

Oman to open embassy in Budapest

Péter Szijjártó, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, lauded the bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Hungary. The Hungarian minister said that Oman's decision to open an embassy in Budapest represents a turning point in the bilateral relations as it boosts economic and trade ties. **DETAILS ON P3**



P12

INDIA HAND
PAKISTAN SEVEN
WICKET WORLD
CUP ROUT



P15

DUQM TOURISM
ZONE PULLS IN
RO 526M IN
INVESTMENTS



P18

ANCIENT AFLAJ
IS STILL RELEVANT
IN MANY PARTS
OF OMAN



MUSCAT

MOVE TO ESTABLISH SPORTS CITY PROJECT

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth has embarked on the procedures for establishing the Sports City Project in response to Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik who directed the establishment of an integrated sports city to host regional and international tournaments. Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas, Under-Secretary for Sports and Youth at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, affirmed that the ministry immediately put into effect the Royal directives issued by His Majesty the Sultan. His Majesty's directives, he said, came in continuation of the support and attention he accords to the Omani youth. **DETAILS ON P2**

OQ INVESTS \$10 BN WITH PARTNERS

OQ, the global integrated energy group, in collaboration with its partners, has made investments surpassing \$10 billion in Duqm. This significant contribution is part of their commitment to leveraging Oman's abundant resources, endorsing the government's economic diversification initiatives, and attracting foreign investments. These investments encompass several major projects. The Duqm Refinery stands out as a joint enterprise between OQ and Kuwait Petroleum International. **DETAILS ON P13**

OPINION

P8



Dr Hamed al Sinawi

Thriving in a changing world

P9



Ray Petersen

An ultra-sharp two-edged sword

SPREADING AWARENESS



The Oman Olympic Committee organised the Suhar Walkathon, on Saturday. Over 1,000 participants from all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman took part in the 5-km walkathon from Al Jahli village in Wadi Al Jizi until the finish point at Sahban village. — **ONA**

HM, Iran President review bilateral relations



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik



Ebrahim Raisi

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Ebrahim Raisi, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, reviewed the existing bilateral relations and cooperation between the two friendly countries and means of fostering them during a phone call on Saturday evening. The two leaders exchanged viewpoints on a number of topics in light of the current developments on the regional and international arenas particularly the developments taking place in the Palestinian territories. — **ONA**

PALESTINIANS FLEE GAZA AS ISRAEL MASSES TROOPS FOR ASSAULT

Oman, US voice concern

MUSCAT/GAZA: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, reviewed, via phone call, the dangerous situation and the developments currently taking place in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories, on Saturday.

The foreign ministers of the Sultanate of Oman and the United States of America (USA) voiced concern over the ongoing escalation which is affecting civilians in Gaza, stressing the importance to reach a truce in order to open corridors and air spaces for urgently-needed humanitarian aid and to re-operate water and power stations.

During the phone conversation, Sayyid Badr explained that violence generates extremism, hence the international community is facing a legal and moral responsibility to push forward towards achieving a just and comprehensive peace for the Palestinian cause and to restore the legitimate Palestinian right to end the illegal Israeli occupation.

GROUND ASSAULT

Thousands of Palestinians fled the north of the Gaza Strip on Saturday from the path of an expected Israeli ground assault, while Israel pounded the area with more air strikes and said it kept two roads open to let people escape.

Israeli forces have since put the Gaza Strip, home to 2.3 million Palestinians, under a total siege and bombarded it with unprecedented air strikes. Gaza authorities say more than 2,200 people have been killed, a quarter of them children, and nearly 10,000 wounded.

Israel had given the population of the northern half of the Gaza Strip, which includes the enclave's biggest settlement Gaza City, until Saturday morning to move south.

As that deadline approached, it said it would guarantee the safety of Palestinians fleeing on two main roads until 4:00 pm (1300 GMT). The new deadline expired with no immediate announcement from either side of any change in the situation. Troops were massing around the Gaza Strip, "getting ready for the next stage of operations," military spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Conricus said.



SAYYID BADR, BLINKEN REVIEW SITUATION

ISRAEL READIES TROOPS FOR GAZA INVASION

EU TO TRIPLE HUMANITARIAN AID TO GAZA

UN AID CHIEF SAYS SITUATION 'UNTENABLE'

MORE AID FLIGHTS ARRIVE IN EGYPT'S SINAI

A Palestinian girl looks out of her family house, amid the ongoing conflict, in Khan Younis refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip. — **Reuters**

NOT SAFE

Hamas has told people not to leave and says roads out are unsafe. It says dozens of people had been killed in strikes on cars and trucks carrying refugees on Friday, which Reuters could not independently verify.

In Gaza City's Tel Al Hawa neighbourhood, in the area Israel ordered evacuated, warplanes bombed a residential area during the night

hitting several houses, according to residents who took refuge at the nearby Al Quds hospital and planned to flee south in the morning. "We lived a night of horror. Israel punished us for not wanting to leave our home. Is there brutality worse than this?," a father of three said by telephone from the hospital, declining to give his name for fear of reprisals.

SEE ALSO P6&7

DUQM FORUM TO REVIEW NEW TRENDS IN GREEN INDUSTRIES

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, will preside over the opening of the first Duqm Economic Forum, to be held on Monday at the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

The forum aims to highlight the economic environment in the Sultanate of Oman in general and available investment opportunities in SEZAD in particular.

The two-day event reviews new trends in the green industries and renewable energy sector, as well as the most key projects attracted by SEZAD, as it is an industrial and investment centre and a gateway to international trade. The event also highlights the pivotal role of the economic zone in supporting the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040 and achieving the goals of zero carbon neutrality in the Sultanate of Oman by 2050.

The first edition of the forum will focus on the role of the economic zone in the transition to the uses of renewable energy and technology for production and export. It will also include discussion sessions to address various issues related to investment in green industries and the opportunities available to small and medium enterprises. — **ONA**

FRANCE ON TOP ALERT AFTER SCHOOL ATTACK

ARRAS: France was on high alert on Saturday, after an attacker stabbed a teacher to death in what the president called an act of "terror," with troops deployed and major attractions including the Louvre museum and Palace of Versailles evacuating visitors.

Friday's attack took place in the northeastern town of Arras.

A man in his twenties killed French teacher Dominique Bernard and severely wounded three others at the school he used to attend. France announced it would deploy up to 7,000 soldiers under the highest warning level.

DETAILS ON P5



A French police officer patrols in front of the Louvre museum.



AGE OF TAXIS SET AT 10 YEARS; DRIVERS NOT OVER 60 YEARS

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has issued new rules for taxi vehicles based on the Land Transport Law issued by Royal Decree No 10/2016.

The ministry stipulated that to do drive taxis, one must have a light driving licence that must be three years old from the date

of issuance, and the operator's salary must not exceed RO 600 if he or she is an employee in the private sector.

The age must be at least 21 years and not more than 60 years. One-year extension can be given based on a medical report from accredited health institutions indicating his or her ability to drive a taxi.

It is also required that to carry out operations at airports, ports and hotels, the age of



Driver's age must be at least 21 years and not more than 60 years.

the taxi vehicle must not be more than seven years from the manufacture year, while to operate in other public places, it should not be more than 10 years.

The ministry stressed the need for everyone to reconcile their situation before September 1, 2024. The ministry recently implemented the decision to include taxi owners at airports to operate under two app-based operators as part of the

efforts in the first phase of its initiative to improve the public transportation system.

The ministry stated the second phase would cover tourist complexes, hotels, commercial centres and ports beginning from November 1.

The third phase will cover white and orange street taxis from January 1, which are currently mandated to operate as per a mobile-based meter called Aber.

Musandam Airport project to take off : CAA Chairman

MUSCAT: The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has started preparing the National Aviation Strategy 2040, which aims to integrate all sectors, especially the tourism and logistics sectors, and is expected to be completed in the first half of 2024.

Eng Naif bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), said that this strategy will enhance the Sultanate of Oman's aviation as a crossing point between East and West. He said there is a preference for using the Omani airspace and the total number of aircraft flying over the Sultanate is 1,600 aircraft.

He added that the strategy will focus on air freight capabilities at Salalah Airport, which has promising opportunities, and the CAA is working in cooperation with its partners to promote and attract air carriers to the airport in freight, or at Muscat International Airport, which has witnessed good growth.

On the Musandam Airport project, he said that the project is currently in the final stages of appointing a consultant to prepare detailed designs and technical studies for the proposed site and these steps will be completed during the next year.

The proposed National Aviation Strategy 2040 aims to "meet the current and future" growth needs of the civil



Naif bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority

aviation sector in Oman, according to the Authority. Importantly, the new blueprint will seek to build on the existing National Aviation Strategy 2030, which was first unveiled three years ago in early 2020 just as the coronavirus pandemic began its devastating sweep across the globe.

That ambitious plan envisioned a dominant role for the aviation sector as a key pillar of economic growth. The existing 2030 Strategy enshrines a commitment to, among other goals, the development of an effective organisational framework that contributes to supporting and developing the aviation sector, strengthening the Omani economy, creating job opportunities, building manpower and strengthening stakeholder capabilities and expertise.

Steps to set up sports city start

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth has embarked on the procedures for establishing the Sports City Project in response to Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik who directed the establishment of an integrated sports city to host regional and international tournaments.

Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas, Under-Secretary for Sports and Youth at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, (MoCSY), affirmed that the ministry immediately put into effect the Royal directives issued by His Majesty the Sultan. His Majesty's directives, he said, came in continuation of the support and attention he accords to the Omani youth.

Al Rawas added that paying attention to youth is a guarantee for the future, thus it is an enhancement of their political, economic and social participation. This gives young people opportunities for empowerment and improves their levels of well-being through practicing sports in the designated places that suit their ambitions and aspirations of an outstanding country at the international level. Attaching an importance to sports and empowering young people could help achieve economic development and yield benefits in various sectors and elevate the status of the Sultanate of Oman in global sports.

"Starting last Thursday, we began collecting information about international think tanks that will enable us to implement the sports city project. We seek to create the sports city as described by the Royal directives, one that will be able to attract regional and global sports tournaments and



We began collecting information about international think tanks that will enable us to implement the sports city project. We seek to create the sports city as described by the Royal directives, one that will be able to attract regional and global sports tournaments

BASIL BIN AHMED AL RAWAS
Under-Secretary, MoCSY

competitions in addition to its goal of investing in youth and empowering them.

"The implementation of the project will be overseen by HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, out of his keenness to ensure that the city has high technical specifications and modern technologies capable of hosting international championships," the official said.

Regarding His Majesty's constant attention to sports, Al Rawas said, "This attention has recently been manifested by His Majesty's directives regarding camel racing, a deeply-rooted sport in the Omani society which is why the Ministry will endeavour, in coordination with the governors' offices and the Omani Camel Racing Federation, to put His Majesty's directives into force by establishing a number of race tracks and restoring existing ones according to the highest technical specifications." — ONA

Breaking basic rules leads to accidents

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

For nearly two weeks, the road users in the Sultanate of Oman were subject to unprecedented traffic woes on the main artery roads - Sultan Qaboos Street and the Qurum Heights, due to the closure of one side of the Mountain Road for maintenance.

As the outbound traffic from Al Amerat via Wadi Adei road piled up on these two roads, minor or even major accidents became a regular affair as motorists to reach their offices on time, overlooked the basic rules such as using indicators or maintaining safe distances.

The lack of safe distance between two vehicles often leads to sudden surges in minor mishaps with owners of the two or more affected vehicles indulging in arguments in an attempt to determine who was at fault.

"What actually used to happen is that such minor or major incidents that take place due to not following simple traffic rules often aggravate the already chaotic traffic situation, causing further delays to workplaces in the morning rush hours," said Majid al Balushi, who had to leave for work an hour early and still get delayed.

According to the Royal Oman Police, "Rear collision accidents are mainly



Rear collisions have become common only when motorists do not follow the rules of keeping a safe distance or using indicators while changing lanes in haste.

caused by failure to adhere to the safety distance. Leave enough distance between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you to avoid any sudden collision. It is considered a violation of any driver who does not leave a safe distance while following a course."

Speaking to the Observer, an ROP official said, "We understand that people are in a hurry and frustrated during peak hours, that they tend to ignore some basic rules, which do not help anyway because damages to the vehicle can be significant, even if there is no human casualty."

Traffic problems in the morning eased when the authorities opened the Mountain Road partially for a few hours in the morning. "But those two to three

weeks really put the temperament and resilience of motorists to test because one could see some of them taking chances with simple rules, and compounding the hardships," Ramesh Sharma, a resident of Al Amerat, said.

Eyewitnesses told the Observer that rear collisions have become common only when motorists do not follow the rules of keeping a safe distance or using indicators while changing lanes in haste.

Apart from the use of mobile phones or responding to messages while driving that distracts the driver from watching what is happening on the road, the other violation is overtaking when there are two parallel connected lines because it poses a great danger to road users.

It may be noted that collisions between vehicles and crashing against fixed objects are seen as the major cause of accidents in the Sultanate, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

There were 76,200 traffic accidents in 2022, including 60,900 minor accidents.

As per the Traffic Law of 2018, penalties for commonly detected offenses are not adhering to the correct path at the traffic lights RO 15, 1 black point, abandoning a vehicle on either side of the road - RO 15, exceeding the maximum speeds can lead to fines between RO 50 and RO 10 and up to three black points.



جهاز الضرائب
TAX AUTHORITY



Announcement

The Tax Authority would like to draw the attention of taxpayers who are subject to Excise Tax to submit their returns for the third quarter of 2023, according to the forms prepared for this purpose through Tax Authority's Portal: www.taxoman.gov.om not later than **30 October 2023**. We hope that all taxpayers will abide and commit to the deadline of submitting.





taxoman



1020



Follow us on **facebook**
omanobserver

oman

OMANDAILYOBSERVER
SUNDAY | OCTOBER 15 | 2023

3



**SEND USD WORLDWIDE
FOR BUSINESS, EDUCATION,
FIXED DEPOSITS & MORE**

OMR 4 SERVICE FEE

SIMPLE | SECURE | SWIFT



**SEND MONEY TO ANY
BANK ACCOUNT IN UAE FOR
CORPORATES AND INDIVIDUALS**

OMR 2.5 SERVICE FEE



**PURSHOTTAM KANJI
EXCHANGE**



**OMAN
1
EXCHANGE**



شركة برشوتم
كانجي للصرافة



www.pkanjiexchange.com

OMAN TO OPEN EMBASSY IN BUDAPEST

BILATERAL TRADE STANDS
AT \$60 MILLION

MUSCAT: Péter Szijjártó, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, lauded the bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Hungary.

These relations are based on mutual respect, affirmed the Hungarian minister, pointing out that the keenness on building a partnership between the two countries serves the interests of their peoples.

The Hungarian minister said that Oman's decision to open an embassy in Budapest represents a turning point in the bilateral relations as it boosts economic and trade ties. The personal presence of a country's representative always makes a difference when it comes to interaction, affirmed the minister.

He stressed Hungary's keenness to promote economic ties with Oman. In this context, he mentioned the memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between Oman and Hungary on low-carbon hydrogen and renewable hydrogen, during the 27th session of Joint GCC-EU Ministerial Council



Péter Szijjártó, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary,

held in Muscat last Tuesday.

The Hungarian minister pointed out that the two countries are considering the possibility of striking a deal in energy sector, as Hungary seeks to include Oman's gas in the Hungarian energy imports by 2026. Oman and Hungary are also considering cooperation in the field of water management, added the minister.

The Hungarian minister also spoke of the cooperation between OQ and the Hungarian National Oil Company in the field of renewable energy and the use of new chemical prod-

ucts to make energy operations more effective.

He said that the Hungarian National Oil Company offers solutions called enhanced oil recovery to OQ. With this technology, OQ can extract oil from old oil fields in an efficient and eco-friendly way, said the minister, who affirmed that the strategic partnership between the two companies represents the cornerstone of economic relations between Oman and Hungary.

The Hungarian minister stressed the importance of launching direct flights be-

The Hungarian minister pointed out that the two countries are considering the possibility of striking a deal in energy sector, as Hungary seeks to include Oman's gas in the Hungarian energy imports by 2026

tween Muscat and Budapest, as this will contribute in completing the efforts made by both countries to develop bilateral relations. He pointed out that a Hungarian tourism company will organise charter flights between Budapest and Salalah between November 2023 and May 2024. He expressed optimism about the future of trade cooperation between the two countries, as the opening of Oman's embassy in Hungary and the inauguration of a direct flight between Muscat and Budapest would augment the volume of trade exchange, which stood at \$60 million last year. — ONA



جهاز الضرائب
TAX AUTHORITY



Announcement

The Tax Authority would like to draw the attention of taxpayers who are subject to VAT to submit their returns for the third quarter of 2023, according to the forms prepared for this purpose through Tax Authority's Portal: www.taxoman.gov.om not later than **30 October 2023**. We hope that all taxpayers will abide and commit to the deadline of submitting.



omantax



taxoman



1020

BGP - The Road to Discovery

ICV Support - **BGP** Technical Lecture at **SQU** Muscat on Non-Seismic Acquisition Methods



BGP Oil & Gas Services LLC has been working in Oman since 2003 for Major Oil & Gas Operators carrying out mainly Seismic and occasionally Non-Seismic Projects. BGP held a Technical lecture and seminar in Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) Muscat on October 8th 2023. This technical lecture was part of the ongoing commitment and efforts to support and development of Omani Youth at their academic level. With this Technical lecture both BGP and SQU embarked on a new chapter of Academic cooperations and Technical collaboration. BGP took

onboard this collaboration between BGP and SQU and a seminar on non-seismic Geophysical methods and mineral exploration was organized and conducted at the university campus for students and faculty members.

As a company, ICV is one of the priorities to ensure that BGP work on and develop the Omani Youth to take up the technical lead in the Geophysical Industry. BGP ICV initiatives include the Support to the National Institutions with regards to the Geophysical knowledge sharing and provision with Technical information.

SQU Earth Sciences department is the leader in providing highly Competent Youth with Geophysical Qualification. The SQU audience received extensive practical information and an explanation of the non-seismic methods with practical examples and case study. The purpose of this seminar was to present methods such as Gravity, Magnetic, Electromagnetic, Geochemical, Time Frequency Electromagnetic and many other non-seismic techniques to explore minerals and hydrocarbons reservoirs. Learning about these

Exploration Techniques would encourage the students to acquire more knowledge to provide future support to the Sultanate in exploring rich mineral industry.

The positive feedback received from both students of SQU and faculty members was extraordinary. The most important outcome was undoubtedly that the audience were able to link the knowledge they acquired during their studies and the presented material. This collaboration would not have been possible without the remarkable efforts from SQU- Dr. Farooq Al

Jahwari and Dr. Usman Taura, as well as the General Manager of BGP- Mr. Tian Jianhui and BGP presenters Mr. Waqar Ahmed and Mr. Tang Biyan.

The General Manager of BGP, Mr. Tian Jianhui, stated that Omani youth are the future of the Sultanate and are responsible members of the community, we must support them by providing them with the technical skills required to further elevate their competency prior to joining the practical field for a sustainable growth of the Sultanate of Oman.

RESEARCH OPEN DAY CONCLUDES
AT MUSCAT COLLEGE

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Muscat College hosted Research Open Day under the auspices of Dr Ali bin Amer al Shidhani, Under-Secretary for Communications and Information Technology at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology. Esteemed guests graced the event, including government delegates, educators, industry professionals, college students and staff.

The central objective of Muscat College's Research Open Day was to showcase the institution's impressive research achievements and ongoing efforts, emphasising its unwavering commitment to research and innovation. This gathering served as a platform for networking, collaboration and exchanging knowledge among diverse participants. The event also honed the research excellence demonstrated by the faculty and students.

Dr Khalfan al Masruri, Dean of Muscat College, shared insight into the college's research focus, particularly in computer science, business and accounting. He highlighted that Muscat College takes a proactive approach to addressing real-time challenges, encouraging students and staff to collaborate on projects that offer practical solutions. The college also actively promotes partnerships with educators from other institutions and industry professionals.

"Both students and staff actively identify real-time challenges and work collaboratively to research and develop practical solutions to these issues. The college also encourages and facilitates collaborative projects with educators from other institutions and professionals from various industries," he said.

Reshmy Krishnan, Head of the Research Centre, shared Muscat College's research achievements and highlighted the institution's strategic focus on prioritising research and innovation. She stressed the Research Centre's role in encouraging both staff and students to engage in projects that benefit the community. During her presentation, she highlighted that Muscat College has achieved the third position among private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Oman for Scopus Indexed publications, thanks to the successful implementation of their best practices.

Prof Abdullah al Badi from Sultan Qaboos University delivered a presentation titled 'Exploring the Horizon: Unveiling Oman's Path to Research and Innovation Advancement'.

Tomy Bosco, Business Area Director at Nortel, provided insights into Research Opportunities and Facilities in Higher Education in Oman. Dr Ahmed Nawaz Hakro, Associate Dean of Research and Innovation, shared best practices adopted by Middle East College in the research and innovation domain.

The event culminated with an award ceremony. Notable accolades included the presentation of the Annual Researcher Award for 2022, with Dr Stephen Aro Gordon representing the Business and Accountancy Department and Dr Ferddie Quiroz from the Computing Department as recipients.

GSO grooms earth scientists
and petroleum engineers

AMAL AL RIYAMI
AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR, OCT 14

The Geological Society of Oman (GSO) recently organised the 8th Geo Challengers competition in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar from October 12 to 14 to groom earth sciences and petroleum engineering in Oman. This year's competition featured 48 participants, meticulously grouped into eight teams, each comprising six students. These promising talents hailed from Sultan Qaboos University, the German University, and the College of Technology in Nizwa.

This year's competition included mapping and modelling geological formations and structures using different tools. The breathtaking terrain of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar provided the perfect canvas for their explorations.

Zaid al Kindi, a geologist at OQ, said, "One of the primary goals of the Omani Geological Society is to disseminate geological knowledge among diverse segments of society. This competition, in particular, is dedicated to students of petroleum engineering and earth sciences. The main objective of the competition is to provide students with the opportunity to develop their scientific and practical skills



Participants of the 8th Geo Challengers competition in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

in geological settings, especially the oil and gas sector."

Al Kindi said Al Jabal Al Akhdhar was chosen as it has rock layers, which are the best for study. "We selected these rock layers because they are the same layers found in oil and gas fields. Students here have the opportunity to study the rocks, observe the types of fossils present in these rocks, and understand the sedimentary characteristics of these layers.

When we come here, we see prominent fossils that can be touched by hand, offering students the chance to study these layers and compare them with the information available about the same layers deep within the earth's crust."

The initiative included many activities including an insightful overview of the unique geological features of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, field trips and project presentations. The local school, Rubue Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, hosted the participants, providing classrooms and facilitating collaborative work and presentations.

The final presentations will take place at the Oil and Gas Institute of Sultan Qaboos University. Each team will present their projects in the presence of industry managers and experts from various oil and gas companies. The participants will be assessed, and three winners will be selected from the eight teams.

Fatima al Tubi, a participant from German University of Technology in Oman, said, "I saw this as an opportunity to immerse myself in fieldwork. This has been a great opportunity for me to develop soft skills such as teamwork, effective communication, problem-solving and presentation skills. Each team comprises geologists, geophysicists, and oil and gas engineers from various universities. The collaborative nature of this competition allowed us to learn from each other. Al Jabal Al Akhdhar is not only suitable for the competition, but also an ideal environment for studying geology. Oman in general is rich in geological features, which makes it a paradise for geologists, offering numerous advantages. I thank the Geological Society for providing us with this opportunity, and I wholeheartedly recommend that everyone seize the chance to participate in such an enriching experience."

Geo Challengers not only provided a valuable learning experience for these young talents, but also showcased the commitment of GSO to the wider dissemination of geological knowledge, fostering the future leaders in earth sciences and petroleum engineering.



Recall



Recall Date: 15/10/2023

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production	Number of Affected Commodities
GMC Terrain	2010-2017	1015

Recall Consequence

2010-2017 GMC Terrain vehicles fail to conform, in part, to S10.15.6 of Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) No. 108, "Lamps, reflective devices, and associated equipment." A reflection caused by the headlamps' housing can project a narrow beam of light 80 degrees outboard and 45 degrees upward of each lamp's forward-center axis. When tested, the light emitted from this single point on each lamp may be brighter than the maximum designated in section S10.15.6 and Table XIX of FMVSS 108. The headlamp design allows a narrow beam of light from the lower beam lamp to reflect off of the inner surface of the high beam reflector. These reflections may cause glare or be distracting to other drivers, increasing the risk of a crash. The lamps' high beams are not affected by this condition.

Recall Action

GM Dealers will install headlamp appliques that address this issue.

To check the serial Numbers of the affected commodities, please visit the website for Recalls & Warnings: <http://recall.pocp.gov.om>



وزارة النقل، الاتصالات
والتقنية
www.pocp.gov.om



دائرة حماية المستهلك
Consumer Line
80079909
80077997

During official working hours:
MARH No. 80076200



On the move...



Recall



Recall Date: 15/10/2023

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production	Number of Affected Commodities
GMC Terrain	2022	4

Recall Consequence

These vehicles have a condition in which the fuel pump module may not consistently provide sufficient fuel to the engine. If the engine does not receive adequate fuel, the vehicle may stall. A vehicle stall could increase the risk of a crash. Drivers may see a check engine light or experience engine hesitation. The vehicle may not start.

Recall Action

Dealers will replace the vehicles' fuel pump module.

To check the serial Numbers of the affected commodities, please visit the website for Recalls & Warnings: <http://recall.pocp.gov.om>



وزارة النقل، الاتصالات
والتقنية
www.pocp.gov.om



دائرة حماية المستهلك
Consumer Line
80079909
80077997

During official working hours:
MARH No. 80076200



On the move...



Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese (L) and Minister for Indigenous Australians Linda Burney attend a media conference at Parliament House in Canberra. — AFP

Australian voters reject Indigenous rights

SYDNEY: Australians have roundly rejected greater rights for Indigenous citizens, scuppering plans to amend the country's 122-year-old constitution.

With 88 per cent of polling places reporting, around 59 per cent of people had voted against a proposal to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders within the 1901 constitution for the first time.

The reforms would also have created a consultative body — a “Voice” to Parliament — to weigh in on laws that affect Indigenous communities.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who campaigned for a “yes” vote, urged a divided nation to now come together in a “spirit of unity and healing”.

He added that the defeat would be a “heavy weight to carry” and “very hard to bear” for the vast majority of Aboriginal Australians who supported the referendum.

“From tomorrow we will continue to write the next chapter in that great Australian

story. And we'll write it together. And reconciliation must be a part of that chapter.”

Minister for Indigenous Australians Linda Burney, the first Aboriginal woman elected to sit in the House of Representatives, said “Today is a day of sadness”.

The opposition campaign had deftly channelled fears about the role and effectiveness of the “Voice” assembly, encouraging people to vote “no” if they are uncertain.

Conservative opposition leader Peter Dutton, who staunchly opposed the referendum, expressed his relief on Saturday that the binding vote had failed.

“It is clear obviously that the referendum has not been successful and I think that is good for our country.”

“At all times in this debate I have levelled my criticism at what I consider to have been a bad idea, to divide Australians based on their heritage or the time at which they came to our country.” — AFP

France on top alert after school attack, Louvre evacuated

ARRAS: France was on high alert on Saturday, after an attacker stabbed a teacher to death, with troops deployed and the Louvre museum evacuating visitors.

Friday's attack took place in the northeastern town of Arras. A man in his twenties killed French teacher Dominique Bernard and severely wounded three others at the school he used to attend.

France announced it would deploy up to 7,000 soldiers under the highest warning level, while the famous Louvre museum in Paris evacuated visitors and closed following a “security” threat.

Police arrested the suspected perpetrator of Friday's attack, Mohammed Moguchkov.

He was among 10 people being held in custody on Saturday, a police source said, including several members of his family.

In Paris, a spokeswoman for the Louvre, the largest museum in the world, said that it had “received a written message stating that there was a risk to the museum and its visitors”.

The deployment of the soldiers from Operation Sentinelle will be completed by Monday evening, according to the Elysee presidential palace.

France upped its alert level to the highest position following a crunch security meeting chaired by Macron on Friday, the prime minister's office said.

French authorities said Moguchkov was Russian, born in the predominantly North Caucasus republic of Ingushetia. He was already on a



CRS riot police arrive to cordon off an area near the Gambetta high school in Arras, northeastern France. — AFP

French national register as a potential security threat and under electronic and physical surveillance by France's domestic intelligence agency, the DGSI.

Bernard was stabbed in the throat and chest. Among those wounded were a school security guard who was stabbed multiple times and is fighting for his life, and a teacher in a less serious condition.

A cleaner was also hurt, according to prosecutor Jean-Francois Ricard. No pupils at the school were hurt.

The pupils and teachers had been confined to the school

France announced it would deploy up to 7,000 soldiers under the highest warning level, while the famous Louvre museum in Paris evacuated visitors and closed

premises before being allowed out in the afternoon.

Martin Dousseau, a philosophy teacher who witnessed the attack, described a moment of panic during break-time, when schoolchildren found

themselves face-to-face with the armed man.

“He attacked canteen staff. I wanted to go down to intervene, he turned to me, chased me and asked me if I was a history and geography teacher,” Dousseau said.

Macron said in an address to the nation on Thursday that 582 religious and cultural facilities in France were receiving stepped-up police protection.

Speaking in Arras, he reaffirmed his message from that address for the French to “stand shoulder to shoulder” and “stay united”. — AFP

‘Heated’ fighting in Avdiivka as Russia tries to ‘surround’ city

KYIV: Kyiv reported “heated” fighting around its eastern city of Avdiivka on Saturday, saying Russian forces had “not stopped assaulting” the symbolic industrial hub for days in their attempt to surround it.

Ukraine last week said Russia had stepped up assaults on the frontline city, which lies just 15 kilometres from Moscow-held Donetsk.

Avdiivka has been a symbol of Ukrainian resistance since 2014, after it briefly fell to Russian-backed separatists.

Russian forces now control

territory to the east, north and south of Avdiivka.

“For the fifth day already, the enemy has not stopped either assaulting or shelling positions around the city,” Vitaliy Barabash, the head of the city, said on Ukrainian television.

“It is very heated, very heated,” he said of the fighting.

“They are trying to surround the city,” Barabash added, claiming that Moscow was deploying “more new forces” to the area.

He described intense battles: “There is certainly no silence



Smoke rises from the area in the direction of Avdiivka in the course of Russia-Ukraine conflict, as seen from Donetsk. — Reuters file photo

“
For the fifth day already, the enemy has not stopped either assaulting or shelling positions around the city
VITALIY BARABASH
The head of Avdiivka's military administration

there at all. Shooting battles continue, both from the north and from the south of the city.”

Kyiv's interior ministry said Russian shelling had “destroyed” a five-storey building in the city, saying it believed a man in his sixties was under the rubble but that it was “impossible to retrieve the body.”

It urged residents still in Avdiivka to evacuate.

Some 1,600 civilians are believed to be in the city, which had a pre-war population of 31,000. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

WARSAW

Man surrenders after Warsaw square closed

Polish police negotiators persuaded a man to come down from a monument in a central Warsaw square, putting an end to an incident that had seen part of the capital cordoned off amid reports of a bomb threat.

Police spokesperson Sylwester Marczak told reporters officers had seen the man climbing onto the Smolensk monument at around 0800 GMT. “They approached him but then there was a very worrying statement which



indicated that there was a very real danger for people on the square,” he said, adding that police were now examining his backpack to make sure it was safe. — Reuters

QUETTA

Gunmen kill six in southwest Pakistan

Gunmen killed six labourers in an overnight raid in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province, officials said on Saturday, in the region's latest bout of violence.

Balochistan has been plagued for decades by an insurgency as well as killings, and attackers have a history of targeting workers seen as outsiders. Two local officials said the attack took place in Turbat city — 120 kilometres east of the border with Iran — where labourers



were constructing a private residence.

“Gunmen entered an under-construction house and attacked eight sleeping labourers,” Saeed Ahmed Umrani said. — AFP

HANOI

Two dead as floods hit central Vietnam

Two people died after being swept away in floodwaters in central Vietnam.

Almost 500 houses were inundated with water in recent days, according to Vietnam's disaster management authority.

The coastal city of Da Nang has been hit with heavy rain, as have areas from Ha Tinh to Quang Nam provinces since Tuesday.

Around 5,000 people were evacuated from homes in Da



Nang on Friday night and Saturday morning, it said.

Roads flooded by the Perfume River, with water reaching nearly chest-high levels in some areas. — AFP

2,269 PALESTINIANS K

CAIRO: New aid flights arrived on Saturday in Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula where relief materials are being held until safe delivery into the nearby Gaza Strip can be secured, an official from the Red Crescent and an aid volunteer said.

Egypt says its side of the Rafah crossing that connects Sinai with the Gaza Strip remains open, though traffic has been halted for several days because of Israeli bombardments on the Palestinian side of the border.

A senior US State Department official said the United States had been working with Egypt, Israel and Qatar to open the crossing on Saturday.

Washington had been in contact with Palestinian-Americans inside Gaza, some of whom expressed a wish to leave via Rafah, but it was unclear if Hamas would allow access to the crossing, the official said. Egyptian security forces have been reinforcing security on their side of the border, including moving concrete barriers, but reports that they were sealing off the crossing were incorrect, one Egyptian security source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The crossing is the main exit point for the Gaza Strip’s 2.3 million residents that is not controlled by Israel. Israel and Egypt have upheld a blockade



A young girl with a ‘Free Gaza’ message gestures during a ‘March For Palestine’, part of a pro-Palestinian national demonstration in London. – AFP

on the enclave, controlling the movement of goods and people since Hamas took control in 2007.

Israel’s military spokesperson said on Saturday that the border remains closed and any crossing to Egypt needed to be coordinated.

Two aid flights, including one from Türkiye, arrived at Sinai’s Al Arish airport, about 45 km from the Gaza border, bringing the total number of planes that have arrived this week carrying humanitarian relief for Gaza to at least five, the Red Cross official and the aid volunteer said.

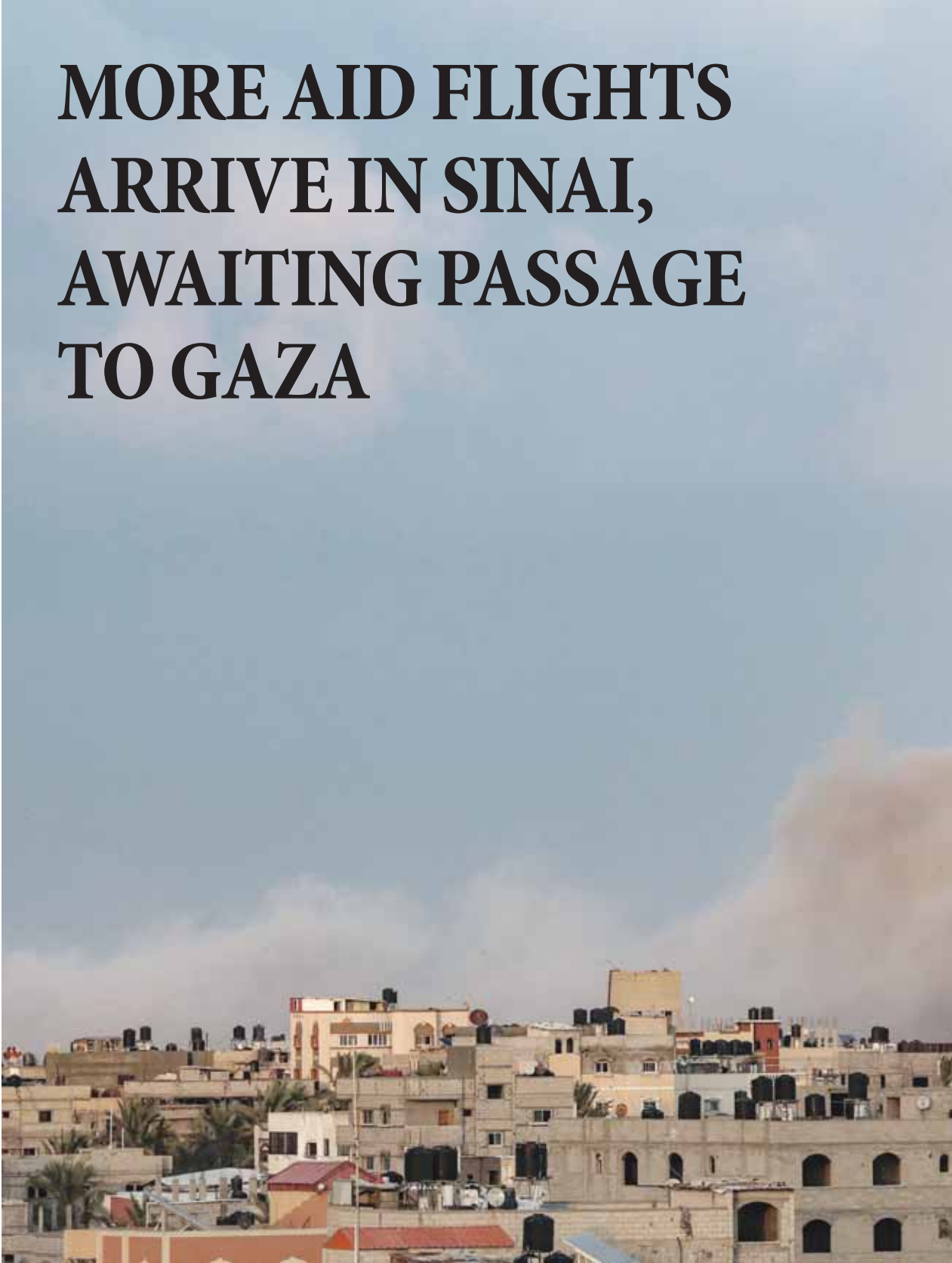
The World Health Organization said a plane carrying trauma medicines and health supplies had landed.

“Every hour these supplies remain on the Egyptian side of the border, more girls and boys, women and men, especially those vulnerable or disabled, will die,” WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a statement.

There is alarm in Egypt over the prospect that residents in Gaza could be displaced by Israel’s siege and bombardment of the territory, launched in retaliation for the devastating incursion by Hamas.

Like other Arab states, it has said that Palestinians should stay on their lands as the war escalates, and that it is working to secure delivery of aid into the Gaza Strip.

— Reuters



Smoke plumes rising above buildings during a strike on Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. – AFP



A Palestinian man uses a fire extinguisher to douse a fire following an Israeli strike in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. – AFP



A demonstrator attends a protest in solidarity with Palestinians in London. – Reuters

THOUSANDS HOLD SOLIDARITY MARCH IN LONDON

LONDON: Thousands of people rallied in central London for a pro-Palestinian protest following police warnings.

Attendees, who gathered near BBC News’ headquarters through the morning, began a march through the British capital ahead of an afternoon rally near parliament and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak’s Downing Street office and residence.

Some displayed Palestinian flags and placards -- bearing slogans including “freedom for Palestine”, “end the massacre” and “sanctions for Israel” -- as they made their way towards the end-point for a series of planned speeches.

“I think all just people around the world, not just in Britain, must stand up and call for this madness (to end),” Ismail Patel, chairman of the Friends of Al Aqsa campaign, said at the demonstration.

“Otherwise, in the next few days, (we) might see a catastrophe unfolding.”

Ahead of the London protest, the city’s Metropolitan Police Service said it would deploy more than 1,000 officers, as the events thousands of miles away reverberate in Britain and elsewhere.

The Met said this week that general expressions of support for Palestinians, including flying the Palestinian flag, were not criminal offences.

Ferouza Namaz, 34, a student from Uzbekistan, joined the London protest, arguing that civilians in Gaza are “absolutely innocent”. – AFP

Bakeries run out of bread, water runs low in Gaza, families



Palestinians wait to buy bread outside a bakery, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip. – Reuters

GAZA: As Israeli bombardment intensified on Saturday, bakeries in Gaza were running out of bread, drinking water was in short supply and power outages left families without charged phones to find out if fleeing relatives were safe.

“There is an electricity crisis, food crisis, water crisis, a crisis of everything,” Eyad Abu Mutlaq, 45, said in Khan Younis in south Gaza, a region filling up with thousands of people fleeing the north for fear of an Israeli

invasion.

“It is only God who can resolve it,” he said after touring four bakeries to find long queues or no supplies.

The flood of people arriving in south Gaza after Israel told them on Friday to leave an area in the north has stretched resources that were already strained to breaking point.

The United Nations has urged Israel to “avert a humanitarian catastrophe” in Gaza, a slither of land with 2.3 million people

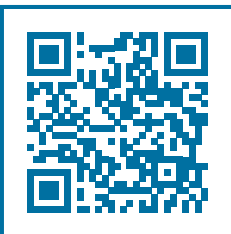
wedged between Israel, Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea.

In its response to the October 7 assault from Gaza by Hamas, Israel has imposed a “total blockade” halting food supplies and cutting electricity to Gaza. A week after that began, shops are running out of many items.

“I was looking for basic food, eggs, rice, canned food, even milk for the children and I couldn’t find them,” said Khan Younis resident, giving only her nickname of Um Salem. “This is

how Israel is fighting us, through starvation of our children. They either kill children by bombs or soon by starvation.”

Israel said it had told people to leave the north for their safety and to ensure they were not caught up in the conflict. It said it would guarantee the safety of Palestinians fleeing the area on two main roads until 4 pm on Friday. Those who have fled say many roads and streets are often difficult to use, and some impassable, because of damage.



KILLED 9,814 WOUNDED



MORE THAN 1,300 BUILDINGS DESTROYED IN GAZA: UN



A Palestinian boy holds a child as he stands on the rubble of destroyed buildings following Israeli strikes in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. — Reuters

GENEVA: More than 1,300 buildings in the Gaza Strip have been destroyed, the United Nations said on Saturday, after nearly a week of fierce bombardment by Israeli forces. The UN's humanitarian agency OCHA said "5,540 housing units" in those buildings were destroyed and nearly 3,750 more homes were so badly damaged they were uninhabitable.

At least 1,900 Gazans —most of them civilians and including more than 600 children -- have been killed in missile strikes on the densely populated enclave, the Palestinian health ministry said.

"According to the Gaza Ministry of Public Works, 1,324 residential and non-residential buildings, comprising 5,540 housing units, have been destroyed," OCHA said. "Another 3,743 housing units have been damaged beyond repair and rendered uninhabitable."

A further 55,000 housing units have been partially damaged, said OCHA. The UN has been monitoring the number of people displaced from their homes within the Gaza Strip, with more than 423,000 recorded by the end of Thursday.

RED CROSS 'APPALLED' BY HUMAN MISERY

GENEVA: The Red Cross said on Saturday it was "appalled" by the human misery unleashed by the war between Hamas and Israel, saying its volunteers would not abandon those who needed them most.

It called on both sides to abide by international humanitarian law, protect civilians and allow humanitarian organisations to alleviate the growing levels of suffering.

"The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is appalled to see the human misery that has unfolded over the last week in Israel and Gaza," with civilians paying the highest price, a statement said.

Thousands of Palestinians sought refuge on Saturday after Israel warned them to evacuate the northern Gaza Strip ahead of an expected ground offensive against Hamas, one week after the deadliest attack in Israel's history.

"Nothing can justify the horrific loss of civilian lives in Israel last weekend... but such tragedy cannot in turn justify the limitless destruction of Gaza," the Red Cross statement said. — Reuters

WHO FLIES HEALTH SUPPLIES TO EGYPT

GENEVA: The World Health Organization said enough basic health supplies to serve 300,000 people in the Gaza Strip have been flown to an Egyptian airport near the Palestinian enclave. The supplies were ready to go in once humanitarian access could be established through the Rafah crossing from Egypt into the southern Gaza Strip, WHO said.

A plane carrying 78 cubic metres of health supplies from the UN health agency's logistics hub in Dubai has landed in El Arish airport "to serve the needs of 300,000 people," including pregnant women.

"Every hour these supplies remain on the Egyptian side of the border, more girls and boys, women, and men, especially those vulnerable or disabled, will die while supplies that can save them are less than 20 kilometres away," a statement said.

The Rafah border crossing between Egypt and Gaza is the only passage in and out of the coastal enclave not controlled by Israel.

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



A Palestinian man carries an injured girl following an Israeli strike in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip as fighting between Israel and Hamas continues for the eighth consecutive day. — AFP



People carrying foreign passports wait at the Rafah gate hoping to cross into Egypt as Israel's attacks on the Gaza Strip continues. — AFP



Protesters holding Palestinian flags climb the Eros statue at Piccadilly Circus during a 'March For Palestine', part of a pro-Palestinian national demonstration, in London. — AFP

flee to south for life

Water is now the last remaining lifeline. I appeal for the siege on humanitarian assistance to be lifted now
PHILIPPE LAZZARINI
Commissioner-General,
UNRWA

Gaza authorities said 70 people were killed and 200 were wounded when Israel struck cars and trucks carrying people fleeing the north. Reuters could not independently verify this. The Hamas assault last week killed more than 1,300 Israelis. The fighters also took scores of hostages in the worst breach of Israel's defences since its creation in 1948. The death toll from Israel's response was more than 2,200 people by Saturday.

"We need to truck fuel into Gaza now. Fuel is the only way for people to have safe drinking water. If not, people will start dying of severe dehydration, among them young children, the elderly and women," said Philippe Lazzarini, the commissioner-general of the UN refugee agency UNRWA. "Water is now the last remaining lifeline. I appeal for the siege on humanitarian assistance to be lifted now," he said. — AFP



A girl with a Palestinian flag and the words 'Free Gaza' attends a demonstration in support of Palestinians in Msida, Malta. — Reuters

Thriving in a changing world



Dr Hamed al Sinawi
@alsinawi

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

The ancient saying “this too shall pass is believed to originate from the Persian Sufi poets who describe the temporary nature of the human coned and that neither the bad, nor good, moments in life ever indefinitely last.

In another term, change is inevitable.

The trees around us change colour through the different seasons and our physical and emotional abilities also change as we grow older and face different realities in our lives.

People around us sometimes change the way they feel toward us and that is a part of life.

I remember when I returned from my training abroad, I suggested a few changes to the teaching curriculum that we provided to our medical students. Not surprisingly, this was met with resistance from both senior and junior members of the team.

I remember how difficult it was to hold meetings and prepare evidence that the new system I was suggesting is better than the old ways.

Change is common in the corporate world as companies combine, evolve join together, or

rebrand to address changes in the market. Yet some employees find it difficult to accept this change for several reasons.

Some may hold the attitude that “if something is not broken why fix it”, others may worry that change would bring them long working hours and more responsibility or have lost passion for work and would rather do the same work over and over instead of challenging themselves with new responsibilities.

Some people fear change because they do not understand the reason for it so they resist it because it pushes them out of their comfort zones.

The following tips are suggested to manage change. The main step is to communicate changes to the team members by holding meetings and providing opportunities to answer their questions and clarify the main objectives of this change.

It is essential to involve members in the change process, which would ease any feelings of lack of control and, where possible involve them in redesign of tasks, roles, and responsibilities.

During or following change, team members may feel uncertain about what their role involves or what

‘SOMETIMES PEOPLE RESIST CHANGE BECAUSE THEY HOLD THE ATTITUDE THAT IF SOMETHING IS NOT BROKEN WHY FIX IT’

their current priorities are.

Sometimes change creates conflict between different aspects of a person’s role or between the roles of different team members therefore you should hold regular follow-up meetings to see how change is impacting your workers and check that your team members know what they need to do, how they can do it and when it needs to be done by.

Make sure your team has the resources they need to effectively deliver their tasks and help them understand how the delivery of their work affects the work of others and how they can work together to achieve good results for all.

As a leader, you should remain positive and welcome feedback and innovations in the change process.

Finally, one needs to acknowledge that resistance to change is a psychological reaction that should be expected and in order to manage it you would need to understand why people resist change, and then identify the causes of their resistance, before considering your strategic approach and formulating the tactics and techniques for reducing resistance to change.

Migrant surge in US sparks anguish in Democratic cities

PAULA RAMON

Hundreds of migrants congregate by the huge wall marking the US-Mexico border in southern California, a tiny glimpse of the crisis unfolding in American cities as new arrivals strain resources to breaking point.

The dysfunction in the border city of San Diego is repeated on a larger scale in hubs like New York and Chicago -- testing the patience of local Democratic leaders who say their own man in the White House is failing on a very pressing problem.

“The reality is that we don’t have sufficient funds,” Nora Vargas, a Democrat on San Diego County’s Board of Supervisors, said.

“We’ve been trying to create a plan with the county, with the federal government and the state of California. And as we continue to plan, the numbers continue to increase.

“As a result, last week, we declared it a humanitarian crisis.”

Immigration has long been a contentious topic in the United States, with Republican and Democratic politicians presenting differing visions on how to rehaul the country’s broken system.

A huge influx of arrivals this year -- US media report a record 2.4 million migrant encounters at the southern border over the last 12 months -- is testing the traditional Democratic stance of welcoming even those who come into the country without permission.

In San Diego, migrants -- most fleeing poverty and desperation in Latin America, along with others from Africa or Asia -- are given wristbands that say when they crossed. Local authorities try to process them within two days.

But a massive backlog to see immigration judges, with waits of two years or more, means at this stage the migrants are merely shuttled through overcrowded processing centres and directed to interstate buses.

The situation is repeated in communities along the southern US border.

Republican-run Texas isn’t wringing its hands. Governor Greg Abbott buses newly arrived migrants to cities like New York and Chicago, forcing their Democratic administrations to deal with a crisis that until recently was concentrated in border towns.

New York has absorbed more than 100,000 migrants in the last twelve months, and Mayor Eric Adams and state Governor Kathy Hochul have adopted a hardline stance. — AFP



Andrew Higgins

The writer is the bureau chief for East and Central Europe based in Warsaw

Growing wariness of aid to Ukraine hangs over Polish election

The radical right-wing candidate running for Parliament in Poland’s deep south wants to slash taxes, regulations on business and welfare benefits.

Most striking, however, is his vow to remove a small Ukrainian flag that was hoisted last year on a town hall balcony as a gesture of solidarity with Poland’s eastern neighbour.

He wants it taken down, not because he supports Russia, he said, but because Poland should focus on helping its own people, not cheering for Ukraine.

In a country where millions of citizens rallied last year to help fleeing Ukrainians and where the government threw itself into providing weapons for use against Russia and complaints about the burden imposed by the war used to be confined to a tiny fringe. A general election set for Sunday, however, is pushing them toward centre stage.

That is due in large part to the vocal carping about Ukraine from candidates like Ryszard Wilk, the owner of a small photography business in the southern Polish town of Nowy Sacz. He is the electoral standard-bearer in the region for Konfederacja, or Confederation, an unruly alliance of economic libertarians, anti-vaxxers, anti-immigration zealots and belligerent nationalists that is now unusually united in opposition to aiding Ukraine.

“We have already given them too much,” Wilk said in an interview early this week. He was travelling during a campaign swing through his mountainous and deeply conservative home region, a longtime bastion of support for Poland’s right-wing governing party, Law and Justice.

“We don’t want Ukraine to lose the war, but the burden on Poland and its taxpayers is too high,” Wilk added. “Poland should be helping Poles.”

The growing reservation in Poland comes at a critical time for Ukraine, which is struggling in its counteroffensive against Russia and scrambling to stem an erosion of support from Western allies. Sunday’s vote in Poland comes after an election



A Ukrainian flag hangs from the town hall in Nowy Sacz, Poland.

two weeks ago in neighbouring Slovakia that was won by a Russia-friendly populist party that wants to halt sending arms to Ukraine.

Long dismissed by liberals as a collection of extremist cranks, Konfederacja has jumped on the question of how much Poland should help Ukraine as a potential vote-winner, channelling what opinion surveys show to be modest but growing currents of anti-Ukrainian sentiment.

THE GROWING RESERVATION IN POLAND COMES AT A CRITICAL TIME FOR UKRAINE, WHICH IS STRUGGLING IN ITS COUNTEROFFENSIVE AGAINST RUSSIA AND SCRAMBLING TO STEM AN EROSION OF SUPPORT FROM WESTERN ALLIES

Konfederacja is still less a party than a jumble of niche and often contradictory causes — from small-state libertarianism to big-state nationalism — but “they are all anti-Ukrainian, though for different reasons,” said Przemyslaw Witkowski, an expert on Poland’s far-right who

teaches at Collegium Civitas, a private university in Warsaw, Poland.

“Anti-Ukraine feeling and sympathy for Russia is one of the few elements that glues them all together,” he added.

Konfederacja has no chance of winning Sunday, and opinion polls indicate that its public support, which surged to 15 per cent over the summer, slipped after Law and Justice started echoing some of its views, particularly on Ukraine. By threatening to outflank the governing party, itself a deeply conservative force, on the far-right in a tight election, Konfederacja helped prod the Polish government into curbing its previously unbridled enthusiasm for backing Ukraine.

The result has been a sharp souring in recent weeks in relations between Poland and Ukraine, particularly over Ukrainian grain imports. The issue triggered an ill-tempered tiff last month when Poland’s government, led by Law and Justice, banned the import of grain from Ukraine in an effort to protect Polish farmers — and avoid defections in its vital rural base.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine exacerbated tensions by insinuating in a speech at the UN that Poland, by blocking grain deliveries, had aligned itself with Russia. And last month, Ukraine filed a complaint against Poland with the World Trade Organization over grain.

— The New York Times

An ultra-sharp two-edged sword

It's an incredibly difficult time for so many folk at the moment with societies seeking to manage the still emerging effects of the global pandemic, the recently emerging global energy price shock, and a world that is perpetually hurtling at breakneck speed towards climate, mineral resource, and ongoing mental health and social challenges. While many of these challenges do not affect the Sultanate of Oman, because it has compassionate and empathetic, societally active governance, the 'trickle' and 'cascading' effects of many of the aforementioned, must impact upon the Omani way of life eventually.

Of course, in terms of communications, we are so much better off than ever before. Media giant owned 'money trees,' like mobile phones, the Internet, and social media are transformed into mega-entities, with 'minds' of their own. Of course, mobile phones are seen by most as a boon, as an asset, a way to 'keep in touch,' to 'stay safe,' and to always know where everybody is. Do you not recognise when you are being controlled and manipulated?

A significant consequence of the extraordinary advances in communications has been that the entertainment industry has become so much more than cinemas and televisions. Long before streaming, 'telly' was free, but now you must have Sky, then Netflix, then YouTube, then Prime, then Now, then National Geographic, then Disney, and by then every man and his dog wants \$9.99 a month from you. Just pick a couple, and either the kids, or the wife, will criticise your choices won't they? Aaaaah, such is life.

Social media has been diversely lauded as the 'meaningless news about me.' Focusing not on who and what you are, but who and what you want the world to see you as. Surely there is something wrong with that? Surely this is a harmful, malignant spectre of us, distracting from what it is about us that others should find appealing, offering instant gratification, but eroding an ever-diminishing self-confidence. It is nuts! I would much rather understand your



Ray Petersen
r.j.petersen52@gmail.com

The writer is a media consultant

THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY HAS BECOME SO MUCH MORE THAN CINEMAS AND TELEVISIONS

compassionate self and genuineness.

The Internet though, is absolutely brilliant! When I think of the number of library hours I spent studying, to today being able to find millions of life and academic resources in an instant, I am absolutely sold on 'the net! Mitch Kapoor said, "Getting information off the Internet is like taking a drink from a fire hydrant," but as Robert Louis Stevenson said, "You can't make an omelette without cracking a few eggs."

Technological progression in healthcare has been another area of advancement that is often baffling, yet at the same time reassuring. We have much less illness and pain as a consequence, but it has come at the cost of much less 'relationship-based,' medicine, when your doctor knew you and all your family. Blood tests, X-rays, CT scans and the like, once the domain of the wealthy, are for everyone in contemporary society, though the one discomfiting element is the web-based analysis packages that medical specialists are slaves to today. Are they better than a 'real' doc?

Definitely not so good is our exposure to the global energy giants, as it appears any and every global impacting incident immediately drives energy prices skywards. The rich get richer. The reality is that banks, and financiers too are 'trigger-happy' when it comes to interest rate rises. As a colleague remarked to me this week, "It's almost as if we have stepped back in time, to the medieval, or even dark ages, in terms of the rich getting richer, and the poor becoming poorer." I would certainly agree.

We all know how the banks were bailed out by governments 20 years ago, as they were 'too big to fail,' and yet the same authorities around the world find it onerous, and 'beyond their remit,' to support wider initiatives to get their populations out of the dreaded 'rental traps,' and into their own homes, when it should be an absolute priority. Consequently, we are a more confused, less trusting, more insular, more parochial and self-interested population than before, almost back to the times of Ali Baba and his thieves, or King Arthur and the sword in the stone.

MARCH FOR PALESTINE



People gather with placards to take part in a 'March For Palestine', part of a pro-Palestinian national demonstration, in London on Saturday, organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Friends of Al Aqsa, Stop the War Coalition, Muslim Association of Britain, Palestinian Forum in Britain and CND. – AFP

The geopolitics of EU enlargement

Where will Europe's borders end? On October 6, EU leaders convened in Granada, Spain, to discuss a question that has captivated Eurocrats, think-tanks, and journalists throughout the bloc since the start of the war in Ukraine.

While the European Union already granted Ukraine candidate status in June 2022, the European Council is expected to vote on beginning formal accession talks on December 15. But the debate in Spain shows that the question is no longer really about Ukraine and the western Balkans; it is now an existential question with far-reaching implications for the EU and its role in a fast-changing global environment.

The EU appears to be moving towards radical reinvention, a "refoundation" built on three pillars, each of which is the subject of fierce debate. It is looking for a grand bargain between geopolitical imperatives and liberal values.

The first pillar is security. As the EU shifts from a peace project to a war project, it is forced to reconsider some of its core assumptions. Most obviously, European leaders must give up their aversion to hard power. But it is still unclear how this process will play out: Can European governments unite and develop their own military capabilities, or will they squander their money on ready-made equipment from the United States and South Korea?



MARK LEONARD

The writer is Director of the European Council on Foreign Relations, is the author of The Age of Unpeace: How Connectivity Causes Conflict

THE DEBATE SURROUNDING THE EU'S POTENTIAL EXPANSION IS NO LONGER REALLY ABOUT UKRAINE AND THE WESTERN BALKANS

National borders, once regarded by EU leaders as malleable, have taken on a new meaning following Russia's war on Ukraine. At its core, the enlargement debate is about defining the borders of the bloc's sphere of influence, ensuring that countries like Ukraine and Moldova can pursue a European future rather than being treated as buffer states between the EU and Russia.

The EU's shifting understanding of security underscores the significance of enlargement. Given the strategic use of immigration, energy, and critical raw materials, as well as the growing nationalisation of technological innovation and regulation, member states cannot rely on Nato alone to meet all their defence needs. Only by expanding and strengthening the EU can the safety of European citizens be ensured. That brings us to the second pillar: the economy. Europeans, arguably more than any other group, believed in the transformative power of economic interdependence and its ability to convert erstwhile adversaries into allies. But given Russia's weaponisation of its energy exports and China's threats to restrict medical supplies during the Covid-19 pandemic, the EU is now pursuing greater self-sufficiency to mitigate potential risks.

But Europe can never achieve complete self-sufficiency. Instead of pursuing "strategic autonomy," European leaders must focus on fostering diverse relationships with multiple partners, ensuring that we have alternatives should one country ever try to blackmail us. For example, Ukraine and the Balkans could offer critical inputs and labour, thereby helping to shore up Europe's global standing.

But this is also where the push for enlargement might face significant opposition. On a recent visit to Warsaw, I witnessed the ramifications of the grain crisis caused by the war in Ukraine. Although Poland is a staunch advocate of Ukraine's entry into Nato and understands

the geopolitical rationale for enlargement better than most countries, it also has strong reservations. One major concern is the potential for economic upheaval that would adversely affect Poland's agriculture sector. And then there is the less-than-appealing prospect of Poland turning into a net contributor to the EU budget should Ukraine become a member state.

The third pillar is values. In the past, Europe was divided between the liberal cosmopolitan EU member states and those outside the bloc, which required gradual integration and transformation, one chapter of the *acquis communautaire* (the body of EU law) at a time. But now, this

dichotomy is evident within the EU itself, with countries like Hungary and Poland embracing illiberal nationalism.

Enlargement offers a potential solution for both camps. For Europe's liberals, it represents an opportunity to implement internal reforms through rule-of-law conditionality and qualified-majority voting. This approach would, one may hope, mitigate the nationalist tendencies that have often hindered efforts to establish a unified foreign policy. By contrast, Europe's illiberals believe that by admitting Serbia under President Aleksandar Vučić and potentially a more nationalistic Ukraine, the collective strength of the illiberal bloc would be great enough to challenge Germany and France, the EU's *de facto* leaders.

The victory of liberalism is far from guaranteed. At the moment, all eyes are on Hungary and Poland, which will hold a critical general election on October 15. Meanwhile, the political heirs of Benito Mussolini are already in power in Italy, and France might follow suit if Marine Le Pen wins the 2027 presidential election.

Nevertheless, Europe is on the cusp of a new era. The current situation is reminiscent of the post-Cold War years, when European leaders debated whether to enlarge the bloc or deepen its integration.

©Project Syndicate, 2023



The EU appears to be moving towards radical reinvention.

sport

Follow us on
omanobserver.om/sports



Wafaa al Simri gets international badge as basketball referee

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 14

The International Basketball Federation has recently announced its roster of international referees for the term 2023-2025. Among the distinguished names is Wafaa bint Saeed al Simriyah from Oman, who has earned an international badge as a basketball court referee. This historic achievement marks her as the first Omani female referee to be granted this honour.

Wafaa al Simri's inclusion in the list follows her successful completion of rigorous physical and written examinations required for international referee accreditation. The roster also features eminent Asian referees from the Sultanate of Oman, including Ahmed al Balushi, Issam al Siyabi, Rashid al



Wafaa bint Saeed al Simriyah

Mashifri and Fares al Khalasi in the capacity of an international observer.

It's worth mentioning that Wafaa al Simri embarked on her refereeing journey in 2019, leveraging her background as a former basketball player. Over the years, she actively contributed to the administration of local competitions and engaged in numerous domestic and international training camps.

Shotokan karate Center concludes the 9th Open



The three cup-winners, Champ Club (C), Kuwait Compat Club(L) and Oman Shito ryu Club (R).

MUSCAT: The ninth Shotokan karate Center Open Competition under Oman Karate Committee concluded on October 13 at the Sports Hall of Al Amal Sports Club in Muscat Governorate.

The event under the auspices of Basil bin Ahmed bin Amer al Rawas, Uder-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth, In the presence of Oman Karate Committee chairman, shaikh Salem bin Hamad al Mahrouqi, along with Hani bin Khamis al Hoti, director of Al Amal Sports Club.

300 male and female representing 23 clubs from four countries, the Sultanate of Oman, UAE, Kuwait, and Iraq competed at the ninth edition of the tournament.

The tournament competitions were managed by an international, continental and national referees, with medical staff from the Apollo Hospitals Group.

The competitions were divided into kata and kumite competitions according to the age groups and weights determined by the organising committee.

The general standings of Competition were as follows: The Champ Club won the first place cup, then the Kuwait Compat Club

won the second place cup, the third place cup went to the Oman Shito ryu Club, and the forth place cup went to the Shotokan Karate Center.

The organising committee extends its thanks and appreciation to: Apollo Hospitals Group, Al Reef Rest House, Al Wafi Water Company, Muscat Pharmacy, Erth Al Mekan Coffee, Oman Newspaper and Sultanate of Oman TV for their contribution to the success of the Competition activities.

It is worth noting that the Shotokan Karate Center holds this Competition annually, in which most local karate clubs, academies and centres and from some Arab and foreign countries participate, with the aim of developing the sport of karate in the Sultanate of Oman and for karate players to gain more experience and skills by competing with players of other clubs.

And For coaches to gain more experience and knowledge by having their players compete with players from other clubs, as well as for referees to hone their skills by applying the International Karate Federation Rules, which has some developments and updates on the Tatami.

Muscat hosts GCC Women's Sports Committee meeting

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 14

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), hosted the second meeting of the Advisory Committee for Sports of the Women's Committee for the GCC countries on Saturday at kempinski hotel muscat.

The meeting is part of the GCC meetings that will take place in Muscat. Beside this meeting, the 97th meeting of the Executive Office (GCC NOCs Secretaries-General) will take place in Muscat on Sunday while the 35th meeting of GCC NOCs Heads will be held in Muscat on Monday.

The Women's Committee meeting on Saturday chaired by Sayyidah Sana bint Hamad al Busaidy, Chairman of Oman Women's Sports, in presence of the GCC Women's Committees representatives. Oman's Chairman of Women's Sports began the meeting with an introductory speech as she said that the previous period of Women's Committee in the gulf countries witnessed many developments in the field of women's sports since the announcement of the establishment of women's sports committees followed by the launch of the first edition of the Gulf tournaments for women's sports in 2008 in Kuwait.

"In addition to the sporting events, the generous initiative of UAE's Shaikha Fatima bint Mubarak to qualify women's capability and ability in various sports events, which had a great



Oman Women's Sports Chairperson along with GCC Women's Committees representatives

impact on empowering and advancing women technically and administratively at Gulf, regional and global levels," she ended

Later, the members reviewed the responsibilities of the Advisory Committee for Sports of the Women's Committee. The main responsibilities which discussed were proposing plans and programmes for competitions and sports events and submitting them to the Executive Office for final approval. Also, Supervising the plans and programmes of approved competitions and sports events in coordination with

Secretariat General of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Proposing games to be included in the Gulf Sports Games. Supporting, enhancing and raising the standards of women's teams participating in regional and international tournaments. Spreading awareness and the culture of sports and physical activity among women in the Gulf countries.

Kuwait's proposal was one



Sayyidah Sana bint Hamad al Busaidy, Chairperson of Oman Women's Sports

of the discussed items during the meeting as they proposed organising sporting tournament for the women in different sports. The proposal included one grouping sports event and five singles sports. The purpose of this event is to shape the readiness of the women athletes for the forthcoming championships. UAE's representative presented the unified platform for Gulf women's sports which featured a unified digital identity for female players, an official and accredited

website for viewing sports news about women's sports relevant to Secretariat General of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Moreover, the platform will include also a unified platform that highlights on the sporting organisation's role in the GCC countries for developing the women's sports in the gulf countries.

Oman showed during the meeting their proposal which was about launching of " Gulf Women's Sports Hackathon" under title of " An active and sustainable community".

The Hackathon is a specialised programme in the field of Gulf women's sports through which aim to research, analyse and innovate applicable ideas and business models through scientific and methodological foundations based on bringing models. The project will focus on coming up with the largest possible number of proposals, programmes and initiatives that can be worked on and implemented socially.

‘Super’ Martin wins fourth straight sprint at Indonesia GP



Jorge Martin celebrates celebrates with his medal following the sprint race of the Indonesian Grand Prix MotoGP. – AFP

Quartararo (Yamaha), Luca Marini and Maverick Vinales (Aprilia) into first.

Martin is now top of the riders' standings for the first time in his career with 328 points, with Bagnaia (321) in second and

Bezzecchi (272) in third.

VR46 Racing also had cause to celebrate, with their two riders putting in heroic performances to claim podium finishes despite having both suffered collarbone injuries in recent weeks.

"Until Wednesday morning, I didn't even know whether I start or not," said Bezzecchi, who underwent surgery earlier this month on a broken collarbone.

"It's fantastic to be here. I was a bit lucky in the race but I was very fast. After the operation, the team did an unbelievable job. I really want to thank my trainer, my doctor and my team, because they made it possible for me to come here."

World champion Bagnaia, who started in 13th after failing to qualify from Q1, finished in eighth place behind team mate Enea Bastianini.

There was some consolation for Ducati, however, as they retained the constructor's championship on Saturday.

Honda's six-times MotoGP world champion Marc Marquez, who confirmed earlier this week that he will be joining Gresini Racing for the 2024 season, crashed out in the first lap.

Aprilia's Aleix Espargaro also crashed out early in the race, also taking out Brad Binder, though the Red Bull KTM rider was able to get back on his bike and end the race in 19th. — Reuters



Dhofar Club player trying to bypass the opponent's defences

Oman Club, Al Bashayer begin with wins in OBL

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 14

The matches of the Oman Basketball League (OBL) for the 2023-2024 season kicked off with Oman Club winning against Dhofar 80-38 and Al Bashayer winning against Nizwa 84-77. These matches took place at the secondary hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

In the first match, Oman Club took the lead in scoring due to the experience of their players and good handling of the game. Players like Musab al Wahaibi, Fahad al Ajmi, Abdullah al Qasmi, Maaz Ambusaidi and Haitham Bani Arabeh stood out in utilising opportunities and contributing to the team's victory.

In the first quarter, Oman Club took an early lead with a basket by Haitham Bani Arabeh, followed by Dhofar scoring two points through Ahmed Abu Hamar. Oman Club maintained a narrow lead of 14-12 by the end of the first quarter.

In the second quarter, Oman Club continued to dominate, extending their lead and scoring 24 points through Maaz Ambusaidi, Bassam al Musalmi, Fahad al Ajmi and Musab al Wahaibi. Dhofar managed to score only 9 points, and at half-time, Oman Club led 38-21.

In the third quarter, Oman Club continued their offensive dominance and scored 21 points, while Dhofar only managed to score 6 points. By the end of the third quarter, Oman Club were ahead at 59-27.

In the fourth quarter, Oman Club maintained their offensive superiority, adding 21 more points, while Dhofar scored 11 points. The game ended with Oman Club defeating Dhofar 80-38.

The match was officiated by international referees Essam al Siyabi as the first referee, Ahmed al Khasibi as the second referee and Mahdi al Awli as the third referee. The table officials were Jamal al Hinai, Mahmoud al Ajmi and Shareefa al Zadjali.

AL BASHAYER
DEFEAT NIZWA

In the second match, Al Bashayer managed to overcome Nizwa 84-77 in a competitive game. Al Bashayer had the upper hand for most of the period, with notable performances from Said al Saadi, Osama al Riyami, Bassam al Busaidi, Ahmed al Halhali, Mahmoud al Souli and Adel al Battashi, contributing significantly to their victory. Nizwa had standout performances from Amjad al Hadidi and professional player Nef McCard, Mohammed al Anqoodi and Saif al Tubi.

The first quarter saw Al Bashayer take the lead, demonstrating offensive prowess and solid defence against Nizwa's attacks. Al Bashayer began scoring through Said al Saadi's shot from under the basket, followed by a two-point play by Osama al Riyami. However, Saif al Tubi of Nizwa managed to score two points from a free-throw. The first quarter ended with Al Bashayer leading Nizwa 24-12.

In the second quarter, the performance shifted, especially from Nizwa, who improved from their performance in the first quarter. Nizwa managed to score 18 points, while Al Bashayer scored 15 points, and at half time, Al Bashayer led 39-30.

In the third quarter, Al Bashayer continued their offensive superiority, adding 19 more points, while Nizwa scored 16 points. At the end of the third quarter, Al Bashayer was leading Nizwa 58-46.

In the fourth quarter, despite Nizwa's offensive efforts, Al Bashayer's defence managed to repel most of the attacks. Nizwa scored 18 points, while Al Bashayer scored 19 points, resulting in Al Bashayer's victory over Nizwa by 84-77.

The match was officiated by international referees Ahmed al Balushi as the first referee, Majid al Akhzami as the second referee and Ali al Suleimani as the third referee. The table officials were Hafiz Oulad Ahmed, Jumaa al Hinai, Yakoub al Nadabi and Younes al Zadjali.



Al Bashayer vs Nizwa

90 SAILORS TO TAKE PART IN MUSANNAH RACE WEEK



Archive photo from Musannah Race Week

MUSCAT: Musannah Race Week, presented by Renaissance Services, returns on October 18 for its 12th edition with more than 90 sailors from 9 countries expected, including members of Oman Sail's SailFree initiative. Taking place at Barceló Musannah Resort, racing in Optimist, ILCA 4 and Open categories ILKA6 and ILKA7, as well as the RS Venture Connect for people with disabilities, will show the diversity of the sport in a pristine environment.

Sailors at Musannah Race Week will have the chance to experience three days of world class coaching

in the water and in the classroom, followed by four days of racing. On-the-water training sessions will focus on boat speed, handling, race starts and tactics. Onshore sessions will cover race strategy, rules, fitness, nutrition and sports psychology, providing the opportunity to learn from each other.

There will also be an opportunity to become immersed in Omani culture and share a relaxing evening while experiencing authentic Omani hospitality before racing begins.

Shaima al Asmi, Musannah Race Week Project Manager, said,

"We are looking forward to welcoming many of the world's best and most promising young sailors to Musannah Race Week. For the past 12 years, Musannah Race Week has been the ideal showcase of Oman's capabilities to host a large international event, use sport to build strong relationships between competitors of different backgrounds and share our culture with the world. This year we expect to host one of the strongest fleet the event has ever seen which will provide an excellent test for our sailors and offer a glimpse at many future champions in our sport."

Issa al Aufi, Chief People Officer, Renaissance Services, added, "Renaissance is committed to investing in the future of Oman, especially the youth. We are very proud to support Musannah Race Week, a prestigious and much-loved event in our national sailing calendar, which provides an opportunity for Omani sailors to compete with and learn from some of the best in their age group from around the world."

Racing in all classes takes place over four days with the prize-giving and closing ceremonies being held on October 24.

France qualify for Euros with Portugal and Belgium

PARIS: France's Kylian Mbappe rediscovered his touch in spectacular fashion as he grabbed a double to lead his side to a 2-1 away win against an injury-ravaged Netherlands and early qualification for Euro 2024 on Friday.

The World Cup runners-up, who will be joined in the June 14-July 14 tournament in Germany by Portugal and Belgium as one of the first three teams to qualify, kept a perfect record in Group B with six wins. Portugal have also won all their matches in Group J after Goncalo Ramos's goal and a double by Cristiano Ronaldo earned them a 3-2 home victory against Slovakia in Group J.

Belgium went through in Group F with a 3-2 win away to Austria, who would themselves have qualified with a victory, as Dodi Lukebakio scored twice before Romelu Lukaku wrapped up the points after the break.

At the Johan Cruijff Arena, France were comfortable for more than 80 minutes, even if a couple



France's Kylian Mbappe celebrates scoring their second goal with team-mates.

of mistakes by goalkeeper Mike Maignan could have cost them dearly.

Mbappe, who left the training camp for a day for personal reasons this week, volleyed home in the seventh minute from Jonathan Clauss's perfect cross before pointing to the sky with both hands.

It came as a relief for Mbappe, who had not scored in his last four

competitive outings.

"I'm not one to worry, and especially not about Kylian. He showed today there was nothing to worry about," said France coach Didier Deschamps.

"When he's like this obviously France have more chances to win."

SUBLIME SHOT

Les Bleus allowed the hosts to

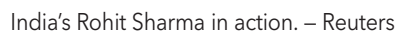
gain a bit of confidence before the interval but Mbappe made sure there would be no comeback eight minutes into the second half.

The 24-year-old, who has had an inconsistent start to the season with Paris St Germain, collected a subtle layoff from Adrien Rabiot before curling a sublime shot into the far top corner from the edge of the box for his 42nd international goal.

Griezmann was playing a record-extending 81st consecutive game for France.

The Netherlands were without Cody Gakpo, Jurrien Timber, Sven Botman, Matthijs de Ligt, Frenkie de Jong, Mark Flekken, Memphis Depay, Noa Lang, Teun Koopmeiners, Tyrell Malacia, and Steven Berghuis because of injuries.

They reduced the arrears through Quilindschy Hartman in the 83rd minute with the 21-year-old's first goal on his debut, and it was the first goal France conceded in the qualifying campaign. — Reuters



Only a trickle of Pakistanis, many expatriates, made it to the game after fans from across the border endured visa delays. — **AFP**







CROWN

TIMELESS LEGACY

340 HP
 2.4L Turbo
 HEV Engine

Ignite **Turbocharged** Experiences!

The all-new Toyota Crown is reimagined with daringly bold design, inspiring luxury, advanced features and exciting performance. Get set for exceptional experiences in the all-new Crown. Discover your Crown at any Saud Bahwan Automotive showroom today.

SERVICE** FROM **3 YEARS / 30,000 KMS**
(WHICHEVER IS EARLIER)

INSTALLMENT® STARTING FROM

RO 188[®]

All Wheel Drive | 21" Alloy Wheels | Toyota Safety Sense | Panoramic View Moonroof | Rear Wheel eAxle



Saud Bahwan Automotive LLC
ISO 9001: 2015 Certified | C. R. No: 1703412

Campaign Period: 01.09.2023 - 01.11.2023 Benefits applicable for all purchases except Government Organizations & Ministries. *Comprehensive 1 Year Insurance (Urban only, excluding desert grades) on 21YM / 21 PLT, Hilux 4x2 & Hilux 4x4, 22YM / 21 PLT, Hilux 4x2 & Hilux 4x4, 22YM / 22 PLT, Camry 3.5, RAIZE, Hilux 4x2 & Hilux 4x4, 22YM / 22 PLT, Camry 3.5, Corolla 1.6, Corolla 2.0, Camry 2.5, Camry 3.5, RAIZE, Rush, Veloz, Fortuner, Hilux 4x2, Hilux 4x4 & Lite Ace, 22YM / 21 PLT, Yaris SD, Corolla 1.8, Corolla 2.0, Camry 2.5, Camry 3.5, RAIZE, Urban Cruiser, Corolla Cross, Ruzh, VELOZ, RAV4, RAV4 HEV, Fortuner, Hilux 4x2, Hilux 4x4 & Lite Ace. Insurance benefit under the campaign would be given upto the extent applicable for Private vehicles only. Additional premium as per insurance norms will have to be paid by the RAC, Taxi & Driving School Company. **3 Years / 30,000 Kms Service (whichever is earlier) covering 2 services at 10,000 Kms service interval based on normal operating conditions (Excluding DSL grades) on RAV4, RAV4 HEV & LC-PURP. ***3 Years / 30,000 Kms Service (whichever is earlier) covering 3 services at 10,000 Kms service interval based on normal operating conditions (Excluding DSL grades) on all Toyota models excluding Corolla, Camry, RAV4, LC Purp, Prado, LC WGN, Lite Ace, Hilace & Urban Cruiser. ****3 Years / 45,000 Kms Service (whichever is earlier) covering 4 services at 7,500 Kms service interval based on normal operating conditions on Urban Cruiser. *****3 Years / 50,000 Kms Service (whichever is earlier) covering 5 services at 10,000 Kms service interval based on normal operating conditions on Corolla and Camry. #Scratch & win: (Applicable for petrol vehicle) Every customer who buys a vehicle will be eligible for one Scratch & Win card. Chances to win: Fuel card worth up to 100 liters of Fuel or cash voucher up to RO 20000. @ EMI calculated are for base models with 20% down payment for 10 years. Loan Approval is based on sole discretion of Bank / Finance company. Terms and condition apply. Vehicles may include dealer-installed items. For further details & to ascertain availability of stocks, please visit your nearest Toyota showroom. Pictures and colours shown above are for illustrative purposes only.

f toyotaoman
@toyotaomanofficial
toyotaoman
www.toyotaoman.com





Closer than you think

Over 100 branches, and more than 300
ATMs/CDMs/FFMs/MFKs to serve you

bankdhofar www.bankdhofar.com

بنك ظفار
BankDhofar

Duqm garners over \$10 bn in investments from OQ, JV partners

MUSCAT: Investments by Oman’s integrated global energy group OQ and its joint venture partners in Duqm Special Economic Zone amount to over \$10 billion, underscoring the government’s efforts to drive economic diversification and attract foreign direct investments.

Benefiting from these investments are the Duqm Refinery (a joint project of OQ and Kuwait Petroleum International), Marafiq (a partnership with Thailand’s Gulf Energy Development), the Ras Markaz Crude Oil Storage and Export Hub (100 per cent OQ owned), and the Fahud – Duqm gas supply project.

Hilal bin Ali al Kharusi, CEO of Commercial Affairs, Refineries and Petrochemicals at OQ, said: “These investments reflect the government’s plans to expand economic diversification policies in accordance with the “Oman vision 2040”, which aims to optimally exploit natural potential and promote sustainable development. These investments represent a qualitative leap for the industrial sector. Specifically, the manufacturing industries. All projects were successful, their construction stages were completed, and they entered into operations, production,



Hilal bin Ali al Kharusi, CEO of Commercial Affairs, Refineries and Petrochemicals at OQ

and exports outside the Sultanate of Oman”.

In a statement to ONA, he added: “The economic projects in Duqm - thanks to its proximity to international shipping routes - facilitate access to global markets, contribute to enhancing economic growth, attracting investments and facilitating trade exchange, pointing out that the projects of OQ and its partners reflect the desire to diversify sources of income and increase Exports, and providing means of storage and distinguished services. These projects also work to add value to oil production and expand investment opportunities in the Duqm Economic Zone for the coming periods.”

Approaching commercial launch is Duqm Refinery, trial operation of which is now in an advanced stage, Al Kharusi said. — ONA

Omani startup plans \$630 million worth green aviation fuel projects



Maher al Habsi, CEO – Wakud and John Jones (RIGHT), Co-founder of X2E, speaking at the CAA Forum on Sustainable Aviation Fuel last week



CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 15

Having successfully established Oman’s first commercial-scale biodiesel plant utilising used cooking oil (UCO) as feedstock, Omani startup Wakud is now embarking on the development of two major bio-refineries for the production of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF). Total investment in the proposed projects, planned to be established at Sohar Port and Salalah Port, is estimated at \$630 million.

An overview of the projects was presented by Wakud CEO and Co-founder Maher bin Mohammed al Habsi and John Jones, Co-founder of X2E, an Oman-based environmental services start-up which recently acquired a majority stake in Wakud. The presentations came

on the second day of the ‘Forum on Sustainable & Low Carbon Aviation Fuel and Clean Energies in the Civil Aviation Sector’, which was organised by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) of the Sultanate of Oman last week.

In his presentation, Jones of X2E revealed that the first of the two projects is planned to come into production at the Port of Sohar in 2026 with an annual capacity of 250 million litres of SAF. Also envisaged is 125 million litres per year of e-SAF production at the same facility.

Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) is a biofuel with an 80 – 90 per cent lower carbon footprint than conventional jet fuel. Feedstock for SAF production can range from organic waste, oils, greases and fats, plant biomass, and other non-petroleum based renewable resources. However, with such

feedstocks barely enough to cover even a small percentage of global SAF demand, energy companies are looking to supplement their production with e-SAF – a synthetic fuel produced from a combination of captured CO2 and hydrogen.

A similar facility, planned at the Port of Salalah in the south of the country, is due to come into operation in 2027. It will boast an annual capacity of 200 million litres of SAF and 100 million litres of e-SAF.

Significantly, feedstock for either venture is envisaged to be camelina, a plant species cultivated in many parts of the world for its high oil content of up to 40 per cent. Suited for desert environments, camelina is proposed to be cultivated on a large-scale utilising part of the prodigious quantities of treated produced water from

oilfield operations or treated effluent provided by Nama Water Services.

According to Jones of X2E, feasibility studies carried out by the company have explored the entire market basis for SAF and eSAF production in the Sultanate of Oman. Separate spinoffs have also been created to oversee, on the one hand, the procurement of irrigation water for camelina cultivation, and on the other, the large-scale agricultural farming of the crop. Massive tracts of land are envisioned for camelina cultivation not only in Oman, but in parts of the UAE and Saudi Arabia as well, he said.

Given the overall scale of the initiative over the long-term, the knock-on benefits for Oman – in the form of employment generation, value creation and GDP growth – will be immense, he added.

26,000 Omani and Gulf standard specs approved to date

SDG GOAL: Oman commemorates World Standards Day under the Banner of Sustainable Health

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, OCT14

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), has enthusiastically embraced World Standards Day, celebrated internationally on the 14th of October each year.

This year’s World Standards Day carries the banner of “Goal 3 of the Sustainable Development Agenda: Ensure healthy lives and

promote well-being for all at all ages.” The theme underscores the crucial role of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) in advancing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Imad bin Khamis al Shukaili, Director-General of Standards and Metrology at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, emphasised that ensuring access to good health and well-being is a fundamental human right. Goal 3 of the Sustainable Development Agenda underscores the importance of providing healthy lives and promoting well-being for individuals of all ages.

He highlighted the critical role of international specifications



Imad bin Khamis al Shukaili

and conformity assessment in achieving this goal. These standards create a global framework that facilitates the adoption of digital health technologies, drives research and development, and enhances the manufacturing of healthcare

devices and systems. In turn, this ensures the provision of effective, safe, and reliable medical devices and health services for a broad global population.

Al Shukaili stressed that standards and metrology are the cornerstones for developing effective policies and regulations that foster cooperation and yield optimal results in healthcare.

He noted that in line with the evolution of digital health technology, specifications from organisations like IEC, ISO, and ITU are essential for ensuring the security of systems and protecting patient privacy. Oman is actively joining global efforts to accelerate the United Nations’ 2030 plan, developing standard specifications to achieve

the Sustainable Development Agenda’s goals and create a better world for all.

Al Shukaili revealed that, as of the end of September 2023, over 26,000 Omani and Gulf standard specifications have been approved. These cover various industrial and service sectors, spanning electricity, electronics, mechanics, metals, food and goods, agriculture, chemistry, textile, oil and gas, building and construction materials, metrology, quality management, information, and information technology.

In addition, he shared that 732 Omani standard specifications were issued in the past year, including specifications for electric vehicles, plastic water

containers, and cooling systems. These standards aim to promote energy efficiency, safety, and environmental sustainability.

Moreover, a standard specification for hydrogen vehicles was introduced to align with the government’s clean energy initiatives and emissions reduction targets for 2050. This specification prioritises safety and aims to reduce harm in accidents while curbing pollutants associated with gasoline and diesel fuel.

Specifications for plastic water meter boxes and liquid synthetic detergents for fabrics and clothing were also unveiled, reaffirming Oman’s commitment to enhancing quality of life through standardised practices.

Unimoni Exchange opens remodelled branch in Avenues Mall



Unimoni Exchange branch in Avenues Mall

MUSCAT: Unimoni Exchange, a leading remittance and foreign exchange brand in the Sultanate of Oman, has opened its refurbished branch in Avenues Mall, with a fresh look and feel, the new location is spacious and bright with modern fitout and technology, which makes it more convenient for our valued customers.

“In our constant endeavour to provide the best customer experience we are glad to open our refurbished outlet

in the Avenues Mall, Al Ghubra. With more space and new look, it gives a fresh feel to our customers with same commitment of unmatched customer service. Our remodelled branch is well equipped to provide greater experiences and enhanced convenience to the customers. We look forward to welcoming our existing and new customers,” said Boban MP, CEO Unimoni Oman.

Unimoni Oman offers a suite of services for consumers and corporates, delivered

through multiple touch-points such as retail stores, digital and mobile solutions, and self-service kiosks, across the Sultanate of Oman.

Unimoni Oman commenced its operation in the Sultanate of Oman in the year 1995. The brand offers its customers money transfer and foreign exchange services. An ISO-certified brand and member of prestigious global associations have been recognised and awarded for its quality and business excellence over the years.

Chery showcased 5 models at the 2023 Geneva International Motor Show

MUSCAT: Recently at the Geneva International Motor Show held in Qatar, Chery Automobile showcased five flagship models including with two PHEV models.

As one of the world’s top five auto shows, the Geneva Motor Show serves as a global stage for automotive brands to display cutting-edge technologies and launch their latest vehicle models. The 2023 Geneva International Motor Show was held from October 5th to 14th at the Qatar Doha Exhibition and Convention Center.

Chery Automobile’s two PHEV models showcased the latest culmination of Chery’s 18 years of hybrid technology. While maintaining Chery’s safety and quality characteristics, these vehicles adopt a “primary electric, supplemented by gasoline” driving mode and features a class-leading efficient powertrain combination, a unique and independently developed 3-gear DHT (Dual-Clutch Hybrid Transmission) in its class, and class-leading intelligent features.

In addition, Chery’s globally popular the Tiggo family models – the Tiggo 8 Pro Max and the Tiggo 7 Pro Max, also made a bold appearance at the Geneva



Motor Show. As the main driving force behind Chery’s continuous upward power, the Tiggo 8 Pro Max boasts a futuristic tech-business style, a future intelligent cabin, and outstanding power performance, making it stand out in the global mid-size SUV (sport utility vehicle) market. The aesthetic design and exceptional quality of the Tiggo 7 Pro Max break through global A-class SUV value standards, aligning with the global trend of family-oriented vehicles.

In the sedan segment, the Chery Arrizo 8 combines technological intelligence with

an elegant style, featuring a fully optimised aesthetic design, a magic cube intelligent cabin, and optimal performance handling. It showcased Chery’s technological charm and product strength to all visitors at the show.

Taking this auto show as an opportunity, Chery Automobile reaffirmed its commitment to providing high-quality vehicles to global consumers through its core products and the latest technology. Chery used this event as an opportunity to showcase its strengths in innovation, quality, and technology on the world stage.

Recently, Kantar and Google jointly released the 2023 Chinese Global Brand Builders Top 50. Chery is ranked as the best Chinese global brand builder in cars and 14th in the overall list and its brand power has achieved strong growth.

Chery Automobile took the first spot among all Chinese automotive brands in J.D. Power 2023 China Initial Quality StudySM(IQS). For more details please visit <https://china.jdpower.com/press-release/2023-IQS>. In Oman, Chery will soon be launched by Saud Bahwan Group.



IIA Oman, KPMG hold annual conference

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 14

The Institute of Internal Auditors Oman recently held its Internal Audit and Organization Excellence Conference in collaboration with KPMG Oman.

In attendance were representatives of major banks, advisory firms, and key governmental bodies. They shared pivotal insights on areas such as the future trajectory of auditing, the challenges and prospects of AI, and the increasing prominence of ESG in auditing.

One of the standout themes this year was the conference’s focus on the younger generation. Through

workshops, networking, and mentorship, the event fostered a collaborative environment and a vision for the future. The underlying sentiment echoed throughout was that the realm of auditing and organisational excellence is not only about navigating present challenges but also equipping the next generation to lead and innovate.

Organised by KPMG in partnership with IIA Oman, this annual conference has become a touchstone in the auditing field, championing dialogue, collaboration, and forward-thinking. With its recent focus on engaging the youth, the event reaffirms its commitment to shaping the future of the industry.

Ferrari to accept crypto as payment for its cars

MILAN: Ferrari has started to accept payment in cryptocurrency for its luxury sports cars in the US and will extend the scheme to Europe following requests from its wealthy customers, its marketing and commercial chief told Reuters.

The vast majority of blue-chip companies have steered clear of crypto as the volatility of bitcoin and other tokens renders them impractical for commerce. Patchy regulation and high energy usage have also prevented the spread of crypto as a means of payment.

These include electric carmaker Tesla, which in 2021 began to accept payment in bitcoin, the biggest crypto coin, before CEO Elon Musk halted it because of environmental concerns.

Ferrari’s Chief Marketing and Commercial Officer Enrico Galliera told that Reuters cryptocurrencies had made efforts to reduce their carbon footprint through the

introduction of new software and a larger use of renewable sources.

“Our target to reach for carbon neutrality by 2030 along our whole value chain is absolutely confirmed,” he said in an interview.

Ferrari said the decision came in response to requests from the market and dealers as many of its clients have invested in crypto.

“Some are young investors who have built their fortunes around cryptocurrencies,” he said. “Some others are more traditional investors, who want to diversify their portfolios.” While some cryptocurrencies, such as the second-largest, ether, have improved their energy efficiency, bitcoin still attracts criticism for its energy-intensive mining.

Ferrari shipped more than 1,800 cars to its Americas region, which includes the US, in the first half of this year.

Galliera did not say how many cars Ferrari expected to sell through crypto. He said the



Ferrari CEO Benedetto Vigna unveils the company’s new long term strategy, in Maranello

company’s order portfolio was strong and fully booked well into 2025, but the company wanted to

test this expanding universe.

“This will help us connect to people who are not necessarily

our clients but might afford a Ferrari,” he said.

The Italian company, which sold 13,200 cars in 2022, with prices starting at over 200,000 euros (\$211,000) and going up to 2 million euros, plans to extend the crypto scheme to Europe by the first quarter of next year and then to other regions where crypto is legally accepted.

Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) is Ferrari’s largest region, accounting for 46 per cent of its total car shipments in the first half of this year.

“Interest is the same in the US and Europe, we don’t see huge differences,” Galliera said.

Countries where cryptocurrencies are restricted include China.

Ferrari has turned to one of the biggest cryptocurrency payment processors, BitPay, for the initial phase in the US, and will allow transactions in bitcoin, ether and USDC, one of the largest so-called stablecoins. Ferrari might use other payment

processors in different regions.

“Prices will not change, no fees, no surcharges if you pay through cryptocurrencies,” Galliera said.

Bitpay will immediately turn cryptocurrency payments into traditional currency on behalf of Ferrari’s dealers, so they are protected from price swings.

“This was one of our main goals: avoiding, both our dealers and us, to directly handle cryptocurrencies and being shielded from their wide fluctuations,” Galliera said.

As the payment processor, BitPay will ensure that the virtual currencies come from legitimate sources and not derived from criminal activity or to be used to launder the proceeds of crime or evade tax.

Ferrari’s marketing and commercial chief said that the majority of its US dealers have already signed up, or are about to agree, to the scheme “I am confident others will join soon,” Galliera said. — Reuters



IMF agrees funding boost, extra Africa board seat



South African Reserve Bank Governor, Lesetja Kganyago, takes part in a panel during the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, in Marrakech. — Reuters



IMFC chair Nadia Calvino attends a news conference during the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Marrakech. — Reuters

MARRAKESH: The IMF announced Saturday member nations agreed to increase their contributions to the global lender and give sub-Saharan Africa a third seat on its executive board at its first meetings on the continent since 1973.

Boosting the International Monetary Fund's quota resources and giving Africa a bigger voice within the institution were among the priorities of the week-long talks of the IMF and World Bank in Marrakech, Morocco.

Spanish Economy Minister Nadia Calvino, who chairs the IMF Financial Committee, said at a press conference that there was "agreement on a meaningful increase of quotas by the end of the year." The quotas, which are based on the size of a country's economy, determine how much funding a nation should provide to the IMF, its voting power and the maximum amount of loans it can obtain.

IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva and World Bank President Ajay Banga used this week's meetings to urge members to step up funding so their institutions can better support nations hit by poverty and climate change.

The conflict between Israel and Palestinians has raised concerns about its

impact on already weak global economic growth in the wake of the Ukraine war, elevated inflation and high interest rates. Georgieva said the agreement on quotas was "very heartwarming."

The goal, she said, was "to make the fund strong financially in terms of our ability to step up should we be hit by yet another shock."

Asked when the IMF will change its voting shares, Georgieva said: the "membership has agreed that this is going to be the next step and that there will be a clear pathway and plan to go there."

China has a 6.08 per cent share of votes compared to 6.14 per cent for Japan, the third global economy.

"At some point, a revision of the IMF's quota distribution will be inevitable," French central bank governor Francois Villeroy de Galhau said in Marrakesh on Wednesday.

"But the emerging countries that will benefit from this — including China — will have to accept common rules of the game," he said. While voting shares were not changed, the IMF agreed to expand its executive board from 24 to 25 members to give Africa another seat.

Sub-Saharan Africa will now have three executive board members instead of two. — AFP

GHSO 2023 to position Oman at forefront of green hydrogen push

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 14

Oman is gearing up to host later this year a mega-scale Green Hydrogen Summit & Exhibition (GHSO) which, in terms of delegate participation and visitor turnout, is expected to be off the charts. Drawing an estimated 3,000 delegates, encompassing government leaders, energy industry bigwigs and experts from around the world, GHSO 2023 will further underscore Oman's newfound global recognition as an early mover in the nascent green hydrogen space.

Organised by Birba, Oman's energy-focused event planner, GHSO 2023 will be held at Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre (OCEC), Muscat, from December 12 – 15, 2023. The high-profile event will take place under the auspices of Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals and the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit.

The overarching theme of the event, 'From Vision to Action', encapsulates the pivotal strides that Oman has made since the government, represented by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, first referenced green hydrogen as a game-changing, sustainable energy source just five years ago.

Commenting on the journey thus far, Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, said: "The Sultanate



Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi

of Oman's trajectory towards a low carbon and green hydrogen economy shines with immense promise. Through steadfast dedication, we have forged agreements and secured over \$30 billion in investments for pioneering projects. In this journey, we stand shoulder-to-shoulder with esteemed global developers and investors, driven by a shared commitment to a sustainable, cleaner tomorrow. Collaboration becomes the cornerstone of our voyage, steering us towards the realisation of a Net Zero world, where innovation and unity pave the way for a brighter future." In its third edition, GHSO 2023 will transcend the role of a typical summit and instead emerge a catalyst for

consensus-building, partnership agreements, offtake deals, and knowledge sharing. With over 500 companies representing the green energy ecosystem, more than 100 speakers, and around 50 exhibitors hailing from over 100 countries, this upcoming forum promises to expedite the realisation of Oman's green energy economy.

A high-level team of executives, led by Mohsin bin Hamad al Hadhrami, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, has meticulously crafted a conference agenda that aligns squarely with Oman's strategic objectives and the broader interests of stakeholders across the industry. The conference will delve into pivotal topics such as green

hydrogen markets, policies, sustainable mobility, hydrogen supply chain, the energy trilemma, green financing, In-Country Value, and innovation.

The common thread binding these diverse themes is Oman's aspiration to play a pivotal role in supporting global efforts to combat climate change through the large-scale production of environmentally friendly green hydrogen.

Assisting Mohsin al Hadhrami as Chairman of the Executive Committee in the planning of a truly transformative energy showcase is a distinguished panel of industry professionals comprising: Dr Firas al Abduwani, Director General of Renewable Energy and Hydrogen, Ministry of Energy and Minerals; Eng Abdulaziz al Shidhani, Managing Director — Hydrom; Eng Najla al Jamali, Chief Executive, Alternative Energy — OQ; Dr Sara Vakhshouri, Founder and President, SVB Energy International — SVB Green Access; Dr Abdullah al Abri, Energy & Investment Consultant, IEA; Guy De Kort, Director — Operated Ventures, Oman Shell; Adithya Bhashyam, Associate Hydrogen, BloombergNEF; Essam al Shaibany, Group Vice President — QHSSE and Sustainability, Asyad Group; and Atsushi Suzuki, CEO – Marubeni (Middle East & Africa Power).

Duqm tourism zone pulls in RO 526m in investments

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, represented by the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), pays great attention to the tourism sector and developing this sector in the region by providing the appropriate investment environment and providing the infrastructure needed by the projects.

Eng Abdullah bin Salem al Hakmani, Director of the Technical Affairs Department at SEZAD, explained that the efforts made by the Authority have borne fruit in increasing



An 18 sq km zone has been earmarked in Duqm for tourism investments

the number of investments in the tourism sector, as more than 30 usufruct contracts have been signed so far for large tourism projects, with an investment volume of RO 526.286 million.

In a statement to ONA, Al Hakmani said a number of tourist facilities have been completed this year, including resorts, hotels, hotel apartments and other tourism projects.

SEZAD now offers nearly 2,500 hotel rooms, varying between hotel rooms, luxury apartments, tourist resorts, and multi-purpose rooms. Business and tourist traffic into Duqm has grown as well, he said.

The Tourism Zone in SEZAD covers an area of 18 km² with a 19km waterfront. It now features 7 tourism projects, with ample land available for large-scale ventures. Enhancing access to the zone is a 14-km coastal road currently under development, while other facilities are being added at a total cost of RO 20 million this year alone. — ONA

MSX 30 Index close week higher by 1.08 per cent

MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange 30 Index closed last week at 4,785.98 points, up by 50.986 points and 1.08% higher from the previous trading session, which stood at 4,734.99 points. Posting gains were the Financial Index by 1.50%, the Services Index by 1.34%, and the Sharia Index by 0.96%, while the Industrial Index dipped by 0.59%.

OQ Gas Networks (under transformation) (OQGN) announced that, following the successful completion of the bookbuilding and public subscription process for its IPO, it has set the final offer price at Bz 140 per share. Having received overwhelming demand from investors, the final offer

price was set at the top of the price range by OQ in its capacity as the selling shareholder. A total of around 2.1bn ordinary shares, representing 49% of OQGN's issued share capital, were offered, which will generate approximately RO 288m (USD 750m) of gross proceeds for the selling shareholder upon settlement, making the OQGN IPO the largest ever IPO in Oman. This includes commitments from anchor investors amounting to approximately RO 89m (USD 230m). Immediately following completion of the OQGN IPO, OQ will continue to own 51% of OQGN's share capital.

The offering saw strong

investor demand and oversubscription for both the Category I offering and Category II offering. Total demand for OQGN shares amounted to around RO 4bn (approx USD 10bn). Including anchor investors the book for the IPO was about 14x oversubscribed.

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) has announced to investors and the public that, starting from the year 2023, the conventional re/insurance companies in the Sultanate of Oman have commenced the adoption of the IFRS 17 insurance contracts as a replacement of IFRS 4 which was issued by the International Accounting Standards Board. Unlike the

previous standard, the new regulation identifies specific accounting approaches.

Oman's production of crude oil and condensate oil decreased by 5%YoY to reach 32.270m barrels in August '23 compared to August'22, which amounted to 33.858m barrels, according to NCSI data. Crude oil production alone decreased by 9%, while oil condensate production increased by 13 % in August 2023 compared to the same period in 2022.

The average price of Omani crude oil decreased by 34 % in August'23, to reach USD 75 per barrel, compared to USD 113 per barrel in August'22. At the same time, the average daily oil production of the Sultanate

of Oman decreased by 5% in August, compared to the same period in 2022.

The total quantity of oil exports of the Sultanate of Oman by end of August 2023, reached 205.012 million barrels, by calculating the average price per barrel at \$ 79.8. The country's oil exports represented 80.1% of its total oil production, reaching to 255.814 million barrels.

The statistics data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information, showed the total production of crude oil in Oman decreased by 2.5%, reaching to 199.497 million barrels, while the total production of the condensate oil increased by 7.4%, reaching to 56.316 million barrels. The

average daily production of oil reached 1.052 million barrels till the end of August 2023.

Oman's public revenue amounted to RO 7.923 billion at the end of August 2023 down by 15 per cent compared to RO 9.325 billion registered over the same period in 2022. The monthly bulletin published by the Ministry of Finance said that net oil revenue amounted to RO 4.145 billion at the end of August 2023 down by 10 per cent compared to RO 4.594 billion registered over the same period in 2022. Average oil price amounted to \$82 per barrel and average oil production reached 1,056,000 barrels per day (bpd).

[Courtesy: U-Capital]

Opportunities from Gaming 2.0 to Gaming 3.0

The gaming industry has come a long way from the days of simple 8-bit graphics and single-player experiences. Today, it's a global powerhouse that has seen two significant phases of evolution: Gaming 2.0 and Gaming 3.0. In this article, we will explore the fundamental differences between these two paradigms and how Gaming 3.0 is redefining the gaming landscape, by bringing business opportunities to game developers, artists, and job seekers.

In Gaming 2.0, major corporations held the reins of the industry. Distribution deals were king, and - except for a few exceptions - only a few giants had the power to shape the gaming landscape. However,



STEFANO VIRGILLI
stefano@virgilli.com

The author is a member of the International Press Association

the emergence of Gaming 3.0, powered by blockchain technology, has rewritten the rules. According to Newzoo, a leading provider of market intelligence, the global games market is expected to reach \$217.9 billion by end of 2023, indicating the industry's rapid growth.

With Gaming 3.0, we're witnessing the removal of these intermediaries. It's a decentralised, democratised future where individual gamers and smaller developers have greater influence and autonomy. Game developers can now reach global markets without the need for traditional distribution deals, providing opportunities for indie developers and niche games to thrive.

One of the most exciting aspects of Gaming 3.0 is the introduction of digital assets and

NFTs (Non-Fungible Tokens). Digital assets encompass in-game items, cosmetics, and even entire characters that players can own and trade. NFTs have made it possible to represent ownership of these assets in a unique and verifiable way.

In a recent keynote session I attended at the ABC Conclave in Dubai, an esteemed speaker shared that the Virtual Goods Rental Market has become a reality. Gamers not only purchase NFT skins and collectibles, but enter into short agreements to rent them. All transactions are recorded on the blockchain.

Gaming 3.0 doesn't just offer advantages to gamers; it opens doors for artists, game developers, and job seekers.

Although it's hard to find the exact number, various sources

point to independent video game developers and studios worldwide exceeding the 100,000-mark. With Gaming 3.0, independent developers have a chance to showcase their creations on decentralised platforms, bypassing the traditional gatekeepers. This democratisation of game development leads to a richer and more diverse gaming landscape.

Artists now have the opportunity to design and distribute digital assets, adding a creative element to the gaming world. The rise of NFT marketplaces has allowed artists to monetise their talent, opening new revenue streams.

Despite the large tach roles layoff occurred at the end of last year and at the beginning of 2023, in the world of Gaming

3.0, job opportunities abound. According to a report by the International Game Developers Association (IGDA), the global video game industry employs over 220,000 people in various roles, including designers, developers, and marketers. Given the speed at which this industry is developing I would not be surprised to find out that this number might have already doubled by the time I am writing this column.

Gaming 3.0 brings the power back to gamers, developers, and artists, ushering in an era of creative freedom and new business prospects. As we move forward, it's an exciting time for anyone interested in gaming, whether as a player, creator, or industry professional. How you can be a part of this vibrant, ever-evolving ecosystem?

The anatomy of the global inflation spike

From the 1960s until the mid-2010s, hunger was on the decline around the world. But, despite record food production, the trend is reversing, with around 828 million people affected by hunger globally in 2021 – an increase of 46 million from 2020 and 150 million from 2019.

The problem is not confined to low-income countries. Large numbers of people in wealthier countries like the United Kingdom, South Africa, and Brazil are unable to meet their basic nutritional needs. Our recent research suggests that inequitable food systems and widespread hunger could become the new normal.

In the UK, the world's sixth-largest economy, roughly one in seven people experienced food poverty in September 2022, with more than 2,000 food banks operating across the country; there were fewer than 100 a decade or so ago.

In Brazil, poverty and food insecurity had fallen to their lowest levels by the early 2010s. But much of this progress has been reversed in recent years, owing to a recession that began in 2014 and deepened in 2015.

The economic crisis coincided with, and was amplified by, a period of political turmoil, resulting in the impeachment of former President Dilma Rousseff in 2016.

When former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro took office in 2019, his government made no effort to reduce hunger or poverty, and the Covid-19 pandemic soon exacerbated both.

By 2022, an estimated 125 million Brazilians – more than half of the population – faced some degree of food insecurity, with 33 million living in hunger. Black and brown communities, women-led households, and low-income families with young children are disproportionately affected.

As in Brazil, hunger in South Africa, where I grew up, is rooted in historical legacies, and food insecurity persists despite the constitution's explicit recognition of people's right to adequate nutrition.

Nearly 45 per cent of the population experienced



STEPHEN DEVEREUX

The writer is a development economist with expertise in food security, is a research fellow with the Food Equity Center at the Institute of Development Studies



To overcome hunger and poverty, the people most vulnerable to food insecurity must be at the centre of efforts to create more equitable food systems.

Our tolerance for inequitable food systems is growing, even in wealthy countries. There is still time to reverse course, but only if policymakers collaborate with civil-society organisations to support community-led food initiatives and to ensure that marginalised groups are included in decision-making at all levels

moderate or extreme food insecurity between 2018 and 2020 – twice as many as in Brazil during that period.

We produce more than enough food to feed the world's population. So, what is going wrong, and how can it be fixed?

The first problem is that governments remain unwilling to act. In the UK, there is a lack of political will to address deepening inequalities, and the country's inadequate welfare system has forced food banks and charities to pick up the slack. That will change only when rising levels of hunger start to cost politicians votes.

In South Africa, civil-society organisations and the media are working to raise awareness

about food insecurity and hold the government to account. Since March 2022, for example, the online newspaper Daily Maverick has published a series of articles about hunger in South Africa under the title "Food Justice." Many NGOs in the country, like Gift of the Givers, provide food to those in need, while other groups pressure the government to deliver on its mandate to ensure the right to food. Such efforts certainly point in the right direction, but much more needs to be done.

The second problem is a familiar one worldwide: victim blaming, like the UK politicians who claim that people use food banks because they cannot cook or manage their

household budget. This is as inaccurate as it is unproductive: structural disparities and power imbalances, not individual choices, are driving food insecurity, hitting small-scale farmers, marginalised groups, and women the hardest.

To overcome the underlying systemic hunger and poverty, the people most vulnerable to food insecurity must be at the centre of efforts to create more equitable food systems that improve both their access to nutrition and their livelihoods.

That means supporting community-led initiatives that are designed with marginalised groups' needs in mind. It will also be critical to develop local and national policies that target

historical inequities and to ensure that those suffering from hunger are included in decision-making at all levels.

The UK city of Brighton and Hove offers a good example of how community groups and government officials can work together to address hunger and poverty. By using a "whole-system" approach, whereby different departments of the local government (including health, planning, and transportation) collaborated with school kitchens and community organisations, the city was able to improve access to healthy food and reduce childhood-obesity rates. Moreover, successive food and food-poverty strategies since 2006 have enabled stakeholders to identify relevant issues and adapt programmes as needed. This long-term vision, coupled with a cross-sectoral approach that is not limited to food organisations, has been key to the city's success.

©Project Syndicate 2023

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

• Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
• Choose from a wide range of brands & models
• PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
• Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

أوربيت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds

SUNDAY

OCTOBER 15, 2023 | RABEE AL AWWAL 29, 1445 AH

OMAN DAILY

Observer Classified Section

Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

Ali al Maashari: 99639264
ali.almashari@omandaily.om

Saada al Rashdi
95919344

94501166
24649593
24649595

النماني للشحن
AL NAMANI CARGO
DOOR TO DOOR AIR AND SEA CARGO WORLD WIDE

DOOR TO DOOR CARGO

INDIA BANGLADESH NEPAL PHILIPPINES UAE INDONESIA EUROPE UK CANADA USA

WHATSAPP 96353654 TOLL FREE NUMBER 80066766
Follow us: f i n t www.alnamanicargo.com

Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)

Contact No: 99074072

Job Vacancy

FERROTECH GROUP OF COMPANIES for its Oman branch looking for Sales Engineer with 3-5 years experience in Cable Management Systems and related products.

Candidates with relevant experience & valid Oman Driving License can apply to recruitment23oman@gmail.com

Salary OMR 500/- Month
(Car, Fuel & mobile allowance will be provided)

FLAT FOR RENT

FLATS for rent in north Al Hail: Ground floor: 2 rooms, 1 Majlis, 2 toilets, kitchen. First floor: 3 rooms, 1 Majlis, 3 toilets, kitchen. Contact number 95588775.

IN Darsait near the Indian Schools, 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, kitchen, store, with free Wi-Fi. RO 220 monthly only. Tel: 99315986

FOR RENT

FLATS and offices for rent in Muscat. 96379095, 98403020.



AUDIT, ACCOUNTING, VAT, TAXATION

Contact: 97239696 95355638

Gulf Center Consultancy & Audit
Muscat, Sohar, Salalah, Sur

HAVE A PROPERTY FOR RENT?

Advertise with us.

Contact us on: 99639264

FOR RENT

Flats for rent

- 1) Darsait, near Indian School. Two bedroom flat, bath attached, hall, kitchen and guest toilet. One bedroom flat, hall, kitchen and toilet.
- 2) Al Khuwair, near Rawasco. One bedroom, bath, kitchen, AC, curtains.
- 3) Al Ghubrah, near Mars Hypermarket. Two bedroom flat with attached bath, hall, kitchen and guest toilet. One bedroom flat with attached bath, hall, kitchen and guest toilet.
- 4) Al Ghubrah, near Indian School. Two bedroom flat with attached bath, hall, kitchen and guest toilet.

*All flats provided with AC. TEL: 91473374 / 97886085

FOR SALE

DISCONTINUOUS
PU Sandwich Panel Machine, running condition, for sale.
Contact number: 99205104. Mail iD: mktho@omantel.net.om

Sale of left over Project Material available at Nizwa

A reputed company from Oman invites Bids for immediate sale of

- 1) Unused high quality project material procured from O&G end user's approved sources.
- 2) Material ranges from Nuts / Bolts to DSS Pipes / DSS Flanges / Nipolets & Sweepolets.
- 3) Used European made Flushing Machine and accessories in good working condition.

Interested Purchasers may write with in next 7 days to material20240@gmail.com or contact at phone no 94727312 for list of items and other details.

EAGLE FREIGHT EXPRESS
DOOR TO DOOR COURIER SERVICES
INDIA | NEPAL | BANGLADESH

25 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE FAST DELIVERY EXCELLENT SERVICES

WORLD WIDE CARGO SERVICE Tel.: 99432926, 78211708, 92319472, 93350126
Head Office (H.O.) Room No.: 218, 1st Floor, Aircargo Complex, Branch Al-Hail, Email: eaglefreightexpress@gmail.com

ROYAL CARGO
DOOR TO DOOR CARGO

ALL OVER INDIA INDONESIA NEPAL AIR EXPORT (Port to Port) SEA EXPORT (Container Booking)

SERVICES BY AIR & SEA

PICK UP FREE ANYWHERE IN MUSCAT 93213206

FOR RENT

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocoraches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

SIT. WANTED

ACCOUNTS professional with 17 years' experience in Oman seeks senior level opportunity. Please contact: +968 78581435.

ARCHITECTURAL Engineer looking for a job, resident in Salalah. Expertise in Business Management, Marketing & Sales. Mob: 97602926

EXPERT in selling and marketing goods produced in Oman to the UAE markets and vice versa is looking for a good break. 78501743.

M Com graduate, with Oman Driving Licence, residing in Muscat with 1 year and 4 months work experience as Media Executive in India, seeking Accounts Assistant or other eligible jobs. Ph No: 71755901. E-mail: krishnanmahesh02@gmail.com

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN male 25 years, B Com, 2 years experience in Digital Marketing, currently in Oman on a visit, looking for a suitable opportunity. Contact: 97908857

SIT. WANTED

ACCOUNTANT & sales Executive, Indian male, 31 years, BA English, specialised in Accounting. 2 years experience in India & 6 years experience in Oman. Seeking position in Accounts/Sales fields (has Oman license). Mob: 78805951. Gmail: akhilgopinath2017@gmail.com

ARCHITECT with three years of experience, 28-year-old Indian woman with a B.Arch., looking for work. Mobile: 96021743, sairainowshad3@gmail.com

SUDANESE lawyer and legal adviser, with more than 30 years of experience in Sudanese courts of all levels and types. Available in Muscat, Tel: 79121176, Yasir. Elmahi@hotmail.com

INDIAN national with accomplished track record in Sales, Debt collection and Marketing of various products, having D/L, release, excellent knowledge of Oman and UAE markets, can promote and sell any product. 78501743

ACCOUNTANT (male), MBA Finance and a Certified SAP FICO Consultant with 7 years work experience from Oman in Finance Department. Looking for a suitable position. Contact: 99685330. Email: hussain_ca87@yahoo.com



OMAN عمان DAILY

Observer

For Advertisements

Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office

Mohd Al Rashdi
99841230
m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

Ali Al Maashari
99639264
wadiameeh@yahoo.com

Salalah Office

Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suhar Office

Musalam Al Saidi
99429192
sohardaily@outlook.com



@omanobserver
www.omanobserver.om



ENTERTAINMENT

Girls participate in a bicycle race along a street on the occasion of International Day of the Girl Child, in Karachi. — AFP



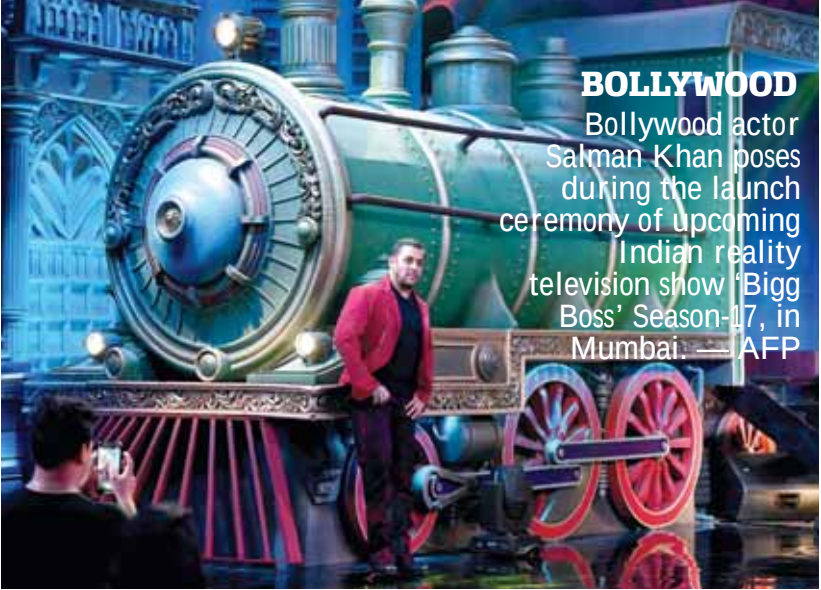
WORK

A worker cleans windows on a high-rise building in Beijing. — AFP



FILM

Film-maker Sam Wrench arrives for the “Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour” concert movie world premiere at AMC The Grove in Los Angeles, California. — AFP



BOLLYWOOD

Bollywood actor Salman Khan poses during the launch ceremony of upcoming Indian reality television show ‘Bigg Boss’ Season-17, in Mumbai. — AFP



FARMING

Afghan children harvest peanuts at a field in Qarghayi district in Laghman province. — AFP

art & life

SUNDAY | OCTOBER 15, 2023 | RABEE AL AWWAL 29, 1445 AH | OMAN OBSERVER | www.omanobserver.om | features@omanobserver.om



Ancient Aflaj is still relevant in many parts of Oman

BY KHALED ABDUL MALAK

They are like the arteries keeping the body alive. Oman's ingenious ancient system, Aflaj, has kept the arid country's fields and date palm groves green for thousands of years. The traditional method of narrow, mud-walled underground and surface canals, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is in northern parts of Oman and constitutes the backbone of agriculture.

Omanis have survived through the ages by managing and sharing water in fair and effective ways through the use of the Aflaj, the only irrigation resource that existed in Oman before the introduction of pumps in the second half of the last century.

The Aflaj may date to 500AD, but archaeological evidence suggests that irrigation systems existed in the highly arid area as early as 2500BC. Using gravity, water is channelled from underground sources or springs to support agriculture and domestic use. The management and sharing of water in villages and towns are underpinned by mutual dependence and communal values and guided by astronomical observations.



Managing and distributing water in ancient times was specific to every village with a wakil, the person in charge of equitably distributing water.

"In the old days, we had no watches, so during the day, we were using the sundial to divide the time of irrigation for each family and during the night, it was the position of some specific stars with the peaks of the mountains surrounding the village," said Hmeid al Hattali, the wakil of Al Hijir, a village in Wadi Bani Kharus in Al Batinah Governorate.

"For example, when the star Al Thanab touches the peak of Al Ruus, we open the water for Mohammed bin Salim, and we stop it when Al Thanab reaches Al Aaqbah and direct it to another family and so on," he added.

Hattali's father was the wakil of the village before him. "He taught me everything, the names of all the stars we observe and the way to calculate the time of use of the falaj water for each house in the village. All of this is registered in my head; nothing is written."

Hattali said he fears the old



knowledge will disappear with him when his son Yusuf takes over. "He will not need this science anymore because he will rely on his smartphone," Hattali said.

More than 3,095 aflaj are believed to exist in Oman, according to a 1997 survey, of which many are in use. Now and then, the villagers do maintenance of the falaj, clearing the channel of leaves and other litter.

There are three main types of Aflaj in Oman, said Abdullah al Ghaffri, director of the Aflaj Research Unit and assistant pro-

fessor at Nizwa University.

"The Dawoodi falaj is a long channel dug underground that runs for several kilometres with a depth usually reaching tens of metres, and the water is present in this kind of channel all year round," Al Ghaffri said.

"Al Awabi falaj runs more than 10 kilometres under the wadi bed at a depth of more than 20 metres in some sections. The Ghaili falaj receives water from ponds or running water, and their depths do not exceed 3 to 4 metres. Water quantities increase in this Aflaj

directly after rainfall and usually dry up quickly during extended dry periods."

The importance of the falaj depends on water quality, which varies between hot and cold and between fresh drinking water, saline water and alkaline water mixed with valley water, considered suitable for agriculture, Al Ghaffri said.

He said there is also the Ayni falaj, which draws water directly from the springs. One kind of spring water contains varying proportions of mineral salts and is suitable for medical treatment.

The Aflaj represent a major water resource for meeting water needs in Oman. They play a large role in the economy of Oman's rural areas. As such, experts and officials are engaged in a broad effort to preserve the institution and the way of life it has made possible. The geographic distribution of water resources and aflaj help explain the pattern of scattered small habitations in the country's heartland. A falaj can support only a limited number of people, and the cooperation it demands for maintenance and operation has helped to organise life in the isolated, tightly-knit communities of Oman's interior.

Instagram Top Picks



rajesh_eimc
Salalah, Oman

Follow

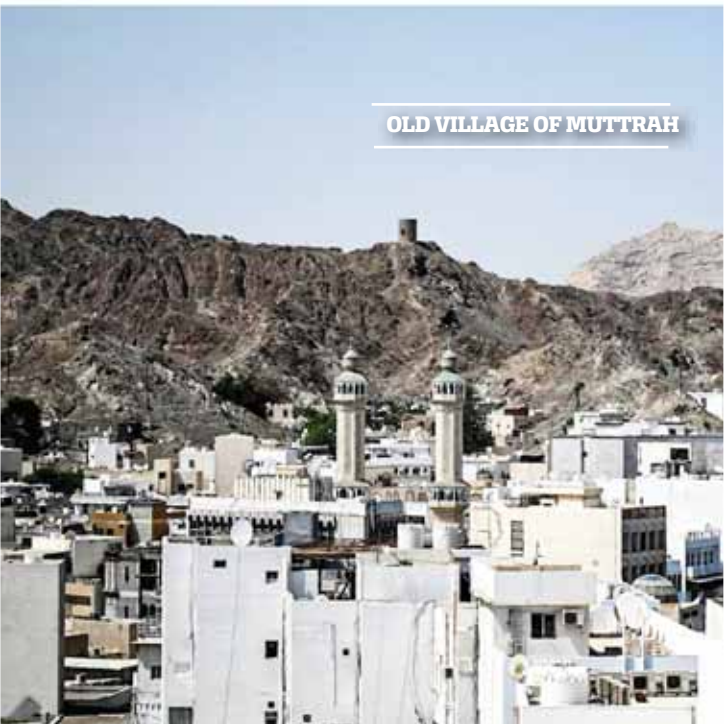


SPINNING THE WEB



aj_views_365
Muttrah Fort

Follow



OLD VILLAGE OF MUTTRAH



rajesh_eimc
Salalah, Oman

Follow



GOOD TO TAKE ROUND

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

MUSIC

Madonna launches tour celebrating 40 years as ‘Queen of Pop’



Madonna performs at the 2019 Pride Island concert during New York City Pride in New York City. — Reuters File

GERMAIN MOYON

THREE-AND-A-HALF MONTHS after she was hospitalised with a bacterial infection that forced the cancellation of her 40th anniversary “Celebration” tour, Madonna returns on Saturday with the start of a 78-date tour.

At 65, the singer looks set to put her health woes behind her with a six-month-long tour of Europe and North America starting at London’s O2 Arena.

The tour will also take in the Accor Arena in Paris on November 12, 13, 19 and 20 and the Bell Center in Montreal on January 18 and 20, before winding up at the Palacio de los Deportes in Mexico on April 24.

The show promises to be a “documentary through her vast career” drawing on archive footage and studio recordings from the four decades since her breakthrough single “Holiday” in 1983, according to her musical director Stuart Price.

“A greatest hit doesn’t have to be a song. It can be a wardrobe, it can be a video, or a statement,” Price told the BBC in an interview.

Madonna spent several days in intensive care in New York after being found unconscious in her New York apartment in June.

But the singer was back and fighting fit after her health scare, Price said.

“The person that is going to

take the stage looks incredible, sounds incredible, performs incredible,” he said.

The star’s hospital stay meant that the North American leg of the tour -- originally due to begin on July 15 in Vancouver -- had to be rescheduled with the European leg opening as planned on Saturday.

“My first thought when I woke up in the hospital was my children,” Madonna said in July in a social media post. “My second thought was that I did not want to disappoint anyone who bought tickets for my tour.”

“My focus now is my health and getting stronger and I assure you, I’ll be back with you as soon as I can!” she added.

The Grammy-winning icon behind classics including “Like A Virgin” and “Material Girl” has asserted incalculable influence as one of music’s top stars.

Her decades-long career, which has also taken in acting, film directing and business ventures, has made her one of the wealthiest artists on the planet.

In 2020 she underwent hip replacement surgery following an injury sustained on her “Madame X” tour.

Madonna, whose full name is Madonna Louise Ciccone, was born in August 1958 in Michigan, to parents of Italian and French-Canadian origins.

— AFP

BOOK REVIEW



The OED was made up of a wide range of gloriously colourful figures, all of whom volunteered their time as an act of service, or pleasure. — Yale University Press

IN THE BEGINNING WERE THE WORD NERDS

DENNIS DUNCAN

ACCORDING TO THE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY the earliest known person to mention a sponge cake in writing was Jane Austen. Austen is also our earliest source for “doorbell,” not to mention “sprawly,” “fragmented” and “irrepressible.”

When the OED was conceived in 1857, the proposal that started the ball rolling declared that it should be “an historical monument, the history of a nation contemplated from one point of view.” Unlike its predecessors, the new dictionary should be descriptive rather than prescriptive, including all the words of the language, current and archaic, highblown and vulgar. Moreover, it should trace their shifting meanings over the centuries, and always — crucially — support its assertions with the evidence of published quotations.

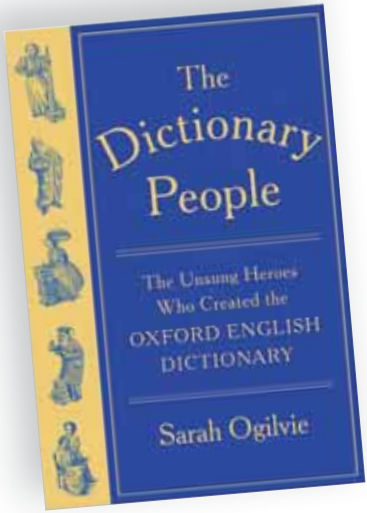
But how to do this? To find, for every word in English, its earliest appearance along

with the moments when it branches into a new sense? An editor was appointed and a list of likely texts for inspection drawn up, but the real work had yet to be assigned. Ahead lay millions of hours of reading and mulling, logging any word that seemed unusual or used in a distinctive way.

For this, the general public would be enlisted: The OED would be a crowdsourced project. Appeals were issued far and wide, with The New York Times remarking wryly that readers with “any superfluity of words about them” should contact the British Philological Society.

In fact, those who volunteered to read for the new dictionary would be given somewhat clearer guidance, particularly when responsibility for the project passed to the greatest and longest-serving of the Dictionary’s editors, an irrepressible autodidact by the name of James Murray.

Potential contributors were asked to “make a quotation for every word that strikes you as



Sarah Ogilvie's sprightly “The Dictionary People” pays tribute to the explorers, suffragists, murderers and ordinary citizens who helped create the Oxford English Dictionary

rare, obsolete, old-fashioned, new, peculiar or used in a peculiar way.” Each should be written out on its own paper slip, 6 by 4 inches or a half-sheet of notepaper, along with the text (plus date and edition) in which the quotation appeared. All slips should be returned to Murray and his sub-editors working from their “Scriptorium,” an ice-cold shed in the back garden of Murray’s house on the outskirts of Oxford.

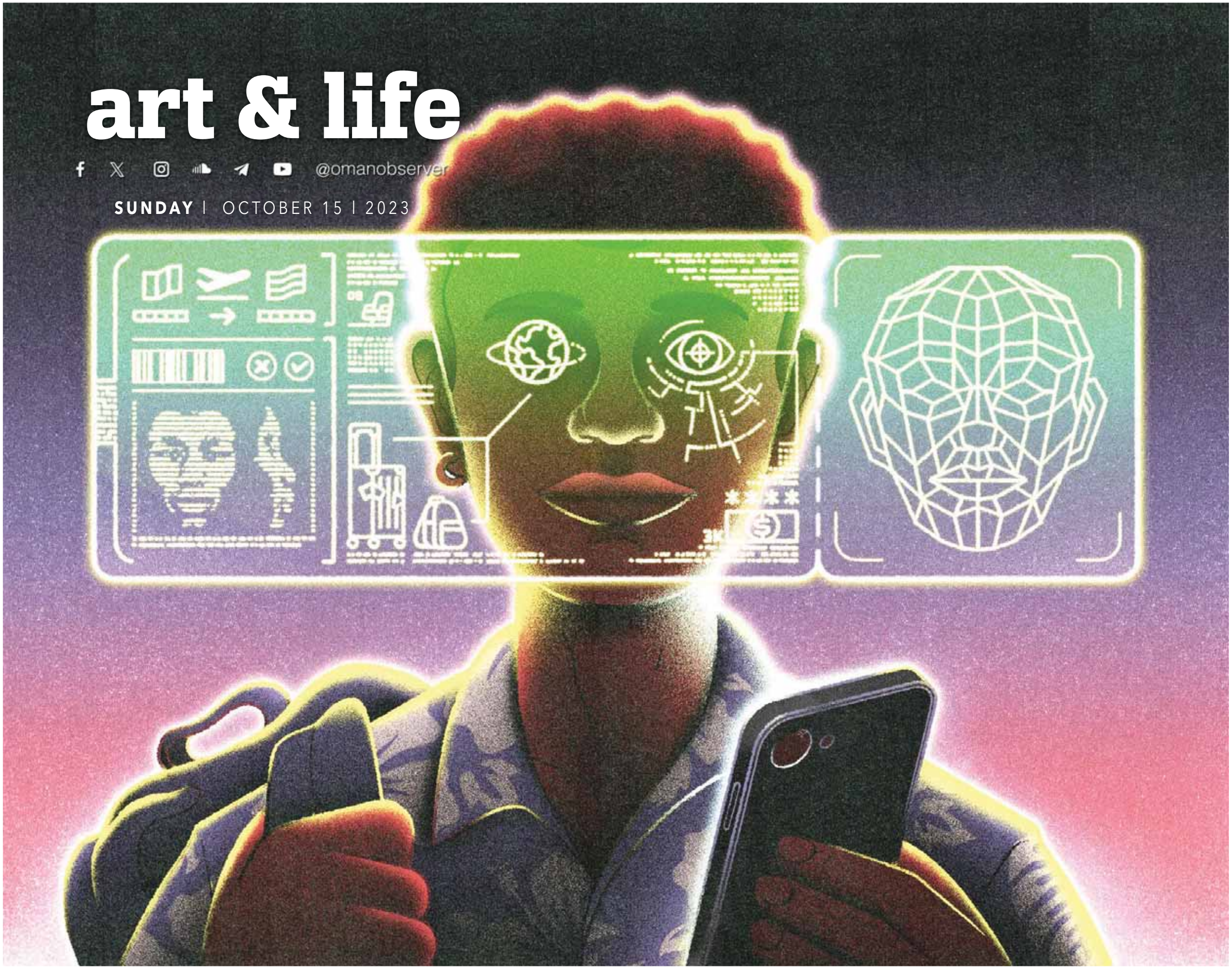
This was a perfectly sensible plan until things turned sprawly. When Murray took the reins in 1879 he estimated that the O.E.D. would be completed within a decade. He was off by 40 years.

Murray would not see further than the letter “T,” expiring as he did on a summer’s day in 1915, soon after writing his last definition, “twilight.”

In 1928, at a dinner to celebrate the work’s completion, prime minister Stanley Baldwin began his oration by running through the OED’s vital statistics: its 15,000 pages, its 178 miles of type, its 400,000 main entries supported by two million illustrative quotations. “Perhaps before I begin, I may make a confession,” he deadpanned. “I have not read it.”

Now Sarah Ogilvie has provided a sprightly, elegant tribute to the ordinary readers — the “word nerds” — who made up the bulk of the OED’s work force, largely unpaid and unsung, filling in millions of slips in their spare time.

— The New York Times



An illustration of a person holding a cellphone and wearing a backpack over one shoulder with a greenish box of digital information superimposed across the face. There is a digitised map of the person's face on one side and information about bags and flights on the other, and the box appears to be scanning the person's eyes.

Facial recognition software is speeding up check-in at airports, cruise ships and theme parks, but experts worry about risks to security and privacy

Your face may soon be your ticket. Not everyone is smiling

JULIE WEED

YOU MAY NOT have to fumble with your cellphone in the boarding area very much longer. As the travel industry embraces facial recognition technology, phones are beginning to go the way of paper tickets at airports, cruise terminals and theme parks, making checking in more convenient, but raising privacy and security concerns, too.

"Before Covid it felt like a future thing," said Hicham Jaddoud, a professor of hospitality and tourism at the University of Southern California, describing the way contactless transactions have become common since the pandemic. That includes facial recognition, which is "now making its way into daily operations" in the travel industry, Dr Jaddoud said.

Facial recognition systems are already being expanded at some airports. At Miami International, for example, cameras at 12 gates serving international flights match passengers' faces to the passport photographs they have on file with the airlines, letting passengers at those gates board without showing physical passports or boarding passes. The company installing the systems, SITA, has been contracted to do the same for a number of international gates in 10 other US airports, including Boston Logan International Airport and Philadelphia International Airport. (Passengers can opt out and still present physical documents instead, SITA says.)

The technology is also speeding up the wait for some passengers at immigration. Members of US Customs and Border Protection's Global Entry program can now bypass lines at the kiosks at seven US airports, including Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and Washington Dulles International Airport, by taking a selfie on arrival using its new phone app. The selfie is matched with the agency's facial biometrics database.

Cruise ship operators are also betting that facial recognition will improve passengers' experience. On Carnival Cruise ships, a camera photographs passengers each time they get on or off the ship to know who's aboard in case of an emergency, and to make sure only authorised people are on the ship. Facial recognition also allows passengers to receive pictures of themselves taken by onboard photographers, rather than scanning hundreds of photos looking for the ones in which they appear.

Holland America, which uses similar technology, says facial recognition has sped up its check-in process by

As the use of facial recognition technology spreads, some experts worry about the risks to travelers' privacy and security. Unlike a password, which can be reset, biometric data cannot easily be changed without significantly altering your appearance

as much as 40 per cent. Both companies say they purge all biometric data after each voyage and that guests can opt out of the system.

Visitors to the theme parks on Yas Island, in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, can use a facial recognition system for entry and to buy food and souvenirs at attractions like Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi, Ferrari World Abu Dhabi and Yas Waterworld. Guests who sign up for the program submit a selfie using an app, which connects their photos with their tickets. When they arrive at the park, the turnstiles open automatically once a camera identifies them. And park guests who submit credit card information can also pay for souvenirs and food by looking into a camera. In the United States, Disney World said it tested facial recognition to enter parks in 2021 but decided not to keep using it.

Hotel chains are taking more of a wait-and-see approach, Dr Jaddoud said. Marriott tested facial recognition technology for check-in at two

hotels in China a few years ago, but there's no sign the broader industry has any immediate plans to roll out technology that might, for example, let guests open their hotel rooms with their faces instead of key cards.

As the use of facial recognition technology spreads, some experts worry about the risks to travellers' privacy and security. Unlike a password, which can be reset, biometric data cannot easily be changed without significantly altering your appearance, said Phil Siegel, co-founder of the Center for Advanced Preparedness and Threat Response Simulation, a nonprofit group.

As with other sensitive data, like Social Security numbers, people's images could be used by criminals, perhaps to impersonate people online or even create deepfake videos, said Nima Schei, chief executive of Hummingbirds AI, a start-up that works with facial recognition.

If biometric data is stolen or misused, travellers don't have much recourse, said Alex Alben, who teaches privacy, data and cybersecurity at the University of California Los Angeles and University of Washington law schools. There are no federal laws regarding the use of biometric data, he said, although a few states are beginning to create a patchwork of legal protections, and in the European Union and Britain, companies must get permission from consumers to collect their data and must tell them what it will be used for.

Private companies' management of facial recognition data worries Jeramie D Scott, director of the Project on Surveillance Oversight at the Electronic Privacy Information Center. Companies, he said, could be hacked or could turn the data over to government entities, who might use it for surveillance. Some might even sell customers' biometric information or find other ways to profit off it and bury those intentions in the fine print, Scott said — a scenario that could echo the "Black Mirror" episode "Joan Is Awful," in which a fictional streaming service uses its terms-and-conditions agreement to hijack the main character's life for a TV series.

One company has already used facial recognition technology to exclude people from its premises. Last year, MSG Entertainment, which owns Radio City Music Hall in New York, barred a lawyer from seeing the Rockettes with her daughter's scout troop, because she worked for a firm the company viewed as adversarial. — **The New York Times**