prefer to waste time and fuel by driving in the car park until we find a vacant spot and in the process of looking out for the shoppers heading towards their vehicle.

On the other hand the weather can play a significant role when it comes to outdoor activities. Interestingly shopping malls have become an attraction to do the walk.

In other words people are finding their way to achieve what they want for their fitness.

Mental Health Foundation says walk, run or stroll your way to better mental health for all this November. November is just around the corner and this is what we have to do. The challenge is designed to get us moving and feel physically and mentally healthy.

Meanwhile an interesting factor is that sports can balance both the right and left hemispheres.

Dr Hamed pointed out on the podcast about the studies that talk about the balancing of brain function and there is also a relation between sports and happiness because of endorphins and dopamine. There's more- the actual movement not only improves your mood, but there are some studies that it can defeat Alzheimer's.

So in other words exercising can bring us happiness- something everyone is searching for. Most of the time we expect external factors to bring us happiness and miss the whole point. It is only our mind and thoughts that can bring happiness to us.

So exercising is not to impress others but to bring balance in our brain and body. That would be the best achievement in life. So be selfish when it comes to moving for fitness.

LIGHT OF HOPE



A woman lights earthen lamps on the occasion of Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, at her house in Guwahati, Assam, India, on Monday. – AFP

Some doubt Sunak can win UK polls

ELIZABETH PIPER AND WILLIAM SCHOMBERG

Electd for the first time to parliament in 2015, Rishi Sunak became Britain's youngest prime minister in more than 200 years on Monday, tasked with steering the country through an economic crisis and mounting anger among some voters.

It is a remarkable return for Sunak who lost a leadership bid to Liz Truss less than two months ago when he was accused by some in the Conservative Party of bringing down their hero, Boris Johnson.

One of the wealthiest politicians in Westminster, he enters Downing Street facing a need to make deep public spending cuts to stem a fiscal crisis, as well as tackling a cost-of-living crunch, a winter of strikes and Russia's war in Ukraine.

His backers say the former finance minister is a safe pair of hands who can restore Britain's credibility with investors who sold the country's bonds and sterling after Truss's mini-budget offered tax cuts with little on how to fund them.

But the former Goldman Sachs analyst and hedge fund partner also faces challenges within the governing Conservative Party, where some lawmakers blame him for his role in ousting Johnson and are concerned he has not got what it takes to win elections.

HIS BACKERS SAY THE FORMER FINANCE MINISTER IS A SAFE PAIR OF HANDS WHO CAN RESTORE BRITAIN'S CREDIBILITY WITH INVESTORS WHO SOLD THE COUNTRY'S BONDS AND STERLING AFTER TRUSS'S MINI-BUDGET OFFERED TAX CUTS WITH LITTLE ON HOW TO FUND THEM.

The opposition Labour Party is likely to paint him as a member of the uber-rich elite, out of touch with the pressures faced by millions as Britain slides towards a recession, dragged down by the surging cost of food and energy.

Some fear he cannot reunite a party that is deeply divided and getting used to quickly dispensing with leaders they do not like.

"He couldn't beat Liz Truss last month; he's not turned into an election winner less than two months later," one senior Conservative lawmaker said on condition of anonymity after supporting Johnson in his failed bid to run again.

Sunak replaces Truss, who said she would resign four days ago but who defeated him on September 5 with 57 per cent of the vote from Conservative members. Then, the former finance minister repeatedly described his predecessor's ideas as "fairytale" economics that would spook the markets.

He was proved right, but after a fast-track leadership race, some Conservatives say they doubt his commitment to a Margaret Thatcher-style small state vision to spur growth after he put Britain on course for the highest tax burden since the 1950s with emergency pandemic spending on saving jobs and welfare.

When declaring his candidacy, Sunak, 42, said he had a track

record that showed he could "fix our economy, unite out party and deliver for our country".

Born in Southampton in 1980 to Hindu parents of Punjabi Indian descent, Sunak repeatedly during the last leadership campaign spoke of helping his mum, who ran a pharmacy, with the books, doing payroll and accounts.

He had a privileged education - he went to an elite fee-paying school and is the latest prime minister to have studied politics, philosophy and economics at Oxford University, following David Cameron and his predecessor, Truss. During the last leadership campaign, he supported the creation of more selective grammar schools after new ones were banned by the opposition Labour Party, but



Rishi Sunak at the Conservative Party Headquarters in central London on Monday. – AFP

repeatedly said "a world class education" should be a birthright.

He will also be the first person of colour to become Britain's prime minister. Ravi Kumar, 38, a Conservative Party member working at a finance company in the central English city of Nottingham, described the appointment as a "watershed moment". But Sunak's marriage to the daughter of an Indian billionaire has raised concerns in the party that he is too far removed from the concerns of everyday voters, some of whom are being forced by spiralling inflation to decide whether to spend their money on food or heating. It didn't help that in April Sunak's wife was forced to confirm reports that her non-domiciled status meant she did not pay tax on all her international earnings,

something she agreed to end.

"Rishi never had a overdraft so he is used to having a Treasury (finance ministry) account and a current account," said one Conservative insider who had backed Johnson. "Rishi has good PR but an inability to be brave and be the Brexit Chancellor the UK needs," the insider said on condition of anonymity. Sunak's supporters say he is just the man who is needed to steady the ship financially after Truss's so-called mini-budget roiled financial markets, raising government borrowing and increasing mortgages and fears pensions funds could go bust.

Sunak rose swiftly up the ranks of the Conservative Party, becoming, in 2020, one of the youngest finance ministers.

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit Britain, Sunak dropped the Conservatives' small-state instincts to borrow massively and stave off the risk of an economic depression.

That made him one of the most popular politicians in the country, as he was praised for helping businesses and workers. In one photograph that captured the sense of unity behind his rescue plans, Sunak posed outside his Downing Street office flanked by the heads of Britain's biggest trade union group and a leading employers' group.

sport

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Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen celebrates on the podium after winning the Formula One United States Grand Prix, at the Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas. — AFP

Verstappen fights back to take US GP honours

RED BULL GRAB FIFTH CONSTRUCTORS' CROWN

AUSTIN: Max Verstappen fought back from a slow pitstop to win the US Grand Prix in Austin on Sunday as his Red Bull team clinched the Formula One constructors' title a day after the death of billionaire owner Dietrich Mateschitz.

The title, clinched with three races to spare, ended an eight-year streak by Mercedes who have yet to win a race this season.

Their seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton looked like he might do it, leading with 15 laps to go but ending up second at the Circuit of the Americas after being reeled in by Verstappen.

"That one was for Dietrich," said Verstappen after taking the chequered flag.

The title was Red Bull's first since 2013, when they completed a fourth successive title double with Germany's Sebastian Vettel at the end of the sport's V8 era.

Ferrari had needed to score 19 points more than Red Bull at the Texas track but Charles Leclerc was the Italian team's sole finisher, fighting his way to third from 12th on the grid.

Team-mate Carlos Sainz, who started on pole position, retired with a damaged car after a first-lap collision with Mercedes's George Russell. Red Bull now have an unbeatable 656 points to Ferrari's 469.

Verstappen's win was his 13th of the season, equalling the Formula One record held jointly with Ferrari great Michael Schumacher and Vettel, and the 33rd of his career and second in a row in Texas. The Dutch 25-year-old secured his second title in Japan two weeks ago.

"Max Verstappen you are world champion, we are world champions, thank you so much," team boss Christian Horner told him over the team radio after Red Bull's eighth win in a row and 15th in 19 races. "And thank you Dietrich Mateschitz for everything that you have done for us, for this team. These championships are for you," he added.

AGONISINGLY LONG PIT STOP

Verstappen seized the lead into the first corner and was in control when he made his second stop to



FORMULA 1			F122
19. United States Grand Prix			October 23
Circuit of the Americas			
① Max Verstappen (NED)	1:42:11.687	Driver standings	
	25 Red Bull	Verstappen (NED) (Champion)	391
② Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	at 5.023	Leclerc (MON)	267
	18 Mercedes	Perez (MEX)	265
③ Charles Leclerc (MON)	at 7.501	Russell (GBR)	218
	15 Ferrari	Sainz Jr. (ESP)	202
④ Sergio Pérez (MEX)	at 8.293	Teams	
	12 Red Bull	Red Bull (Champion)	656
⑤ George Russell (GBR)	at 44.815	Ferrari	469
	11 Mercedes	Mercedes	416
		Alpine	149
Source: Formula1.com			AFP

switch from hard to medium tyres on the 36th of 56 scheduled laps.

The stop lasted an agonising 11.1 seconds with the front left wheel not tightening and mechanics scrambling for another wheel gun. He returned to the track in sixth place, jumped by Leclerc who had also pitted and with Hamilton effectively leading in fourth since the three ahead of the Briton had yet to pit.

"Beautiful," said Verstappen sarcastically over the radio.

He then set about reducing the gap with determination, passing Leclerc after a brief joust and hitting the front again six laps from the finish to cross the line 5.023 seconds clear of Hamilton.

"It was a tough one...I had to fight my way forward again. We gave it everything out there today,"

said the champion.

Red Bull's Sergio Perez was fourth with Russell, who took fastest lap, fifth and Lando Norris sixth for McLaren.

Double world champion Fernando Alonso finished seventh for Renault-owned Alpine but, following an appeal by Haas, was handed a 30 seconds post-race penalty and dropped to 15th. Haas objected to the Spaniard being allowed to race with an unsafe car after his side mirror flapped around and finally flew off.

Alonso had damaged his car in a collision with future Aston Martin team-mate Lance Stroll, an incident that brought out the safety car for the second time. Stroll was handed a three-place grid drop for the next race in Mexico. — Reuters

25th Arabian Gulf Cup draw in Iraq's Basra today

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, OCT 24

The 25th edition of Arabian Gulf Cup football championship draw will be held at Basra in Iraq on Tuesday.

The championship is scheduled to be held in Iraq in the beginning of 2023.

The draw will be held in the presence of top football chiefs in the Gulf countries and coaches of the participating teams.

Sultanate of Oman part will

be represented by Qutaiba bin Said al Ghailani, member of the Board of Directors of the Oman Football Association, Younis bin Issa al Ghafri from the Media Department, Maqbool bin Mohammad al Balushi, Director of the National Team and Salah bin Thuwaini al Araimi from the National Teams Department. All federations announced their participation and attendance at the draw ceremony.

The teams will be divided into two groups, with the first group



headed by the hosting Iraqi team, the second group with the Bahraini team, and the other six teams were classified according to the latest Fifa classification, where Saudi Arabia and Qatar in the second classification, the Sultanate of Oman and the UAE in the third classification, Kuwait and Yemen in the fourth classification.

After more than 10 years, Iraq is hosting the tournament for the second time in history after the first in 1979, when it hosted the fifth edition in the

capital, Baghdad, at Al Shaab International Stadium and won the tournament title.

The Arabian Gulf Cup is organised every two years. The first edition was held in Bahrain in 1970 and the recent one in Qatar 2019. Kuwait holds the record for the number of wins with 10 titles, compared to 3 titles for Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, and two titles for the Sultanate of Oman and the UAE, and one title for Bahrain.

Oman national football team

is supervised by the Oman Football Association, which was established in 1978 and joined the International Football Association in 1979.

Oman team won two championships for the Gulf Cup, the first title was in 19th edition hosted by Oman in January 2009 in Muscat, when they met Saudi Arabia in the final match.

The second title was at 23rd edition hosted by Kuwait in 2017, when they won against the UAE in the final.



Muhammad Ali (L) and Vijeesh Velunni (R) of Strenserv.

Strenserv , Fagor FCC register first wins in A Division

MUSCAT: The A division of the Oman Cricket League Season 2022-23 started with Strenserv closely beating Orient Travels by 2 wickets.

Electing to bat first , Orient Travels started off a shaky start loosing 3 wickets for just 33 runs.

Small partnerships with lone standing Amandeep Singh guided the total to 185 for Orient Travels. The mighty turner, Vijeesh Velunni was the wrecker for Strenserv picking 4 wickets in his quota of 10 overs.

To oppose , Strenserv got off to a stable start with their first wicket falling for 42. The key batter in the chase for Strenserv was Ali Muhammed scoring a quick fire 56 of 48 balls with 8 fours to guide them to a convincing win. Strenserv play their next game versus Glam Homes on October 28.

In another A division match , Fagor FCC beat OCT Ruwi by a massive margin of 121 runs to account their first win. Winning the toss, OCT Ruwi put Fagor FCC to bat first. With a stable start to the innings, Fagor FCC were looking to post a big total on the board but Mohammed al Balushi's spell of 3 wickets restricted them to 190 loosing all their batters in the 46th over.

The Fagor FCC bowlers were spot on with their plan s as they bundled out OCT Ruwi for a mere 69 runs courtesy 3 wickets from Chirag Mandaviya and Pradeep Kumar.

BRIEF SCORES
Orient Travels 185 all out in 42.5 overs (Amandeep Singh - 52 (68) 8x4 ; Vjesh Velunni - 4-47) **lost to Strenserv 189-8 in 42.1 overs** (Ali Muhammed - 56 (48) 8x4 ; Syed Amir Ali - 2-32) by 2 wickets.
Fagor FCC 190 all out in 45.3 overs (Shazaf Ali 36 (55) 3x4,1x6 ; Mohammed al Balushi 3-44) **beat OCT Ruwi 69 all out in 29.3 overs** (Chirag Mandaviya 3-11 and Pradeep Kumar 3-13) by 121 runs.

GUADALAJARA, Mexico: American Jessica Pegula captured her first WTA 1000 crown with a 6-2, 6-3 win over Maria Sakkari in the Guadalajara Open final on Sunday.

The third seed, who will be making her first appearance at the season-ending WTA Finals in Texas this month, beat four Grand Slam champions en route to the final, where she needed only 70 minutes to beat Sakkari.

“All the people I beat, my draw to get here in my opinion was honestly the toughest out of everybody,” said Pegula, who beat major winners Victoria Azarenka, Sloane Stephens, Bianca Andreescu and Elena Rybakina in the earlier rounds.

“So I was a little annoyed when I saw the draw come out.

“But the way I’ve been able to manage it throughout the whole week, today handle my nerves and emotions, I’m super proud of myself.”

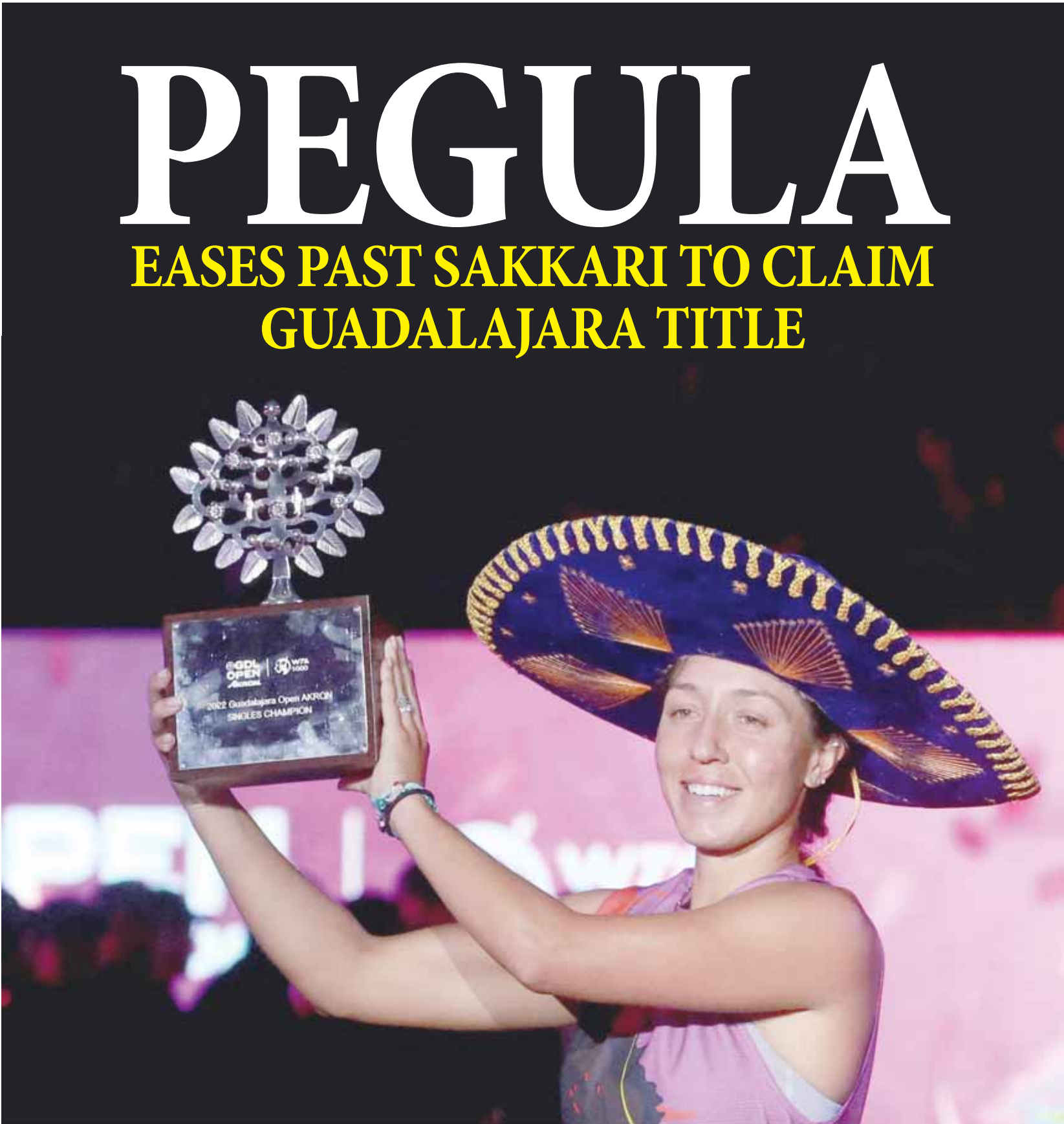
Pegula switched gears at 2-2 and went on to take the opening set. She broke twice to race ahead 5-2 in the next before closing out the win as fourth seed Sakkari struggled with unforced errors.

Pegula converted five out of eight break points against Sakkari, who was playing her second match of the day having earlier wrapped up her rain-delayed semifinal against Marie Bouzkova.

It was Pegula’s 41st match victory in WTA main draws this year, with only world number one Iga Swiatek (62) and the second-ranked Ons Jabeur (46) winning more.

She will rise to number three in the rankings.

Earlier on Sunday, Sakkari beat Bouzkova 7-5, 6-4 to set up the meeting with Pegula. She had won the first set on Saturday when the match was



Jessica Pegula of the US celebrates with the trophy after winning her final match against Greece's Maria Sakkari. – Reuters

halted due to rain.

Returning to the court, the Greek looked to make quick work

of her Czech opponent, racing out to a 4-1 lead, before Bouzkova rallied and swept the next three

games to level the set at 4-4.

Sakkari struggled to hold serve at 5-4 before breaking Bouzkova

to secure her place in her second WTA 1000 event final of the year.

— Reuters

bp Oman to sponsor RS Venture World Championships

MUSCAT: Oman Sail is delighted to announce that bp Oman is the title sponsor of the upcoming RS Venture Connect World Championships; the first exclusive para sailing event to be held in Oman.

In collaboration with Oman Sail, bp Oman has been heavily involved in the development of para sailing in Oman as supporters of the SailFree initiative. This is the region's first para sailing programme, launched in 2019 as part of bp Oman's social investment programme, and will now continue its association at the championships, taking place at Barcelo Mussanah Resort from

November 22-27.

Dr Khamis al Jabri, Oman Sail CEO, said, “We are very pleased to welcome bp Oman as title sponsors of the RS Venture Connect World Championships and deliver the very first sailing championship in Oman solely devoted to para sailing. Their support for SailFree has been invaluable and has changed the lives of hundreds of people across Oman, and we hope that exposure to the RS Venture class during the championships and the Oman Sailing Festival will inspire even more people with disabilities to discover sailing.”

Thuraya al Tai, C&EA Manager, bp Oman, Kuwait



and Qatar said, “bp in Oman is committed to supporting Omanis with disabilities ensuring

opportunities are inclusive for all people within community. We are excited to be sponsoring the RS

Venture World Championship to deliver on our aim. Over the past three years, we have seen first-hand the success of our social investment programme ‘SailFree’ which has now allowed a national para sailing team to compete internationally. We look forward to working with Oman Sail to deliver a successful championship and continue supporting ‘Sail Free.’

SailFree is a joint initiative between Oman Sail, bp Oman and the Oman Paralympic Committee, and is the region's first para sailing programme. Launched in December 2019, it has since introduced over 200 men and women from the ages of 16 to 30.

OOC participates in ANOC General Assembly in Seoul

SEOUL: Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) participated in the 26th General Assembly of the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC), which was held in South Korea from October 19-21.

The meeting was attended by representatives of 187 National Olympic Committees in Seoul, and the participation of representatives of 16 committees online.

The opening was attended by Yoon Seok-yeol, President of South Korea, and Thomas Bach, President of International Olympic Committee (IOC), and representatives of international

and continental federations and the organising committees of the tournaments.

It was announced that the second ANOC Beach Games will be held next year in Bali, Indonesia.

Khalid bin Mohammed al Zubair, OOC Chairman, headed the OOC delegation, accompanied by Taha bin Sulaiman al Kishry, OOC Secretary General.

South Korean President Yoon Seok-yeol opened the 26th ANOC General Assembly last Wednesday at the Seoul Convention and Exhibition Centre with a speech in which he thanked ANOC and all NOCs for their great efforts



to keep the Olympic spirit alive, especially in the years that South Korea shares the values set by IOC in achieving independence and solidarity through sport.

He noted that South Korea had previously hosted the 1988 Summer Olympic Games in

Seoul, the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, and is preparing to host the 2024 Winter Youth Olympics in Gangwon.

For his part, Dr Robin Mitchell, Acting President of ANOC said that representatives of about 200 NOCs participated in the General

Assembly, and President of the Korean Olympic Committee Lee Ki-hyung mentioned in his speech that it is the third time that Seoul hosts the General Assembly of ANOC after 1986 and 2006.

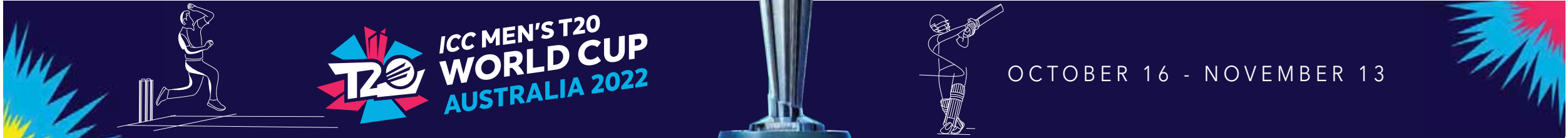
IOC President Thomas Bach pointed out that Seoul is a great Olympic city, and called on all NOCs to stand united to advance the Olympic movement.

During the third day meetings, ANOC Board of Directors was elected for the new term (2022-2026), where Shaikh Joaan bin Hamad al Thani, President of Qatar Olympic Committee, won the position of First Vice-President of ANOC, and Robin

Mitchell was recommended as President.

An awards ceremony was held on the second day in which the best athletes, sports teams and distinguished Olympic committees for the past year 2021 were honoured.

The committee consisted of representatives from each of the continental federations, the chairman of the Athletes Committee, the secretary-general of ANOC, and the president of the Asian Football Confederation. The meetings came out with important decisions in the interest of international sports and athletes.



Taskin takes 4 as Bangladesh win first-ever Super 12 match

HOBART: Bangladesh won their first-ever game in a Twenty20 World Cup Super 12 on Monday, with Taskin Ahmed taking 4-25 as the Netherlands imploded early and never recovered, losing by nine runs. The Dutch, who battled through the preliminary round to reach the Super 12, held the Asian nation to 144-8 with Paul van Meekeren becoming his country's joint all-time T20 wicket-taker along the way.

But they got off to a horror start in the run chase, losing two wickets off the first two balls to Ahmed then suffered two run-outs in one over to slump to 15-4 in cold conditions at Hobart.

Colin Ackermann with 62 played a lone hand, making his maiden T20 half-century as the Netherlands were all out for 135 on the final ball.

Veteran Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan has played in every edition of the World Cup since its inception in 2007 and this was his first Super 12 victory.

"It was an important win, I've played all editions but haven't won and that was on the back of my mind," he said.

"Taskin has been a good bowler for us, he has the experience and pace. Most of the fielders in our team are agile and quick, in the field we can save five to 10 runs, and that could be the big difference."

Defeat was a heavy blow for the Dutch with two points desperately needed in a group that features heavyweights India, Pakistan and South Africa. But it was a relief for Bangladesh, who had suffered from poor form since the 2021 World Cup, playing 19 T20 internationals and losing 14.

NEEDLESS RUN-OUTS

"Our bowlers were quite amazing, but our run-outs (Max O'Dowd and Tom Cooper) were poor," said Netherlands skipper Shaun Edwards.

SCOREBOARD	
BANGLADESH	
N Shanto c Van Beek b Pringle	25
S Sarkar c De Leede b Van Meekeren	14
L Das c Cooper b Van Beek	9
S Al Hasan c De Leede b Ahmad	7
A Hossain c Edwards b De Leede	38
Y Ali b Van Meekeren	3
N Hasan c Van Meekeren b De Leede	13
M Hossain not out	20
T Ahmed c Van Beek b Klaassen	0
H Mahmud not out	0
Extras (lb8, w7)	15
Total (8 wickets, 20 overs)	144
Fall of wickets: 1-43, 2-47, 3-60, 4-63, 5-76, 6-120, 7-129, 8-134	
Bowling: Klaassen 4-0-33-1, Ackermann 1-0-4-0, Van Meekeren 4-0-21-2, De Leede 3-0-29-2, Pringle 2-0-10-1, Ahmad 3-0-27-1, Van Beek 3-0-12-1	
NETHERLANDS	
V Singh c Ali b Ahmed	0
M O'Dowd run out	8
B De Leede c Hasan b Ahmed	0
C Ackermann c Hossain b Ahmed	62
T Cooper run out	0
S Edwards c Mahmud b Al Hasan	16
T Pringle c Mahmud	1
L Van Beek c Ahmed b Mahmud	2
S Ahmad c Mahmud b Ahmed	9
F Klaassen not out	7
P Van Meekeren c Das b Sarkar	24
Extras (nb1, w5)	6
Total (all out, 20 overs)	135
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-0, 3-13, 4-15, 5-59, 6-66, 7-81, 8-96, 9-101	
Bowling: Ahmed 4-0-25-4, Mahmud 4-1-15-2, Al Hasan 4-0-32-1, Rahman 4-0-20-0, Sarkar 3-0-29-1, Hossain 1-0-14-0	

"Hopefully we can bring in a better performance with the bat, looking forward to the next challenge (against India)."

After being sent into bat, Bangladesh plundered 12 off the opening over and kept the pressure on. With temperatures hovering around 12 Celsius (54 Fahrenheit), the Dutch took time to warm up but when Van Meekeren switched ends he found extra pace and Soumya Sarkar (14) mistimed a pull shot to Bas De Leede.

Spinner Tim Pringle was brought on and ended fellow opener Najmul Shanto's innings on 25 in the next over.

Litton Das was out for nine, slapping a Van Beek ball to Tim Cooper at mid-off, before Al Hasan fell four balls later, caught in the deep off Shariz Ahmad to leave Bangladesh at 70-4. — AFP

Rain forces washout of SA-Zimbabwe clash

HOBART: Rain had the final say in a Twenty20 World Cup match between South Africa and Zimbabwe after the Proteas looked on course for a likely win on Monday. Chasing a rain-revised target of 64 in seven overs, Quinton de Kock smashed an unbeaten 47 to steer the team to 51 for no loss in three overs when rain stopped play for the final time in Hobart.

De Kock, a wicketkeeper-batsman, came all guns blazing to smash Tendai Chatara for four fours and a six in a 23-run opening over.

The opener kept up his attack into the second over to hit Richard Ngarava for four straight boundaries and take the total to 40-0 in a stop-start match.

Umpires tried their best to complete the Super 12 encounter but the final rain interruption forced the players off the ground and a disappointed de Kock shook hands with the opposition.

Zimbabwe managed 79-5 after they elected to bat first but their innings only began after two hours and 30 minutes of rain delay.

The South African quicks had an instant impact with Wayne Parnell and Lungi Ngidi rattling the opposition top-order.

Zimbabwe slipped to 19-4 inside three overs before Wesley Madhevere hit 35 off 18 balls and put on a 55-run stand with Milton Shumba, who made 18.

Parnell sent back skipper Craig Ervine for two after a frenetic

start by Zimbabwe, with batsmen living dangerously while running between wickets.

Ngidi struck twice in the next over including the in-form Sikandar Raza for a duck after de Kock took a leaping one-handed take behind the stumps. But Madhevere, who smashed four fours and one six in his 18-ball knock, and Shumba, who got out on the final delivery of the innings off Anrich Nortje, put up a gritty show.

The African nations got one point each from the washout.

Bangladesh, who beat the Netherlands in the first match of the day in Hobart, lead Group 2 that witnessed India edging out Pakistan in a last-ball thriller on Sunday. — AFP



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Sohar Port sets 6 million sqm of land for green projects

Positive growth: Media briefing highlights port and free zone's continued strong performance

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 24

Sohar Port and Free Zone has announced the allocation of around 6 million square metres for renewable energy projects, CEO Emile Hoogsteden said. He made the announcement at a media roundtable hosted by the company, which operates the country's main commercial gateway and adjoining free zone, on the North Batinah coast.

The land allocation, he noted, would benefit from extensive studies on green hydrogen as an alternative fuel source.

At the briefing, Hoogsteden highlighted some of the important developments characterising Sohar Port's performance so far this year and its positioning for stronger growth in a number of areas. At the end of the third quarter of this year, cargo throughput reached 21 million tonnes, with the port handling a total of about 2,225 ships.

As many as 1,924 companies



are associated with the operation of the port and free zone, which accounts for a notable 2.6 per cent (equivalent to RO 601.4 million) of the Sultanate of Oman's GDP, the CEO noted.

Among the noteworthy developments of the year, the CEO said, was the signing of a MoU between Oman and the United Arab Emirates for the establishment of the Oman-Ethiad Rail Project that will connect from

SOHAR with the UAE network.

"The two parties aim to unlock new opportunities by strengthening commercial exchange and social cohesion, connecting key urban centres, facilitating travel between communities and providing seamless transport solutions between economic and industrial zones in Oman and the UAE, including SOHAR Freezone," he said.

Equally significant is the new land route connecting Oman and Saudi Arabia. The overland route cuts the driving time between the countries down by 16 hours and opens up easier trade between the two countries through SOHAR Freezone, he said, adding that a number of Saudi based businesses are currently operating at SOHAR Freezone.

A total of 12 agreements were signed so far this year — pacts that

At the end of the third quarter of this year, cargo throughput reached 21 million tonnes, with the port handling a total of about 2,225 ships. As many as 1,924 companies are associated with the operation of the port and free zone, which accounts for a notable 2.6 per cent (equivalent to RO 601.4 million) of the Sultanate of Oman's GDP.

EMILE
HOOGSTEDEN
CEO, Sohar Port and Free Zone

underscore Sohar Port and Freezone's growth, said Hoogsteden. They include an agreement with C Steinweg Oman, General Cargo Terminal Operator at Sohar Port to expand its storage facilities with 27 hectares.

The new facility will be fully operational within four months and add storage for minerals and raw materials for export, making

C Steinweg Oman more efficient and facilitate growth for clients, Sohar Port and Oman in general.

Likewise, an agreement was signed with Arkan Sohar Logistics to develop a port-based Container Freight Station (CFS) and logistics complex that will occupy 26,000 m2. Through this agreement, Arkan Sohar Logistics will offer bonded and non-bonded facilities, ambient and covered storage, as well as temperature controlled, dry, chilled and frozen storage facilities.

These facilities will also provide value added services such as cross stuffing for import, re-export and transshipment cargo, lashing, crating, staging, labelling, re-packing, kitting, and order processing

A further nine agreements have been signed in relation to SOHAR Freezone. It includes an agreement with Lalan Middle East to build a Glove packing plant along with an ETO sterilisation unit on 5,000 sqm of land at SOHAR Freezone.

As the first of such fully-fledged facility in the Sultanate of Oman, once built, it will supply the local, regional and international market with surgical sterile gloves and disposable nitrile and latex gloves.

TURN TO PAGE 15

\$300 million Oman-Australia cable switched on

JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

The Oman-Australia Cable (OAC) — a 9,800 kilometre subsea cable manufactured and installed by SUB.CO that links the Sultanate of Oman to Western Australia — was officially switched on by Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in Perth, Australia on Sunday. Albanese himself announced the event on his official Twitter account.

The Oman-Australia Cable, which costs over \$300 million, lit up in Equinix's International Business Exchange (IBX) data centre, PE2, in Perth.

The Australian Prime Ministersaid,"Today we opened an undersea cable connecting Australia to the world. The cable would enable direct high-speed data connectivity from both the East and West Coasts of Australia to the Middle East and Europe for the first time. Oman-Australia Submarine Cable allows for faster, more secure and more reliable data transfers. It is fast enough stream over 65 million shows



on Netflix simultaneously, and it will make Western Australia a critical data hub for the country — ensuring Australian businesses and industry can share data quickly and securely to global markets."

"OAC delivers more capacity to support Australia's growing digital economy and jobs," he added.

SUB.CO, a submarine cable development specialist firm founded by Australian entrepreneur Bevan Slattery, announced earlier this month the start of the live broadcast of the OAC. The cable is the first diversified cable between Europe, the

Middle East, Asia and Africa. Equinix previously claimed it will be the only data centre operator with an express cable between Oman and Australia.

Equinix President and CEO Charles Meyer said the centre's completion came as "Perth is poised to become a major hub." "As the world's largest digital infrastructure company, we will always be where our customers are. The OAC Cable Landing Stations in Perth and Oman will provide organisations with access to a dense ecosystem of networks and the lowest latency and the most direct path between Australia and onward into Europe," he said.

KEYNOTE
SPEAKER



H.E. Salim bin Nasser Al Aufi
Minister of Energy and Minerals,
Sultanate of Oman

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Ominvest celebrates Omani Women’s Day

MUSCAT: Aligned with its core values of excellence and collaboration, Oman International Development & Investment Company SAOG (Ominvest) recently celebrated Omani Women’s Day with the inauguration of its ‘Leadership Development Programme for Women’, as well as a number of activities including team building and motivational speeches.

The day’s celebrations were centred around empowering the women working at Ominvest, and marking the vital contribution they make to the success of the company. Attended by the Group CEO AbdulAziz al Balushi and other members of the leadership team, it was the women of the organisation and their wellbeing that were at the centre of activities, with a speech by a female staff member and the announcement of the ‘Women Leadership Development Programme’ the highlight of the day.

AbdulAziz al Balushi, Group CEO at Ominvest, said, “Through



INAUGURATES SPECIAL ‘WOMEN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME’

our core values, we always seek to bring strategies to life that sharpen our people’s expertise and give them the confidence to succeed. Over 30 per cent of our workforce, and out of 9, 2 of our board members, are women, and we hope for this percentage to

grow in the coming time, across key functions. The ‘Leadership Development Programme for Women’ is an essential step in providing our female colleagues with equal opportunities to excel and exceed. It is also a right step in becoming more ESG-compliant,

putting people at the centre of our activities.” Al Balushi added, “Omani Women’s Day is a celebration of all the mothers, daughters, sisters and friends we are lucky to know. We are proud to take part in an occasion that ultimately sheds

lights on their achievements in transforming our nation.

At Ominvest, we know that ensuring the empowerment and wellbeing of all our colleagues, but especially our female colleagues, will proof to elevate performance, productivity and organisational profitability, as well as help us accomplish more towards our purpose of “Transforming Businesses to Enrich Societies. I wish a Happy Omani Women’s Day to all the women of Oman.”

The ‘Leadership Development Programme for Women’ will see the upskilling of female Omani talents within Ominvest at global standards, empowering them to take up future leadership positions.

Executed by internationally recognised Leadership Management International, the programme is one of the many initiatives Ominvest supports to work towards global ESG goals, adding long-standing value to the business and society at large by increasing the number of female leaders.

NBO marks Omani Women’s Day



MUSCAT: National Bank of Oman (NBO) marked Omani Women’s Day by celebrating the impact female employees and entrepreneurs have had on the growth of the organisation from the beginning of its journey.

As part of a day of activities and in recognition of womens’ contribution to the nation, NBO held an exhibition inviting female-owned SMEs to showcase their products and services to the employees and customers.

NBO also held an internal discussion panel featuring two female employees who shared the story of their professional growth with NBO. In line with the role Omani women play in the renewed renaissance of the Sultanate of Oman, NBO has

committed to the development of its female employees by identifying the right opportunities to unlock unexpected growth and appointing them in leadership positions, allowing them to play an active role in various areas.

This insight and diverse selection of voices has helped shape NBO’s direction and been influential in developing products to meet the needs of all areas of society.

NBO’s long-standing commitment to the Sultanate’s female employees and entrepreneurs will continue through a number of initiatives such as organising a series of exhibits held at its head office and work together to drive progress across Oman.

Maisarah Islamic Banking Services participates in IFN Oman Forum

MUSCAT: Maisarah Islamic Banking Services participated in the seventh edition of Islamic Finance News (IFN) Oman Forum 2022 held recently at the Grand Millennium Muscat Hotel. The forum was organised in collaboration with the Capital Market Authority, Sultanate of Oman.

The annual event attracted key local regulators, industry experts, potential investors and leaders from Oman and around the region. The day-long meet focussed on session on relevant topics including ‘Omani Islamic Financial Services: Momentum and Success’, ‘Digitalisation and the Evolution of Omani Islamic Financial Services’ and ‘Funding the Future: Islamic Sustainable Finance and Investment’.

Mohsin Shaikh Sehu Mohamed, Head of Investment Banking & Capital Markets, Maisarah Islamic Banking Services was a panelist in the session on the topic ‘Building a Nation: Funding National Development through Islamic Finance. The session focused on Islamic real estate finance and its scope for complex project and asset financing in Oman via Shariah-compliant structures. It deliberated on whether Islamic products effectively lend themselves to fund public-private partnerships for the development of infrastructure and large-scale projects.

IFN Oman Dialogue brought together Oman’s leading Islamic finance practitioners, regulators and experts to discuss the benefits and concerns facing the Shariah-compliant financing and investment market. The forum focused on the laudable growth rate of the Islamic finance sector in Oman and drew attention to



the rising prominence of Shariah-compliant finance in its economy.

Over the years, Maisarah has maintained a prominent position as a leading financial service provider in Oman. The Islamic banking window of BankDhofar maintains standards of corporate governance, research and development, corporate social responsibility, and customer service.

Maisarah’s products and services set the standard for best Islamic financial solutions and it is committed to lead with creativity and innovation to provide the best customer experience there is. Maisarah aims to distinguish itself with outstanding customer experience, investing in Fintech, developing innovative products, and launching state-of-the-art financial solutions, as part of its future growth plan to reach to a wider base of customers across Oman.

Mazoon holds campaign on waste management and legislation



MUSCAT: To create awareness about environmental impact and legislation in Oman, Mazoon Electricity Company, the leading electricity provider in Oman organised an environmental campaign for the benefit of its employees and contractors.

The objective of the campaign was to raise awareness about environmental laws, reduce adverse environmental impact, encourage audience to report about environmental issues and inspire teamwork and engagement with other sectors.

The event focused on topics including reduction of environmental impact from oil leakage, hazard and non-hazard waste management and application of environmental legislation.

A spokesperson for Mazoon Electricity said, “The environmental campaign was organised based on the company’s endeavour to operate a system that sets high standards on environment conservation, pollution prevention, resources preservation and legal compliance. All company employees and contractors abide with its policy and help reach goals by continually improving environmental performance. As a team, we comply by surpassing standards required by the applicable environmental ordinances and fulfil all environmental requirements prescribed by the company.”

In addition to Mazoon Electricity, subject experts from other leading partners such as Environment Authority, PDO, Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be’ah) and Oman Electricity Transmission company spoke on topics including environmental impact from oil leakage, waste management, environmental legislation and industrial waste segregation among others.

Bank Muscat holds seminar on business development

MUSCAT: The Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSME) sector plays an important role in the creation of jobs and driving economic growth and development in the Sultanate of Oman. This importance has been recognised by Oman Vision 2040, which aims to comprehensively enable the growth of the sector as part of the Sultanate’s overall growth and development.

Hence, the sector has received keen support from Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, in line with its vision ‘To serve you better, everyday’.

The bank recently organised a seminar for more than 300 Omani entrepreneurs in Salalah by noted business consultant and coach

Ahmed al Mutawa. The seminar focused on the initial steps of starting a business, growing already existing businesses, gaining knowledge about sources of capital and also how to handle challenges. It was attended by Taya Eid Bait Sabeea, Deputy General Manager – Interior Region, Bank Muscat, as well as a number of bank officials and well received by customers in Dhofar.

Speaking on the occasion, Taya Eid Bait Sabeea (pictured), Deputy General Manager – Interior Regions, Bank Muscat, expressed his gratitude for the excellent participation of owners and management of small businesses in the seminar organised by the bank’s Najahi Business Banking department. The bank has always



been an enabler of opportunities for budding entrepreneurs so as to bring about sustainable development and financial inclusion in Omani society.

He stressed on how Bank Muscat’s Najahi Business Banking

offers a range of non-financial support for small businesses including training sessions and mentoring programmes, which are helping Omani entrepreneurs guide their business through vital phases of growth and

development. The Deputy General Manager extended his thanks and appreciation to Najahi customers for their constant support and trust in the bank and to all attendees for the interest expressed in the products and services of Bank Muscat.

Bank Muscat’s Najahi has been playing a major role in supporting the SME sector since its launch in 2014. Over the years, Najahi has been growing from strength to strength in expanding its suite of products and services and has won praise from customers for the excellent financial support through collateral-free financing and non-financial support it extends to the SME sector. Bank Muscat’s Najahi strategy is closely aligned with the overall developmental

goals of the Sultanate of economic diversification, job creation and increasing GDP.

The Najahi products suite includes the value-added Najahi Current Account, POS Terminals, Credit and Debit cards, Internet Banking and Collateral-free Financing. It is a matter of great pride for the bank that Najahi has been well praised by its customers for the various services and facilities provided since its inception as it has enabled many to develop and expand their projects and grow in size to realise their entrepreneurial dreams.

For more information about Najahi, please visit the nearest branch, call 24790000 or visit <https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/najahi/Pages/default.aspx>.



OPAZ approves whistleblower protection policy



MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) issued a decision approving its policy of whistleblowing and whistleblower protection by opening an official communication channel on its website, which serves protecting the whistleblowers and ensures confidentiality.

By establishing this policy, OPAZ aims to preserve its positive image and good reputation, as well as improves the quality of its services and promoting transparency, integrity, impartiality and fairness.

This also reflects its keenness to apply best practices in preserving its assets and raising the performance efficiency by informing employees and all those dealing with OPAZ to report any committed violations or wrong practices that are in violation of the laws, regulations and systems in force in OPAZ.

Accordingly, this policy guarantees confidence, protection and confidentiality of the whistleblower.

The policy stipulates that the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) adheres to the highest standards of integrity and best practices in delivering its responsibilities and business, which are considered a basis for success and building a good reputation by reporting unprincipled or illegal work practices.

Oman launches Round 1 of bidding for green hydrogen blocks

Energy transition: Newly established hydrogen-industry flagship HYDROM opens registrations for two blocks of around 320 sq km in Duqm in first round of Phase A of tendering

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 24

Registrations opened on Sunday, October 23, 2022 for international developers interested in bidding for a number of blocks offered up by the Omani government for the establishment of green hydrogen projects in the Sultanate of Oman.

As many as two blocks in Duqm (Al Wusta Governorate) and four blocks in Salalah (Dhofar Governorate) are up for grabs in Phase A of the government's strategy to attract international investment in a future green hydrogen industry.

Covering a total area of 1,900 sq kilometres, they represent just a fraction of the estimated 50,000 sq kilometres of acreage earmarked for green hydrogen projects around the Sultanate of Oman.

An overview of this tendering strategy was presented by Dr Firas al Abduwani, Acting Managing Director of HYDROM, the new state-owned hydrogen-centric company that will oversee the delivery of Oman's green hydrogen strategy.

Speaking at the unveiling of Oman's Net Zero's pathway, and the launch of HYDROM on Sunday, Dr Abduwani said the six blocks on offer in Phase A of the tendering plan will help meet the country's green hydrogen



“We’re allowing the developers themselves to choose the end product, whether they want it to be hydrogen itself and transport it in a liquefied manner or with a liquid organic carrier.”

DR FIRAS AL ABDUWANI
Acting Managing Director of HYDROM



production target of 1 million tonnes per annum by 2030. Future developments are envisioned in blocks delineated in other parts of the country, including Al Dhahirah (8,200 sq km), Al Dakhiliyah (5,180 sq km), Sur (2,450 sq km), Al Wusta / Duqm (15,930 sq km), Al Jazir (25,700 sq km) and Dhofar (7,910 sq km).

Of the six blocks on offer in Phase A, two of them – located in Duqm – have been opened up for registration in the first round of the tendering programme, said Dr Al Abduwani.

A Request for Qualifications

(RfQ) for these blocks (each of around 320 sq km) will be issued to interested developers on November 2, 2022, with an award set to be finalised by April 2023.

A second round, covering the remaining four blocks of Phase A, will kick off immediately thereafter, with awards expected to be announced before the end of 2023, he noted.

Importantly, successful bidders will be given the prerogative to choose which type of end-product their investment will ultimately produce.

“We’re keeping it very

flexible,” said Dr Al Abduwani. “We’re allowing the developers themselves to choose the end product, whether they want it to be hydrogen itself and transport it in a liquefied manner or with a liquid organic carrier. That’s up to them! Whether they want to move with ammonia or methanol - that is also open to them if they want to bring some of the hard-to-abate sectors and industries and bring them as part of the solutions.”

Responsibility for the offtake of the end-product will also be the responsibility of the developer, he noted.

Crucially, with multiple developers expected to invest in Oman's green energy space, HYDROM plans to tender out the common infrastructure separately.

The official explained: “There are multiple reasons for that. One, we’ve heard that the national champion, OQ Alternative Energy, will be the back-in rights partner for the primary scope. So there’s a different contractual regime that will happen for the main package.

Infrastructure, on the other hand, is something that we foresee to have 100 per cent back-in rights for the Omani state owned enterprises that will come in. So whether we talk about overhead lines or hydrogen pipelines or water pipelines, ultimately all this will have the optionality of being owned by the nation. So for that reason, the infrastructure is separated out into a separate package.

The developers who will be bidding for the main package, are also more than welcome to bid into the infrastructure package to have the collective, end-to-end opportunity to deploy their projects,” he added.

Bank Muscat sells stake in SICO Capital



JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

Bank Muscat sold its 27.29 per cent stake in Saudi-based SICO Capital to Bahrain-based investment bank SICO BSC for a consideration of RO 1.95 million.

In a disclosure submitted to Muscat Stock Exchange on Sunday, Bank Muscat said, “The bank notifies the market that all the necessary regulatory approvals for the transaction are now received and the transfer of 27.29% shares in SICO Capital has been completed on October 23, 2022. The bank received an amount of around RO 1.95 million as sale consideration.

“Bank Muscat also acquired a further 2.76% shareholding in SICO BSC for RO 1.95 million and for which the necessary regulatory approvals have been obtained. Subsequent to these transaction, Bank Muscat has now fully exited its shareholding interest in SICO Capital and increased its stake in SICO BSC to 13.14%, which is designated as an associate in the Bank's financial statements,” the bank added.

SICO BSC signed an agreement with Bank Muscat to acquire the remaining stake last month and the successful transaction closure was completed after obtaining all the required regulatory approvals. The acquisition value for the remaining stake in SICO Capital is RO 1.95 million, based on its net book value as of March 31, 2022.

SICO BSC acquired a majority stake amounting to 72.7 per cent in the Saudi-based wholly-owned subsidiary of Bank Muscat in 2021 via share swap and successfully rebranded it to SICO Capital post the acquisition. SICO Capital is now a fully-owned subsidiary of SICO BSC following the acquisition of the remaining stake.

Sohar Port sets 6 million sqm of land for green projects

FROM PAGE 13

An expansion agreement was also signed with Eagle Ceramic FZC LLC of around 15,000 sqm additional to their current leased area of 20,000 sqm.

The expansion will allow for the production of main ceramic

clay, which is a major component for producing ceramic tiles. United Projects Achievements (FZC), another company, has received the lease of 25,000 sqm of land at the Freezone on which a new Cloud Data Centre is to be constructed.

The investment is also in line with our plans to make SOHAR Freezone a frontrunner in innovation and a smart, technologically advanced ecosystem, while helping attract future ICT investments and diversifying our income sources.

Additionally, an agreement with Penicillin General Integrated Industrial Company (Pen-G) for the establishment of a pharmaceutical manufacturing facility plant for the manufacture of key pharmaceutical start-up material at the SOHAR Freezone.

bp Oman launches ‘Ruwad’ national training programme

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 24

bp Oman launched the ‘Ruwad’ national training programme, a joint collaboration between bp Oman, Oman Society for Petroleum Services (OPAL) and various oil and gas contractors. The programme aims to enhance nationalisation and present a framework that upskills national competencies, contributing to the market and economic growth.

To celebrate the launch of the ‘Ruwad’ programme, bp signed an agreement with Halliburton, making it the first contractor company to provide 30 internship opportunities.

Yousuf al Ojaili, bp Oman president, commented, “With the launch of the ‘Ruwad’ national training programme in Oman, we reiterate our commitment to



building a skilled and capable national workforce in line with the Oman Vision 2040. We aim to build a platform that would foster positive and effective interactions between employers and fresh graduates.

Using a standardised process, the programme enables stakeholders to find and obtain fit-for-purpose participants seeking training in their respective fields.”

‘Ruwad’ is an effective one-year training programme targeted

at technical and non-technical Bachelor, Diploma and General Diploma graduates. It aims to equip them with the skills and competencies needed to build a successful career in the local market. Every participant in

the programme will receive a certificate of experience upon completion.

Abdulrahman al Yahyaei, Chief Executive Officer of OPAL, concluded that “This programme offers the country’s talented youth with invaluable opportunities to broaden their knowledge and cultivate new skills while simultaneously providing industry stakeholders with opportunities to introduce new capabilities into the market. In turn, this leads to the development of an attractive labour market and a prosperous economy.”

Halliburton will provide 30 internship opportunities focused on the fields of Engineering, Supply Chain, Finance and other technical & non-technical fields to enhance the graduate's employability.

Ashraf Rabbat, Area Vice-President — Eastern Gulf at

Halliburton, added: “We strongly believe that training on-site and direct collaboration with experienced practitioners in their respective fields are the most effective ways for students to develop important technical skills and relationships critical to their future success in the job market. ‘Ruwad’ serves as the ideal platform for achieving this and providing such training opportunities to graduates in various fields in Oman.”

Ruwad is an example of bp Oman's efforts to support the sustainable development of Oman's economy, through various in-country value initiatives aimed at advancing the capabilities and knowledge of the national workforce and providing on-job training and internship opportunities for Omanis through bp's contracts.

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Observer

ESTABLISHED IN 1981 EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: ABDULLAH BIN SALIH AL SHAHELI

HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

MUSCAT: Before His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Dr. Saad bin Hamoud bin Ahmed al-Hadi (pictured), Chairman of the Supreme Court, Sayyid Khalifa bin Saif bin Khalifa al-Thumali, and Chairman of Administrative Judiciary Court, Shaleh Al-Mubtar

bin Abdullah bin Saif al-Hadi, took the oath of office at Al-Barakat Palace on Thursday. SEE ALSO PG

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

MUSCAT: To mark the 50th anniversary of the Omani Renaissance and in commemoration of the memory of its founder late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) issued a sixth series of new RO 50 banknotes, which will begin circulating this month.

CBO will also issue new banknotes for all other denominations during the last quarter of 2020. YOMR PG 44

STAY APART AND BREAK

SAMUEL KUTTY

MUSCAT: The frequent orders and fervent appeals by the authorities to follow social distancing guidelines are filling on road signs.

A drive around the downtown Sohar and its adjoining areas reveals how mindlessly people crowd at different corners and walk shoulder-to-shoulder.

While most people across the country are following the guidelines that health authorities say are necessary to keep the coronavirus from spreading, many

are not. "In these critical moments of uncertainty with both physical and mental stress, we should discipline ourselves.

SOME PEOPLE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING NORMS

and in some cases, it is necessary to police the behaviour of other people as well," said Faisal Al-Mubtar, who stopped his car to



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Discovering Oman's Gems at Nizwa Souq

Visiting the different corners of Nizwa Souq equals travelling back in time where shabby, withered shops and dusty environment sparked curiosity like unpolished diamonds. Merchants sold different items, from cattles in the early morning to spices, nuts, dry rose petals, clay frankincense burners, household objects made of dry palm leaves, and other souvenirs all throughout the area... **P20**

Taylor Swift reveals late-night musings on pop album 'Midnights'

TAYLOR SWIFT RETURNED to pop on Friday with the debut of her 10th studio album, a record called "Midnights" inspired by her late-night thoughts, and she also released a video of her "nightmare scenarios" in the genre of a horror flick. The 32-year-old singer-songwriter described the 13-track "Midnights"

as "a collage of intensity, highs and lows and ebbs and flows." "Life can be dark, starry, cloudy, terrifying, electrifying, hot, cold, romantic or lonely. Just like Midnights," Swift wrote on Instagram. The pop record followed folk albums "Folklore" and "Evermore," which Swift recorded while quaran-



tining during the Covid-19 pandemic. "Folklore" was named album of the year at the Grammys in 2021. The first single from "Midnights," called "Anti-Hero," was released with

a video starring Swift as a woman alone at night in a 1970s home invaded by ghosts. She later appears in a coffin at her own funeral. "Watch my nightmare scenarios

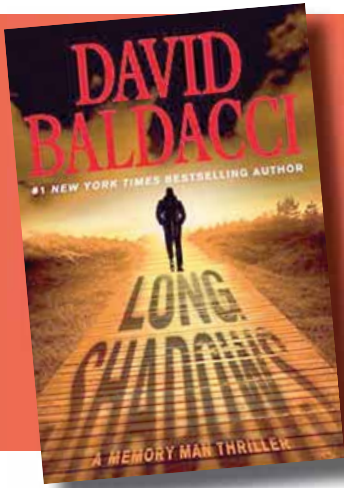
and intrusive thoughts play out in real time," Swift said about the video. Another song, "Snow On The Beach," featured backing vocals by Lana Del Rey, a singer Swift said she had long admired. "Lavender Haze," was inspired by a term Swift said she first heard on television series "Mad Men" about being in love. The "Shake It Off" and "Bad Blood" singer, who has won 11 Grammys during her career, also revealed on Instagram overnight that she was releasing seven additional songs that did not make it onto the new record. Initial reviews from critics were positive. "Her tenth album returns to the dazzling synth-pop of records like '1989' and 'Reputation,' with lyrics caught between a love story and a revenge plot," *Rolling Stone* magazine said. In the *Los Angeles Times*, pop music critic Mikael Wood said the "Midnights" album "heralds the return of a pop music mastermind." — **Reuters**

READ

LONG SHADOWS

BY DAVID BALDACCI

The seventh book in the Memory Man series. Decker works with a new partner to investigate a double homicide.



ENTERTAINMENT

Moroccan rapper ElGrande Toto (R), also known as Taha Fahssi, holds a press conference with his lawyer Abdelfattah Zahrach in Rabat. — **AFP**



CHANGING WORLD

Nicole Boone, a volunteer at the White Harvest Farms Community Garden, poses for a photo in Jacksonville, Florida. A reality of everyday life for the majority of the urban population, is an unattainable desire for the estimated 39 million Americans who live in a "food desert," a nickname given to areas with high poverty rates where no stores selling fruits and vegetables are readily available. The name can be misleading. It is less about the total absence of shops than about the impossibility of getting there, in a country where the car is king, but expensive. — **AFP**





A FULL-SIZED MODEL of Noah's Ark sitting in rural Kentucky promotes a worldview that draws visitors from across the United States — that the theory of evolution is false.

The Ark Encounter and the associated Creation Museum espouse the belief that God literally created the Earth in six days around 4,000 BC.

Evangelical Christians flock to see the spectacular staging and sharp denunciations of scientific facts such as that dinosaurs became extinct about 65 million years ago.

Visitors also reflect America's divided politics as the country heads into midterm elections, with creationists often aligned with the Republican Party on issues such as abortion and gay rights.

"Dinosaurs are often used by evolutionists to proclaim their worldview. So we've taken the dinosaurs back, if you



will," said Mark Looy, cofounder of the ark amusement park and the museum.

Standing a few steps from a model of an allosaurus skeleton, Looy said the site offers a different view of dinosaurs — that "most of them perished during the flood about 4,500 years ago."

The museum opened in 2007 in Petersburg, Kentucky, financed by a donation campaign and supported by Answers in Genesis, a group that believes in strict creationism.

The Ark Encounter opened in 2016 about 70 kilometres (45 miles) away in Williamstown, and contains a replica of Noah's Ark in keeping with its supposed Biblical measurements — 150 metres (510 feet) long, 15 metres (51 feet) high, and 25 metres (85 feet) wide.

'MORE THAN A STORY'

A combo ticket to the two sites costs \$85, and Looy says more than a million people a year browse the exhibits — and also enjoy attractions such as zip-lining and a petting zoo.

Most visitors are committed to the cause.

"My husband and I... believe the Earth is about 6,000 years old," said Suzanne Swindle, a 37-year-old executive from Atlanta who came to show her four-year-old daughter that the Bible "is more than just a story."

However, she does not deny that species "adapt to their environment," one of the pillars of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.

Similarly, Mike Barrington, a 70-year-old former veteran who lives in Louisiana, calls himself a creationist, but he adds that the exhibit's explanation of dinosaurs "is new to me."

Such contradictions are mirrored in the polls. According to a 2019 Gallup



survey, 40 per cent of Americans believe God created man less than 10,000 years ago.

But other polls ask subtler questions with more options and find about 15 per cent reject the theory of evolution, said Adam Laats, a historian at Binghamton University in New York and author of the book "Creationism USA."

Calling oneself a creationist in the United States is more "an identifying mark of a much broader cultural divide," he said.

"Someone would go and say, 'Oh, I guess I'm a creationist because I don't like pornography, I don't want abortion rights, and I don't want LGBTQ rights,'" Laats said decades of conflict over which institutions in the United States are trustworthy — ranging from justice and politics to science and the media — has created "radically different ideas

about truth and reality."

ELECTION ISSUES

The themes are at the heart of key midterm elections on November 8 and Laats sees "a correlation between the most archetypal MAGA (Donald Trump) conservatives and the most ardent museum-type creationists."

At the two sites, "you'd find mostly Republicans," Mark Looy said, and while the attractions must stay away from endorsing candidates, "we don't shy away from some of the hot button issues of the day."

In one clear example, a dummy video game at the museum reflects a binary reading of the world.

Two camps confront each other: "Man's world," associated with "abortion" or "gay marriage," versus "God's word," synonymous with "marriage"

and "sanctity of life."

The mix of religion, activism and entertainment is also evident at the museum's Garden of Eden.

After strolling through a bucolic landscape with Adam and Eve, visitors arrive in a screening room with projected black and white photos of the Holocaust, drug addicts and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

To reinforce the message, big letters spell out: "Rejection of God's word led to corruption."

Peggy Mast, a 74-year-old woman from Kansas, agrees.

For her, "chaos reigns" in America, where "people are now committing anarchy with the acceptance of the administration of our government."

So the museum is "a wonderful place to reaffirm the very things that we know about God," she added. — AFP

MUSIC

Fela Kuti, who used 'music as weapon', honoured in Paris



THE SON OF Afrobeat legend Fela Kuti spoke of his father's bravery in using "music as a weapon" ahead of an immersive exhibition opening at the Paris Philharmonic on Thursday.

"Instead of picking up a gun, music was the only tool he had. It was a weapon to use against authority, against colonisation and corrupt African governments," said Femi Kuti, 60, himself a hugely successful musician.

The Paris Philharmonic is paying homage to Fela Kuti by recreating the atmosphere of his sweaty, politically-charged nightclub in Nigeria, The Shrine, that became a beacon for global stars in the 1970s including Stevie Wonder and Paul McCartney.

Kuti died from AIDS complications in 1997, but his pioneering work remains as potent as ever, frequently cited by today's stars such as or Flea from Red Hot Chili Peppers, or Beyonce and Jay-Z who sampled his hit "Zombie" on "Homecoming Live".

"I'm not surprised. Great people like Miles Davis already talked about Fela," said Femi Kuti of his father's continued popularity. "Afrobeat was the basic element of hip-hop, it's where hip-hop got its sauce from."

Fela's politics have also remained potent.

"When we started working on this exhibition project, the Black Lives Matter movement emerged and Fela's fight in the 70s and 80s found resonance there," said Alexandre Girard-Muscagorry, one of the

curators of the immersive exhibition.

Kuti was harassed throughout much of his life by the military authorities in Nigeria for his relentless criticism of their corruption and violent misrule.

There was a particularly vicious reaction after he refused to take part in an official music festival in 1977, instead organising a parallel event that became much more popular and attracted international stars including Stevie Wonder.

'OUT OF AFRICA'

Soldiers responded to his counter-festival by burning down his home and pushing his mother out of a first-floor window, causing injuries which led to her death a year later, Femi Kuti said.

"He was a voice for the voiceless, the only opponent who was brave enough to tackle the hardcore military dictators at that time and he paid a very high price," said Femi Kuti.

But it was ultimately the genius of his music that made him so popular, creating something entirely new with its mix of free-jazz, soul, funk and Yoruba.

McCartney was one of many inspired to come to The Shrine in Lagos, where he recorded his album "Band on the Run".

"Fela came out of Africa with this incredible sound that caught the ears of everybody," said his son.

"To use this music as a political weapon and message — that caught the attention of the world and especially France, maybe because of the connection to its own rebellions." — AFP



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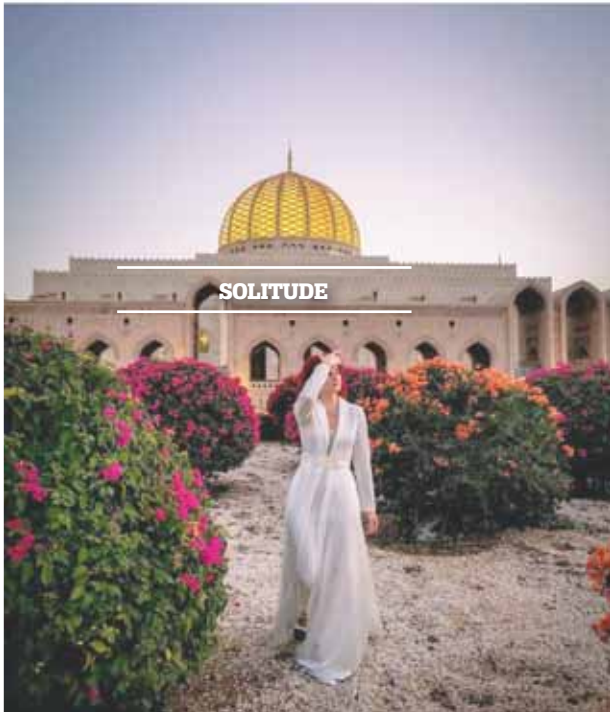
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AROUND THE WORLD

ART

Masterpiece by Titian expected to fetch up to £12 million at auction



A RENAISSANCE MASTERPIECE by Italian painter Titian is expected to fetch up to £12 million (\$13.3 million) when it goes under the hammer in December.

One of the finest versions of the artist's work, "Venus and Adonis," was unveiled on Friday morning in London, and will feature in a sale at Sotheby's auction house on December 7.

The painting is considered among the most highly-prized of Titian's works, with renditions starring in the collections of the world's most illustrious public institutions today.

It was first popularised as one of a cycle of paintings he created for one of the most powerful men in the world at the time, King Philip II of Spain.

The painting depicts the young Adonis pulling himself away from his lover Venus, carrying a feathered spear and the heads of his three hounds.

The god Cupid lies asleep under a nearby tree and in the sky a figure rides a chariot.

Only a dozen renditions survive today, more than half of which are held in major public collections including the J Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, the National Gallery in London, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York.

George Gordon, co-chairman of Old Master Paintings Worldwide at Sotheby's, said the sale was a "once-in-a-generation opportunity."

"The subject of Venus and Adonis is justly celebrated as one of Titian's most popular creations, sought out by collectors the world over ever since it was made famous by his ambitious commission for the future Philip II of Spain 470 ago," he said.

"One of the very finest of Titian's renditions of this subject, it is only recent research, made possible by its re-emergence last year, that has revealed the full extent of the artist's hand in the execution of this painting, surely one of the finest works by Titian to appear on the market this century."

"The offering of a painting of extreme rarity by one of the greats of the Renaissance is a once in a generation opportunity." — **PA Media/dpa**

Creaking chains a reminder of slavery in New York art exhibit



A NEW ART INSTALLATION that visitors can walk through on New York's Governors Island features giant chain links grinding overhead, pointing to the legacy of slavery in the United States.

Artist Charles Gaines says he wanted to create a piece — which faces the Statue of Liberty and is roughly 100 feet (30.5 metres) long that reflected the sounds and history of the Mississippi River.

"The Mississippi River — which is the place that you talk about the history of American commerce, but also we can talk about the history of slavery," said Gaines. — **Reuters**

CHANGING WORLD

Plastic recycling remains a 'myth': Greenpeace study



PLASTIC RECYCLING rates are declining even as production shoots up, according to a Greenpeace USA report out on Monday that blasted industry claims of creating an efficient, circular economy as "fiction."

Titled "Circular Claims Fall Flat Again," the study found that of 51 million tonnes of plastic waste generated by US households in 2021, only 2.4 million tonnes were recycled, or around five per cent.

After peaking in 2014 at 10 per cent, the trend has been decreasing, especially since China stopped accepting the West's plastic waste in 2018.

Virgin production — of non-recycled plastic, that is — meanwhile is rapidly rising as the petrochemical industry expands, lowering costs.

"Industry groups and big corporations have been pushing for recycling as a solution," Greenpeace USA campaigner Lisa Ramsden told AFP.

"By doing that, they have shirked all responsibility" for ensuring that recycling actually works, she added. She named Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Unilever and Nestle as prime offenders.

According to Greenpeace USA's survey, only two types of plastic are widely accepted at the nation's 375 material recovery facilities.

The first is polyethylene terephthalate (PET), which is commonly used in water and soda bottles; and the second is high density polyethylene (HDPE), seen in milk jugs, shampoo bottles and cleaning product containers.

These are numbered "1" and "2" according to a standardised system in which there

are seven plastic types.

But being recyclable in theory doesn't mean products are being recycled in practice.

The report found that PET and HDPE products had actual reprocessing rates of 20.9 per cent and 10.3 per cent, respectively — both down slightly from Greenpeace USA's last survey in 2020.

Plastic types "3" through "7" — including children's toys, plastic bags, produce wrappings, yogurt and margarine tubs, coffee cups and to-go food containers — were reprocessed at rates of less than five per cent.

Despite often carrying the recycling symbol on their labels, products that use plastic types "3" through "7" fail to meet the Federal Trade Commission classification of recyclable.

This is because recycling facilities for these types aren't available to a "substantial majority" of the population, defined as 60 per cent, and because the collected products are not being used in the manufacturing or assembly of new items.

According to the report, there were five main reasons why plastic recycling is a "failed concept."

ECONOMICALLY UNFEASIBLE

First, plastic waste is generated in vast quantities and is extremely difficult to collect — as becomes clear during what the report called ineffective "volunteer cleanup stunts" funded by nonprofits such as "Keep America Beautiful."

Second, even if it were all collected, mixed plastic waste

cannot be recycled together, and it would be "functionally impossible to sort the trillions of pieces of consumer plastic waste produced each year," the report said.

Third, the recycling process itself is environmentally harmful, exposing workers to toxic chemicals and itself generating microplastics.

Fourth, recycled plastic carries toxicity risks through contamination with other plastic types in collection bins, preventing it from becoming food-grade material again.

Fifth and finally, the process of recycling is prohibitively expensive.

"New plastic directly competes with recycled plastic, and it's far cheaper to produce and of higher quality," said the report.

Ramsden called on corporations to support a Global Plastics Treaty, which United Nations members agreed to create in February, and move toward refill and reuse strategies.

"This isn't actually a new concept — it's how the milkman used to be, it's how Coca-Cola used to get its beverages to people. They would drink their beverage, give the glass bottle back, and it would be sanitised and reused," she said.

Some countries are leading the way, including India, which recently banned 19 single-use plastic items. Austria has set reuse targets of 25 per cent by 2025 and at least 30 per cent by 2030 for beverage packaging, while Portugal has also set the 30 per cent by 2030 goal. Chile is moving to phase out single-use cutlery and mandating refillable bottles. — **AFP**



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Tying My Wound with My Turban

THE FOLLOWING IS my English translation of excerpts from "A Soldier from Oman, Memory's Nectar" by (ret.) Inspector-General Said bin Rashid Al Kalbani:

We slept for a night, and on the third day, the guide said to the commander that he knew another place with plenty of water. We followed the guide, and as we reached Wadi Jardom the commander asked us to take positions as a cover. I remember I took a tree's trunk as a screen. When the group under the command of Capt. Mohammed al Hosni arrived, the guide suddenly disappeared amidst the trees in a mysterious way.

Highly alert, holding our guns in our hands, we took the disappearance of the guide as a strong warning bell. In but a few moments we found ourselves in a rather fierce battle. Volleys of fire were shot at us from different directions, our group being most exposed, as we were in the position where the guide took us for water. We fought back in what proved to be a ferocious battle. Salim al Kabi, from Mahdha, got wounded. Sgt. Mohammed al Hosni carried him on his back while we were protecting them. Al Kabi, nonetheless, was hit yet by another bullet and died, may his soul rest in peace. Others got wounded, too, one of whom was Private Saif al Kalbani.

I myself was hit by a bullet that settled in my hip. Close to me was a man from Adam, named Barot al Jonebi. He was firing indiscriminately, so I told him to relax and fire economically, lest his ammunition ran out. However, he paid no heed to my advice. No wonder he came to me after a little while complaining that he had no more ammunition, asking me to give him mine. I refused and

protested that I myself was wounded and needed my ammunition more than he did. I went further than this by adding that if he approached me I would kill him.

I tied my wound with my turban. Once the battle was over, the others came and gave me first aid. My leg was dressed with a piece of a tree branch. The wounded in our party, upon counting, turned out to be nine, amongst whom three died and the others were in a serious condition. I one of them. Even the donkeys had their toll, 17 were wounded and died as they rushed headlong to the firing enemy. One donkey, from Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, remained uninjured, though.

We sent a telegraph providing details about the situation and asking for an aircraft to take the dead and the injured. An aircraft came and dropped all the equipment necessary for it to land. However, it was unable to land despite the fact that the soldiers had prepared the ground. As a result, we spent two nights, and the wounded were given doses of morphine.

It became clear at last that the guide was a spy planted amongst us by the enemy. The commander came to know this belatedly. Stranded in mountains, unable to do anything for our injured and martyrs, we felt time all but stopped. On the third day, when it was impossible for the plane to touch down, Sultan Said was asked to give us the permission to bury the dead in the mountains. He wouldn't normally allow that, as the mountain was populated by prey animals. This time he did give permission, though, and, accordingly all the dead were buried.

A whole regiment from Salalah was sent to us to help evacuate the wounded and carry the equipment on the donkeys.



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Local Scene

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Discovering Oman's Gems at Nizwa Souq

By Olga Velikaya

Salaam," they responded cheerfully. "Kayfak?" "Zayna, al-hamdu, li-lah," I replied quickly. "Oh, you speak Arabic!" one of them laughed in surprise. "Shway shway," I gestured with my fingers. "Is it OK if I take pictures of you?" "Ma fi mushkila," they all nodded in agreement. While I was adjusting my settings between each shot, they patiently waited: looked at me, at each other, laughed and talked. "Shukran." "Afwan," a man with a long white beard replied. "Come have kahwa with us!" Immediately, he started pouring coffee into small paper cups while asking various questions. After a quick chat, two cups of coffee and some dates, I bought a bag of garlic for the family and bid a farewell, "Maa Salama."

Given their strategic location in the middle of the market and authentic looks, I was sure many tourists approached them, but still they were so friendly and welcoming. You'd think they would get annoyed after the hundreds time, but it seemed Oman's famous hospitality was passed through DNA.

An air-conditioned date shop was a refreshing escape from the heat. Before buying, anyone could try different types of dry dates such as Khalas, Khunaizi, Fardh, Nagal, Qash Patash, etc. as well as fresh ones. In a room with a large steel tahini-making machine, sesame seeds were ground into a smooth, silky paste. For a nutty, sweet taste, Omanis dipped dried dates into the paste and served them with coffee. Sesame seeds complemented the sugariness of dates in the most surprising way.

"Come, come! Try some halwa!" a young Omani man in dishdasha greeted me cheerfully at the covered vegetable market. He gave me a spoon filled with a red-brown jelly-looking dessert, which tasted sweet and had a gelatinous texture, nuts, and a strong rosewater smell. "We have different kinds of halwa: honey,

walnut, fig, saffron, frankincense," the seller commented pointing at a display with ingredients. Halwa was made with water, white and brown sugar, corn starch, rose water, ghee, nuts, saffron and cardamom. Though a traditional halwa was a staple dessert at all celebratory occasions in Oman, the saffron one seemed exotic. Its texture was the same, but the colour was more red-yellow and the smell was strong with spicy notes, a hint of honey and hay. The most expensive kind was the halwa with mixed nuts and organic sugar.

Going to the East Souq equaled travelling back in time. A bit shabby, withered shops and dusty environment sparked curiosity like unpolished diamonds. Merchants sold different spices, nuts, dry rose petals, clay frankincense burners, household objects made of dry palm leaves, and other souvenirs.

In the next pavilion, a Silver Crafting little shop with dimmed lights caught my attention. An elderly man in a white turban sat behind a desk surrounded with handcrafted silver and copper objects and jewellery. His name was Nasser, and he was 80 years old. On the wall, there were some vintage pictures of him in his youth which showed that he used to make different ornaments for female wedding gowns.

"Sometimes the government borrows what I make for different celebrations to showcase at exhibitions," he said humbly. The son and grandson walked in, and it turned out that they didn't follow in his footsteps but seemed immensely proud of their grandfather. Nasser's apparent activeness at his age resonated with me. His zeal for life was genuinely inspiring. As the scorching heat intensified, life at the market was slowly winding down: the humming quieted, the streets got empty, and the shops closed. Nizwa Souq turned peaceful and sleepy but would awaken at first light the next morning.

