

Duqm shifts focus to green manufacturing

H H Sayyid Theyazin inaugurates Duqm Economic Forum

Our Correspondent Duqm

H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, inaugurated the first Duqm Economic Forum on Monday. The forum is taking place in Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), under the theme 'Duqm Leading the Change.'

Organised by Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), the two-day forum aims to promote the promising economic environment in Oman in general and the available investment opportunities in SEZAD in particular. The event focuses on the potential of Duqm as a vibrant investment hub for renewable energy and



(Supplied photo)

green industries.

More than 400 investors, industry experts and technology specialists are attending the inaugural Duqm Economic Forum. As many as six agreements were signed at the event on Monday for new investment projects in

This game-changing shift towards promoting green manufacturing will present opportunities for innovation and investment in production, transport, storage and export of green energy

H E DR ALI AL SUNAIDY

the green industries sector in Duqm.

In his keynote address, H E Dr Ali al Sunaidy, Chairman of OPAZ, stated that Duqm is looking to advance its energy production capabilities by relying on renewable energy and the estab-

lishment of green industrial projects.

"This game-changing shift towards promoting green manufacturing will bring about a wealth of opportunities for innovation and investment in the production, transmission, transport, storage and export of green energy. This aligns with the goals and ambitions of Oman Vision 2040 and fulfils our commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050."

H E Sunaidy also pointed out that by making renewable energy and green hydrogen available in Duqm, other industries will prosper. "There are great opportunities. Besides the already licensed green ammonia and green hydrogen projects within the zone, the government has allocated thousands of square kilometres for renewables, most of which are within Al Wusta governorate, adjacent to the zone. It is very easy to connect to our Duqm liquid storages and export jetties at Port of Duqm and Ras Markaz."

The forum will review new

trends in green industries and the renewable energy sector, as well as key projects attracted by SEZAD. The event will also highlight the crucial role of SEZAD in supporting the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040 and achieving the goals of net zero emissions by 2050.

The event will also include discussions on various issues related to investment in green industries and the opportunities available to small and medium enterprises.

H E Sunaidy said, "This forum aims to inform us on how to readjust our utilities and service corridors to better cater to the needs of your future projects and to enhance the supply chain thought in this promising industry. We also aim to upscale our storage capacity both in the vicinity of Port of Duqm and Ras Markaz."

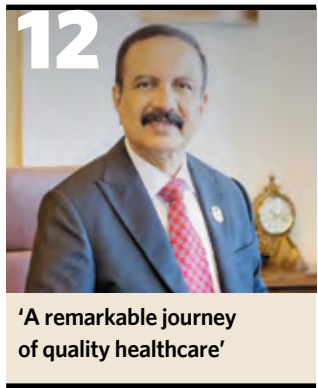
"Based on the outcome of this forum, we aim to attract new startups so that they can grow in this zone and create many sustainable jobs for our capable and talented youth."



Logistics supplement with this edition

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Omani Women's Day: Pioneers in progress



'A remarkable journey of quality healthcare'

EA to plant 100mn mangroves to counter climate change

Our Correspondent Muscat

Environment Authority (EA) and MSA Green Projects inked an agreement on Monday to launch Oman Blue Carbon, a project for cultivation of 100mn mangrove trees in Oman.

Marking a first for Oman, the initiative aims to generate carbon credits through mangrove cultivation. The project aligns with Oman's national strategy to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, as well as enhance environmental performance to combat climate change effects.

Scheduled for completion within four years, the project forecasts an estimated financial return of US\$150mn through blue carbon credit certificates.

The signing ceremony took place under the auspices of H E Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources. Government officials, private sector representatives and researchers specialising in terrestrial and ma-



The project seeks to eliminate 14mn tonnes of carbon dioxide

DR ABDULLAH AL AMRI

the country's planned transition to carbon neutrality by 2050.

It seeks to eliminate 14mn tonnes of carbon dioxide and bring about a marked improvement in natural habitats. It also aims to deliver community benefits and stimulate eco-tourism initiatives in the project's locations.

Mangrove and tidal marsh ecosystems are notable for their ability to capture and store significant volumes of coastal blue carbon, contributing to climate change mitigation. Amri added that mangroves play an essential role in regional ecosystems, offering vital protection against beach erosion, maintaining ecological balance and nurturing the growth of commercially significant fish and other marine species.

Oman predominantly features one of these mangrove species, the *Avicennia marina*, which has adapted to the country's hot and arid conditions. This species spans across various coastal areas, covering an approximate 1,030 hectares.

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Omani teen first from GCC to join UKRI

BREAKING BARRIERS

M Najmuz Zafar Muscat

In a milestone achievement for Oman, 19-year-old Aziza Saif al Mugheiry has broken new ground by becoming the first GCC national to join UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

She has been rising in prominence in the field of particle physics with her work at the ISIS Muon and Neutron Source particle accelerator, a division of the UK government agency Science



Aziza Saif al Mugheiry

and Technology Facilities Council.

Aziza's role at UKRI - the national funding agency investing in science and research in the UK - involves developing training ma-

terials and courses for scientists involved in muon and neutron experiments. Her work aims to advance and consolidate knowledge in diverse scientific domains including materials science and foundational physics.

As one of the youngest scientists from the Gulf region, Aziza is emerging as an inspiration and icon of hope, particularly for Arabs in fields where they are underrepresented.

"I initially found out about the opportunity at UKRI through a coursework assignment," Aziza said.

Continued on Page 03

A prestigious path to the top

Award categories

- Manufacturing Excellence
- Innovation & Technology
- Health and Safety Excellence
- Best New Product
- Employee Development and Training
- Global Reach and Impact
- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Sustainability in Manufacturing
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- FDI Achievement
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- Major Employer
- Omanisation Achievement
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AN APEX MEDIA EVENT BROUGHT TO YOU BY MUSCAT DAILY

OMANI WOMEN'S DAY

Pioneers in progress



Razan Hamad al Kalbani
An electrical engineer at PDO, she won the grand prize at an international competition held in South Korea beating 353 innovators from 18 countries.

"There are many opportunities for women currently in Oman. Women must seize these opportunities. If there is any scope of increasing these opportunities, I'll point to the fields of entrepreneurship, healthcare, research and critical thinking.

"Engagement and inventions in these fields can attract international attention to Oman and its people, which can result in getting huge investments. This will increase confidence in Omanis and facilitate their elevation to higher positions in leading companies around the world. The government will be encouraged to frame new rules and open more doors in the fields of research and innovation."

Alia al Mughairi
National longer jump record holder, she has won several medals at Arab and regional competitions.

"Women need more opportunities, especially in the field of sports, as they are not represented enough. Giving women more chances to participate in sports will empower and encourage others to chase their dreams.

"I have tried my best to contribute to the sports community through my training, medals and records. But, I believe all Omani sportswomen have done the same, and they all have a role in improving the sports environment for women."



Women are at the helm of a number of departments in varied sectors today, showing the level of trust His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the country have in them. As the country celebrates Omani Women's Day on Tuesday, Muscat Daily spoke with women achievers from diverse fields on their journeys and vision for Oman



Yasmeen al Alawi
Founder of Sprout, she won the first She's Next programme conducted in Oman by Visa and Bank Muscat for her pioneering healthy food business.

"It's very important for us to give back to society, especially for those who've been supported by scholarships. I think it's always about the first step; women can take this initial leap and decide whether it aligns with their passion and aspirations.

"Empowerment is about recognising one's capabilities, irrespective of gender. It's crucial for us to realise that women are just as capable as men.

"Having studied in Australia and Tokyo, I didn't choose to stay abroad. My intent was clear - to contribute to my own country. I want to showcase my passion to the world and demonstrate that women can excel in various fields.

"My biggest support comes from my family, especially my husband. A strong support network can take you a long way.

"Personally, I'm particularly keen on witnessing more women venture into entrepreneurship. To be frank, the landscape is quite male-dominated. In my restaurant groups, for instance, out of 300 members, there might be only three women. This gender disparity extends beyond the restaurant industry to various other fields.

"I believe the government should provide more support and encouragement to women. Witnessing women in prominent positions is crucial for representation.

"I think it's crucial for the government to offer increased support and encouragement to women. The presence of women in influential roles is vital for proper representation.

"The implementation of a mentorship programme, where seasoned individuals guide the younger generation, has the potential to create a substantial impact. I strongly believe that, with sufficient support systems in place, women can attain even more remarkable achievements. The government's active engagement in fostering increased representation and providing support for mentorship programmes and various initiatives is vital.

"Gender bias is undoubtedly prevalent, especially

in male-dominated fields. Being in such an environment can be challenging.

"I believe change begins with altering the mindset that perpetuates these biases, demonstrating that it's not only acceptable for women to enter these fields but that they are fully capable and already making significant contributions.

"My journey has been about overcoming challenges. Having previously worked in engineering in the oil sector, I noticed a shift in mindset when men witnessed women succeeding in such roles. However, resistance still exists in some quarters. I personally faced opposition, being told that I couldn't enter the field because of my gender. I persisted until I not only entered but led the team. This experience consolidated my belief that women should push their barriers."

Rawan al Mahrouqi
An artist and proprietor of Makan Studio, she is on a mission to propagate art among people of all ages and nationalities in Oman. She teaches sketching, painting and sculpting alongside an expert team.

"To mark Omani Women's Day, Makan Studio has opened a month-long joint exhibition *Art in Pages* by Omani and international women artists in Oman, besides a few male artists.

"This unique exhibition provides an intimate look into each artist's mind - some are filled with scribbles and doodles, some are more intentional, while others tell stories.

"The exhibition, which opened on October 10, features Amira al Musalmi, Debjani Bhardwaj, Pragya Bhatnagar, Maria Golubkova, Tarini Agarwal, Thuraya al Zubair, Nuha al Khusaibi, Leena al Kiyumi, Maryam al Alawi, Shalini Gupta Kumar, Rozita Nosrati, Wadhah al Rashdi, Fajer al Akhzami and myself, besides Salem Afifi, Mohammed al Attar (Mimoon Art), Ibrahim al Balushi and Siamak Dehbod.

"Women are an integral part of any society; any society that does not allow women's participation will



not flourish. A common hurdle women, especially young women, face is not being taken seriously enough.

"Gender bias is a common human experience. Women are the only ones able to bear children yet they may face discrimination, such as not getting hired because one is pregnant.

"In order for art and culture to grow, there needs to be more than one outlet and source. There is need for multiple institutions for multiple artists.

"My husband has been my biggest supporter since Day 1. He has always believed in me and my vision. And I'm very grateful for that. We are just getting started."



Balqees Sulieman al Hassani
President of community knowledge sharing platform Knowledge Oman, she has been in the education field for over 15 years. Balqees heads the Well-Being and Student Support Services of Al Sahwa School.

"Today, Omani women have a notable presence in many spheres of life and have been appointed to many of the highest offices. Under the wise leadership of our late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, which has continued under His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Omani women have been given equal opportunities to prove themselves in both the public and private sectors. H M Sultan Haitham has been supporting Omani women to rise and participate in different walks of life to make the best of their potential and education so they can have a role in contributing to the wealth of the country and be pillars in nation building.

"At Knowledge Oman, women are given equal opportunities to prove their potential. I have been President of Knowledge Oman for the past two years, and before that, Knowledge Oman was run by another female president as well. Today, many functions of Knowledge Oman are run by women. We continue to support, develop and acknowledge women's strengths and potential. We at Knowledge Oman empower youth with knowledge and skills equipping them to be part of our country's development.

"Women need to be provided equal opportunities and empowered to prosper in various fields. Family support, presence of role models and encouragement have always been a positive influence for women to progress at the workplace or start their own business ventures. Some traditional practices still restrict women to their maternal/domestic role, making it difficult for them to strike work-life balance. Some old practices are preventing women from unleashing their full potential in social and economic participation."



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Voter app for visually impaired launched

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Interior has rolled out the second iteration of the In-tekhab app, now enhanced with artificial intelligence technology to assist visually impaired voters. The app was unveiled by H E Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidi, Minister of Interior, alongside H E Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, and key officials involved in the electoral procedures of Majlis A'Shura. The launch was timed with the forthcoming elections for the tenth term of the shura. H E Sayyid Hamoud affirmed an ongoing initiative of his ministry to digitise services and pro-

The adoption of cutting-edge technologies, including artificial intelligence, aims to elevate the quality of services for citizens

H E SAYYID HAMOUD
AL BUSAIDI

grammes, a pivotal step in its digital transformation journey. "The adoption of cutting-edge technologies, including artificial intelligence, aims to elevate the quality of services for citizens, while streamlining the electoral process for candidates and voters alike."



(Supplied photo)

According to Abdul Rahman bin Ali al Hinai, Director of the Entekhab project, the app's audio feature, designed for visually impaired users, will be operational from the initial step of launching the app and entering ID card details, to the final stages of selecting a candidate and confirming the vote. He also informed that the updated version expedites the process of capturing voters' photos by incorporating an eye recognition feature. Visually impaired users can now choose candidates through an audio file containing the candidates' names. Ahmed bin Abdullah al Mamari, Supervisor of the app, noted that for the first time, voter data will be made available by geo-

graphical regions, covering villages, wilayats and governorates, alongside age demographics on election day. A novel feature - My Page - has been included in both the app and elections.om website. This feature allows candidates to articulate and share their electoral visions and objectives on a dedicated page, where they can also interact with registered voters in their wilayat via video broadcasts. Mamari added, "This new feature allows voters to peruse the list of candidates, engage with their posts, offer comments and acquaint themselves with candidates' achievements, community contributions and educational qualifications."

Sayyid Fahd discusses Palestine with GCC attorney generals

Muscat - On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, received attorneys general of the GCC states participating in a meeting hosted by the sultanate. After a welcome address, Sayyid Fahd pointed out that the sultanate is following up, with great sorrow and grief, the development of events in the Palestinian territories and the resulting suffering compounding the distress of the brotherly Palestinian people. Sayyid Fahd expressed hope that all offensives will end and respect for rules of international laws prevails. "The Sultanate of Oman reaffirms its permanent support for all efforts being exerted to stop the attacks and demolition that led to massive loss of life and property, hoping that sincere efforts will succeed in ending the violence and resumption of negotiations for security and stability in the region. Oman also hopes that the Palestinians will obtain their legitimate rights in their independent state." He affirmed that the GCC states strive to support greater communication among themselves and meet the aspirations of their people. "The judicial field receives the attention of GCC states, and GCC regulations and laws have



been unified. This has contributed to facilitating litigation procedures in courts," Sayyid Fahd explained. He stated that Oman accords special importance to everything related to the judiciary and the development of adjudication to ensure the application of justice and the accomplishment of equality among all citizens in all rights and duties.

Sayyid Fahd also touched on some proposals related to the GCC Attorneys Generals' meeting, which were approved and set for implementation. The GCC attorney generals conveyed their gratitude for Oman hosting the 15th meeting of GCC Attorney General and its efforts to ensure the success of the GCC march. ONA

Oman Airports to conduct AeroHack today

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Airports is set to host AeroHack on Tuesday at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, marking the first event of its kind in the sultanate. Powered by AWJ Innovation and .Nxt Ventures, AeroHack aims to foster innovation in aviation and aerospace by bringing together problem solvers, entrepreneurs, innovators, scientists, technology developers and designers. With trends in aviation rapidly evolving, there's growing need for inventive solutions in airport operations. Oman Airports is committed to establishing itself as a leader in innovation, both region-



(Supplied photo)

ally and globally, in anticipation of swift changes in user behaviour, environmental concerns and technological advancements. Deadline for registration to participate closed on August 31. On September 3, submitted ideas were assessed and the top 50 most creative ones were chosen. The next phase, which started on September 24, involved shortlisting the top 15 ideas. Teams underwent intensive workshops

from September 26 to 28 to refine their proposals. The 15 finalists will engage in an immersive two-day workshop experience starting on Tuesday, guided by industry specialists, culminating in their final presentations to a jury on Wednesday. The event will draw to a close on Wednesday under the auspices of H E Said bin Hamood bin Said al Mawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Infor-

mation Technology. The three most promising ideas will be chosen for top honors. Oman Airports will oversee the incubation of these winning concepts through a specialised lab designed to nurture emerging projects. The goal of AeroHack is to stimulate innovation in transportation and to explore fresh avenues for collaborative partnerships with creative thinkers in this field.

EA to plant 100mn mangroves to counter climate change

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Amri added that the project includes land reclamation and creation of artificial lakes tailored for mangrove cultivation. "The initiative anticipates an investment of US\$100mn to transform 20,000 hectares of land in Al Wusta governorate into suitable habitats for over 100mn mangrove trees." Manbhupinder Atwal, Chairman of MSA Green Projects, said, "Each mangrove tree functions as an oxygen-producing facility while simultaneously humidifying the local atmosphere. These trees act as a natural buffer between terrestrial and aquatic environments, mitigating soil erosion. Moreover, mangroves play a critical role in maintaining environmental equilibrium. Their captivating natural landscapes also offer untapped potential for the tourism sector."

Omani teen first from GCC to join UKRI

Continued from Page 01

"My senior lecturer recognised my potential and encouraged me to apply for the placement. After a few months, I got called in for an interview and shortly after, I was offered the position while attending an astrophysics lab." Aziza's educational background is rooted in the Middle East. "I attended International School of Choueifat - Dubai, which shares an identical system with its counterpart in Muscat. I am currently an undergraduate at Cardiff University, studying physics and astronomy," she informed about her current studies. Asked about the genesis of her passion for physics, Aziza attributed it to her family. "My father was an aeronautical engineer and the first acting-CEO of Etihad Airways. His love for space ignited my interest in astronomy and astrophysics," she said. "My mother and grandmother also contributed to my education, engaging me in solving math problems at a very

young age." Aziza elaborated on her role at UKRI, saying, "I develop scientific training modules aimed at researchers, including biologists, who lack the understanding of physics required for subatomic particle experiments." She's currently working on a variety of projects, from developing courses on Elementary Scattering Theory to Neutron Reflectometry. "In the next five years, I aim to complete my doctorate in physics or philosophy of physics," she added. "I am also involved in interdisciplinary projects that blend science, philosophy and the arts. I hope these projects will reach the public within the coming months" Aziza's journey is not just an individual achievement but a broader statement about the contributions of region's youth to global scientific research. As she continues to make strides in her budding career, Aziza stands as a beacon of inspiration for aspiring scientists in the Gulf and beyond.

Recall

2015-2016 (DS) Ram 1500 Pickup
2015-2016 (DJ) Ram 2500 Pickup
2015-2016 (D2) Ram 3500 Pickup
2016 (DF) Ram 3500 10K LB Cab Chassis

Recall Date: 17 October 2023

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production	Number of Affected Commodities
Ram 1500 Pickup	2015-2016	50

Recall consequence

The Side Air Bag Inflatable Curtain (SABIC) inflator on about 4,200 of the above vehicles could rupture. This could result in compressed gas rapidly escaping the inflator and material potentially being propelled into the vehicle, which could cause injury to vehicle occupants.

Recall Action

Replace both SABICs.

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

خط المستهلك
Consumer line
800 79009
800 77997

هيئة حماية المستهلك
Consumer Protection Authority
www.pccp.gov.om

For more information **800 22 0081** | www.aib.gov.om

Agreements signed for new green industry projects at Duqm forum

Our Correspondent
Duqm

The Duqm Economic Forum, which opened on Monday at the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), witnessed the signing of several investment agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs) for new projects in SEZAD.

These new investment agreements are expected to enhance Duqm's pioneering role in attracting green industry projects and enhancing their presence in Duqm. The agreements and MoUs included major projects in the sectors of renewable energy, green hydrogen, green ammonia production, and green steel production, in addition to an agreement for the Ras Markaz road project.

The agreement - for the construction of the 51km dual road project from Duqm Airport to Ras Markaz - was signed between the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) and a joint venture of Strabag Oman and the Saudi-based Al Rosan Contracting Company.

The cost of this road project is approximately RO57.6mn, and it is expected to be completed in



OPAZ signed an MoU with Korea's POSCO and France's ENGIE to produce green ammonia and green hydrogen derivatives in downstream industries with a production capacity of up to 1.2mn tonnes annually

the second half of 2025, officials said.

OPAZ signed a usufruct agreement with the Hyport Duqm consortium for a land area

between 250-500MW using solar and wind energy. OPAZ also signed an MoU with the Port of Duqm and Shell Oman for a new project.

Furthermore, OPAZ signed an MoU with BP to establish a manufacturing facility to produce green hydrogen derivatives in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

OPAZ also signed an MoU with the consortium of Korea's POSCO and France's ENGIE to allocate a plot of land in the Special

Economic Zone at Duqm to establish a plant to produce green ammonia and green hydrogen derivatives in downstream industries with a production capacity of up to 1.2mn tonnes annually.

The ceremony also witnessed the signing of three agreements related to the Vulcan Steel's green steel project in SEZAD, with a target production volume of about 5mn tonnes annually of green steel.

OAB confirms strong position after bond redemption

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has announced the full redemption of the perpetual subordinated bonds for RO42.553mn on Tuesday at an interest rate of 7.5% per annum.

The redemption of the bonds was announced on September 14 in MSX (Muscat Stock Exchange).

Sulaiman Ali al Hinai, General Manager, Head of Wholesale Banking Group at OAB, said, "Oman Arab Bank has been working domestically, regionally and internationally on bonds offerings for many years, such as our successfully completed first issuance of AT1 perpetual bonds of RO30mn on December 29, 2016, listed in the MSX."

Upon the completion of this issuance, he said, the capital position of the bank strengthened significantly and our ongoing work on such initiatives is continuing to make OAB's position in the market ever stronger.

"We will continue to diversify funding sources and strive to attract foreign direct investment in Oman, these successful redemptions underline our ability to service our obligations and enhance investor confidence,"



Sulaiman Ali al Hinai

Hinai added.

As per the terms and conditions of the OAB's perpetual subordinated bonds, the bank has issued an irrevocable notice to holders of these bonds on September 14 this year that it will fully redeem all the bonds on the redemption date, October 17, by paying the principal amount together with interest accrued for the period.

Post-redemption, the bonds will be delisted from the MSX Bonds Market. The process of transferring amounts to bondholders, based on investor records, will be carried out by the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (MCDCC).



OER signs MoU with Emirates Steel Arkan to supply limestone

Abu Dhabi, UAE - Oman and Etihad Rail Company (OER), the developer and operator of the UAE-Oman Rail Network, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Emirates Steel Arkan, the UAE's largest steel and building materials manufacturer, to facilitate the export of raw materials from the sultanate to the UAE.

Under this agreement, OER will provide logistics solutions to manage the transportation of raw limestone, which Emirates Steel Arkan plans to import from Oman to its cement factories in Al Ain, UAE.

The MoU was signed by Ahmed al Musawa al Hashemi, CEO of OER, and Saeed Khalifan al Ghafri, CEO of Emirates Steel, an Emirates Steel Arkan company.

"We are proud to work with leading construction material manufacturers such as Emirates Steel Arkan, further strengthening our strategic partnerships. This agreement represents the vision for this project, which was launched to link the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates

opportunities for the mining industry and construction materials production sector in Oman and the UAE," he added.

Emirates Steel CEO Saeed al Ghafri remarked, "Our collaboration with OER enhances our supply chain capabilities by leveraging the railway network that connects both countries. This agreement paves the way for integrated logistics solutions for the transportation of raw materials to and from our cement

This agreement represents the vision for this project, which was launched to link the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates

AHMED AL HASHEMI

plant in Al Ain, boosting our operational efficiency and cost-effectiveness, and reducing environmental impact. Furthermore, this enhances our transport infrastructure and reinforces cross-border supply chains."

Oman and Etihad Rail will provide logistics solutions for Emirates Steel Arkan through annual transportation of 4 to 6 million tonnes of high-quality raw materials

to Al Ain. This ensures Emirates Steel Arkan can produce and export 2 to 3 million tonnes of finished goods to regional markets each year.

The collaboration between OER and Emirates Steel Arkan creates several benefits, most importantly driving the revenues of the mining industry and increasing investments in Omani quarries. By connecting ports and manufacturing hubs, the railway network will provide quarrying companies in Oman with direct shipping solutions to export their products to regional markets.

This contributes to achieving the Oman Vision 2040, which aims for a diversified, competitive, and sustainable economy that features unified, modern frameworks.

The agreement showcases the significance of the rail network as a crucial link in the transport and logistics chain spanning the region, which will attract businesses in both countries and international companies in the region and build long-term commercial partnerships to achieve sustainable economic growth. As the joint railway network will reduce dependence on cars and trucks, it will also drive transformation towards a low-carbon future, supporting both countries' objectives to achieve net neutrality by 2050.

Markets wary as Italy budget targets tax cuts

Milan, Italy - A year after her first budget drew praise for its prudence, Italy's Giorgia Meloni set out her 2024 plans on Monday amid market fears over a loosening of the purse strings.

The far-right leader and her coalition partners agreed around €24bn in new measures focused on support for households and businesses still struggling with inflation, as well as helping women back to work after having children. After a Cabinet meeting to agree the plans, Meloni said it was a budget that was "very serious and realistic and which does not waste resources, but concentrates them on the main priorities".

These priorities, financed with



€15.7bn in additional debt and unspecified spending cuts, are intended to "defend the purchasing power of families", she said.

But the largesse comes despite a declining economic outlook for the eurozone's third

largest economy, with Rome having forecast last month lower than expected growth.

And the government now expects a deficit of 4.3% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2024, up from 3.7% estimated

previously.

The market response to that announcement was immediate, with a sharp increase in the cost of Italy's borrowing costs.

Nicola Nobile from Oxford Economics said Meloni's government, which includes Matteo Salvini's far-right League, was showing its 'true colours' with a 'sharp shift in fiscal strategy'.

"The decision not to maintain a conservative fiscal approach will keep financial markets very nervous," he said.

The budget plans include renewing a reduction in salary contributions for those earning up to €35,000 a year, at a cost of around €10bn.

AFP

MENA banking sector witnesses 30% surge in net profits, 12.2% increase in net assets

Dubai, UAE - The Middle East and North Africa region has experienced a remarkable year-on-year (YoY) growth with a 30% surge in net profits and a 12.2% increase in net assets, as per the region's latest banking report.

According to the EY MENA H1 2023 Banking Report, the region's YoY returns on equity also recorded a rise of 6.18%, and the net interest margin grew by 0.2%.

This robust performance extended to the region's banks, which witnessed an 18.8% growth in operating income. Total deposits have increased by 6.08%, and the loan-to-deposit ratio (LDR) is up by 5.43%.

Non-performing loans (NPLs) are expected to remain at the current levels in 2023, with banks adopting a selective approach to lending. Regulatory oversight will be in the spotlight this year with the ongoing implementation of Basel IV regulations and a heightened focus on battling financial crime, electronic know your customer (eKYC) processes, anti-money laundering (AML) and cybersecurity. The industry can also expect further



acceleration of financial market infrastructure initiatives such as EKYC platforms and open banking initiatives across the GCC to continue.

Charlie Alexander, EY MENA Financial Services Leader, says, "With limited effect to the ongoing banking industry crisis in the US and Europe, the GCC banking sector has undergone a fundamental transformation and is now pursuing a strong upward trajectory, boosted by an increasing demand for lending.

"This development is playing an increasingly important role in the region's overall economic growth amidst ongoing economic

diversification drives. Another positive trend is the pursuit of net-zero roadmaps by most GCC countries, which has led to a rise in the demand for sustainable finance, a key enabler of the transition to clean energy."

The outlook for the region has been strengthened by robust oil and gas prices and a major boost in non-oil activity, which has also supported credit demand.

Other prominent trends dominating the banking sector include robust fiscal condition, government investments, an anticipated improvement in the global economic landscape and technological advancements.

Digital banking on the rise

Digital transformation is the future of the MENA banking sector. Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping the financial services industry in the region, bringing faster and more personalised banking services through chatbots. Among other priority areas are digital banking, mobile payments, open banking, tokenisation, digital currencies, blockchain and sustainable finance. Banks are also developing new customer experience initiatives aimed at shifting competition away from products to lifestyle banking. This includes introducing chatbots and loyalty programs, in addition to leveraging the latest customer analytics tools to improve their offerings.

MENA banks are increasingly investing in digital banking solutions to address the ever-evolving needs of their customers while balancing customer experience and risk management.

By strengthening their risk management technologies and systems, banks are boosting their ability to withstand potential financial risks.

Oman International Hospital hosts first international symposium

Oman International Hospital is holding the first international symposium on revisional metabolic and bariatric surgery, a groundbreaking event bringing together leading experts in the fields of metabolic and bariatric surgery.

The symposium, which was inaugurated on Sunday at Oman International Hospital will continue until Tuesday.

A distinguished panel of surgeons from Spain - Prof Torres, Dr Sanchez Pernaute and Dr Muguerza - will address the symposium in addition to the experts from Oman and they have earned international recognition for their extensive experience and contributions to the field.

The symposium was attended by both online and offline attendees as well as experts from around the globe. The event will provide attendees with the opportunity to gain an understanding of the latest developments in metabolic revisions as well as bariatric surgery, as well as hearing from professionals in these fields.

The key objective of this symposium is to provide an opportunity for healthcare professionals, surgeons, researchers, and industry experts to share ideas, discuss challenges, and explore innovative approaches in the field of revisional metabolism and bariatric surgery. The event will feature keynote lectures, panel discussions, two operations with their unique



We are delighted to be hosting the 1st International Symposium on Revisional Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery at Oman International Hospital

DR ROBERTO CAYON

techniques being broadcast worldwide, and networking sessions, all of which aim to stimu-

late collaboration and enhance knowledge exchange.

"We are delighted to be host-

ing the 1st International Symposium on Revisional Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery at Oman International Hospital," said Dr Roberto Cayon (Medical Director and Head of Surgery).

"The symposium will serve to provide professionals in the field with an opportunity to interact, learn from each other, and ultimately improve patient outcomes through the application of the most modern methods in

the field of bariatric surgery."

Marcelo Pereira, CEO of Oman International Hospital, stated, "We are honoured to host global experts at the International Symposium on Revisional Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery. We are committed to advancing patient-centric care through international collaboration and innovation in revisional metabolic and bariatric surgery, aiming to make a meaningful

impact on the lives of patients worldwide."

Oman International Hospital is a leading healthcare institution dedicated to providing exceptional medical care to the community.

With state-of-the-art facilities, a skilled team of healthcare professionals, and a commitment to patient well-being, we strive to deliver top-notch medical services.

Hongqi announces exclusive tie-up with Al Qurum Sports

Hongqi Oman, the luxury automobile brand, and Al Qurum Sports, Oman, the hub for padel enthusiasts, are excited to announce an exclusive partnership aimed at elevating the sport of padel in Oman.

The landmark agreement, signed at the Hongqi showroom by Mohsin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, underscores both organizations' commitment to excellence and community involvement.

"Sports have the power to bring communities together, and this partnership will provide a platform to engage the youth in meaningful experiences," said Mohsin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE.

"At MHD ACERE, we are thrilled to join forces with Padel Addicts and Padel Avenues, Oman. It is an exciting opportunity for us to direct the spotlight towards our brand's identity and services. Together, we are excited to embark on a journey that fosters our vision of creating connections, strengthening our community, and engaging with our customers in a truly unique way."

By sponsoring tournaments at both Padel Addicts and Padel Avenues, Hongqi aims to contribute significantly to the growth and development of the padel community in Oman.



MoE implements Shell NXplorers training

The Ministry of Education (MoE), represented by the Department of Innovation and Scientific Olympiads, in cooperation with Oman Shell, on Sunday began a two-day training programme targeting 32 teachers at Hotel Kyriad Muscat.

Resource persons from Kid City educated participants on how to present the Shell NXplorers programme for Youth, which is an innovative educational programme targeting school students between the age group of ten to twelve years.

This programme has been designed to create and enhance their complex and creative thinking necessary to bring about pos-

itive changes, through interactive and simplified workshops to encourage science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education.

The programme included focusing on three global goals: clean water and sanitation, clean and affordable energy, and responsible consumption and production. It also focused on the 'six' steps in the Shell NXplorers programme, which are stimulating, impressing, innovating, researching, and inventing, selecting, and developing, and presenting and sending.

It also touched on the gains of students participating in the NXplorers programme.

MHD offers experience of opulence in X90 Plus 2.0T

Mohsin Haider Darwish Automobiles LLC, the official distributor of Jetour in Oman hosts a range of prominent Jetour models, including the Jetour X90 Plus 2.0T. This masterpiece combines opulence, intelligence and unparalleled safety in a way that redefines the luxury SUV experience.

Highlighting the features of the X90 Plus 2.0T, Mohsin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD Automobiles, said, "The Jetour X90 Plus 2.0T sets a benchmark in luxury SUVs, combining elegance, intelligence and safety in one extraordinary vehicle. Elevate your driving experience and embrace the future of luxury travel today."

At 4858mm in length, 1780mm in height, and 1925mm in width, the Jetour X90 Plus 2.0T exhibits spaciousness that knows no bounds. This vehicle's interior is a testament to lavish design and indulgence. The Jetour X90 Plus 2.0T features a Hexagonal Chrome-plated front grille, exuding a distinctive and bold character. Enhanced visibil-



ity and safety are assured by the Matrix LED headlamps.

Advanced features include keyless entry, a push-start button, mobile phone wireless charging, a projection screen, and Wi-Fi integration. The premium cabin space makes it the perfect family-friendly travel companion for all your journeys. The Jetour X90 Plus 2.0T boasts

a 12.3-inch touch multimedia interface, smartly integrating features and options for user-friendly access.

A 3-spoke multi-function steering wheel wrapped in perforated leather gives drivers fingertip control. Smartphone integration includes Bluetooth and screen mirroring, while an all-digital instrument cluster en-

hances the visibility of displayed information. The touchscreen panel features an intelligent air conditioning zoning system.

The Jetour brand is created for those who desire modern technology, comfort, adventure, and affordable luxury. Jetour commits to creating the best Chinese luxury cars covering SUV/MPV at an affordable price.

Customers can reach out to the team on 2453 3373 or via WhatsApp on 7146 1999 and get in touch with any of the brand's sales personnel to request a test drive.

MHD Automobiles LLC is one of the main operating divisions under MHD LLC and represents premium automotive brands. MHD LLC is a key contributor to the economy of Oman committed to the progress of the country in accordance with the government's vision for capacity building, human capital creation and efforts towards Omanisation. With the strength of rich history and a firm belief for the future with able leaders at the helm MHD LLC is looking to power the future of Oman.

Jetour is part of a globalized automobile group based in China with over 20 years of formidable experience in automotive engineering. The association boasts an array of self-owned and joint-venture brands with its independent subsidiaries focusing on particular brands of vehicle segments.

Aster Royal hospital opens in Ghubra with world class doctors

A 175-bed multi-speciality tertiary care facility spread over 25,750sqm area, the Aster Royal had a grand opening on Sunday by H H Sayyid Fahar bin Fatik al Said, Special Envoy to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, in the presence of Dr Azad Moopen, Founder Chairman and Managing Director of Aster DM Healthcare and Alisha Moopen, Deputy Managing Director of Aster DM Healthcare.

The hospital is one of the oldest healthcare providers in GCC and India that has made a major move to establish its facility in Ghubra.

Speaking at the inauguration, Dr Azad Moopen said, "Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital in Ghubra, Muscat is a testament to our unwavering commitment to making world-class healthcare services available in Oman. We hope this shall help many patients from the sultanate to avoid travelling overseas to seek advanced medical care. With our focus on many cutting-edge procedures to be done in the Aster Royal, we hope to raise the bar in healthcare excellence in the country."

He added that the hospital now stands ready to serve



Oman's 5mn population and it represents a beacon of excellence and innovation in the field of healthcare in Oman and the Middle East.

The hospital is equipped with cutting-edge technology of specialised centres, including a Cath-lab for Advanced Cardiac Care, Interventional Radiology Centre, Advanced Urology Centre, Dialysis Unit with CRRT, Neurosciences Centre, Sports Medicine and Orthopedics Centre, Interventional Gastroenterology, Advanced Therapeutic Endoscopy, Minimally Invasive Surgeries and a Centre for

Women and Child Health with a key focus on natural journey.

"Having started our journey in Oman 14 years ago, Aster DM Healthcare with its four hospitals, six clinics and six pharmacies, is all-set to redefine clinical excellence and patient experience in the country. Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital in Muscat is our commitment to make quality healthcare easily accessible for the people of Oman," said Alisha Moopen.

It was revealed that the existing building of Aster in Ghubra will be a rehab centre for patients.

Summit in China amid Israel-Hamas war

At the top of the invitation list to China’s Belt and Road Initiative forum is Russia’s Putin

Beijing, China - China began welcoming on Monday representatives of 130 countries for a conference that will be overshadowed by the Israel-Hamas war, as an increasingly assertive Beijing is asked to help de-escalate the violence.

At the top of the invitation list to China’s Belt and Road Initiative forum is Russia’s President Vladimir Putin, on his first trip to a major global power since the Ukraine invasion threw his regime into international isolation. Leaders have begun to pour into the Chinese capital for a gala event marking a decade of the BRI, a key project of President Xi Jinping to extend China’s global reach.

While China hopes the forum will help boost its international standing, Israel’s war with Palestinian organisation Hamas will continue to dominate the headlines.

More than one million people have fled their homes in scenes of chaos and despair under heavy Israeli bombardment of the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip.

Israel’s bombing has killed at least 2,670 people in Gaza,



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov meeting his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Beijing on Monday (AFP)

mainly civilians, and flattened entire neighbourhoods.

China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi condemned Israel’s actions for going ‘beyond the scope of self-defence’ and called for it to ‘cease its collective punish-

ment of the people of Gaza’.

“(Israel) should listen earnestly to the calls of the international community... and cease its collective punishment of the people of Gaza,” Wang said on Sunday, in China’s strongest re-

sponse to the conflict so far.

Western officials have criticised Beijing for not naming Hamas in statements on the Israel-Gaza conflict.

Wang spoke on Sunday with US Secretary of State Antony

Blinken, who called on China to use its ‘influence’ in the Middle East to push for calm.

China has a warm relationship with Iran, where the clerical leadership supports both Hamas and Hezbollah, the Lebanese group

that could open a second front against Israel.

This year, China brokered an entente between former regional foes Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Beijing’s special envoy Zhai Jun will visit the Middle East this week to push for a ceasefire and peace talks, China’s state broadcaster CCTV said on Sunday, without specifying which countries he would visit.

The BRI summit would allow Beijing to frame attendance as a gesture of support for its position on the Israel-Hamas war, said Niva Yau, a non-resident fellow with the Atlantic Council’s Global China Hub.

“Any head of state that attends the summit, it’s almost as if they agree with Beijing’s positions on these global issues,” she said.

Strategic dependence

Several leaders are already in Beijing ahead of the two-day forum, which starts on Tuesday.

Among them are the prime ministers of Hungary, Ethiopia and Cambodia, and the presidents of Kenya and Chile.

Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov flew into Beijing on Monday and within hours held talks with his Chinese counterpart.

Lavrov thanked China for inviting Putin as the summit’s ‘chief guest’, according to a read-out from Moscow, which later said the top diplomat would head to North Korea after Beijing.

Relations between China and Russia are ‘on the rise’, Lavrov told Wang Yi, adding that their two leaders ‘will discuss them in their entirety when they meet’.

Wang, in turn, said China ‘appreciates’ Russia’s support for the Belt and Road Initiative.

“Both sides should plan commemorative activities, deepen strategic mutual trust, consolidate traditional friendship, and promote friendship from generation to generation,” he said.

Putin is expected to arrive overnight.

Trade between China and Russia this year has soared to levels not seen since the beginning of Moscow’s war in Ukraine, with Chinese imports of Russian oil offering Moscow a critical lifeline as international sanctions bite.

China has refused to condemn the Ukraine war in an effort to position itself as a neutral party, while also offering Moscow vital diplomatic and financial support.

At the heart of the deepening partnership is the relationship between Xi and Putin, who have described each other as ‘dear friends’.

In their symbiotic alliance, each relies on the other to help counter Western dominance.

Putin hailed ties with Beijing in an interview with state broadcaster CGTN ahead of his visit, and praised ‘highly relevant and significant’ initiatives put forward by Xi.

AFP

Latest attempt: US House to elect speaker today

Washington, US - The US House of Representatives, paralysed for the past two weeks amid a leadership fight among Republicans, will vote on Tuesday in its latest attempt to elect a speaker, members were told on Sunday.

The blockage in the House for one of the most powerful positions in US politics - second in line to the presidency - has few precedents. Members have grown increasingly frustrated as the absence of a speaker has prevented action on key spending measures and kept the chamber from reacting to crises like the Israel-Hamas war.

While a temporary speaker, Patrick McHenry, was named after the surprise ouster on October 3 of Kevin McCarthy, his replacement has few real powers. McCarthy fell victim to sharp divisions between Republican moderates and a small core of far-right backers of former president Donald Trump.

After a tense week marked by several reversals, Ohio lawmaker Jim Jordan, a former wrestling coach who is close to Trump, is



A couple walks in front of the US Capitol at dusk on October 12 (AFP)

currently the only announced candidate for the job - but he appears far from having the needed backing to be elected to the powerful post.

The vote on Tuesday is set for noon (1600 GMT), its outcome far from certain.

“It’s time to get to work,” Jordan said on X, the former Twitter, as he urged his colleagues to bury their differences and rally around his candidacy.

Hamas’s surprise attack on Is-

rael, a historic ally of the US, has added to the pressure for a new speaker. Congress also needs to act on aid for Ukraine. And it faces a November 17 deadline to act on the budget and avert a possible government shutdown.

The Democratic Party of President Joe Biden is in a minority in the House - though only barely so - and essentially plays a spectator’s role to the Republican drama.

AFP

Swiss populists set to sweep elections with war on ‘woke madness’, migration

Geneva, Switzerland - Switzerland’s biggest political force, the right-wing populist Swiss People’s Party, kicked off its general election campaign with figure-head Christoph Blocher riding into Zurich’s ice hockey arena on a tractor trailer.

The SVP, which looks set to increase its lead on its rivals in the October 22 general election, started out as a farmers’ party.

But despite the rural theme of its campaign launch, it has come a long way from its origins and is now accused by some of skirting too close to the far-right.

Blocher, 82, an industrialist who made his fortune in the chemicals sector, took hold of the small agrarian party in the 1990s and transformed its outlook.

Blocher’s SVP is focused around three key principles: no to mass immigration, no to the European Union and no to the abandonment of Swiss neutrality.

“It then grew almost everywhere in Switzerland, becoming, from the 2000s, the leading Swiss party electorally,” Oscar Mazzoleni, professor of political



A pedestrian walks past electoral posters on October 13 in Lausanne, ahead of the Swiss federal elections (AFP)

science at the University of Lausanne, told AFP. “This success came with a new agenda: on the one hand, a much more prominent national defence policy and, on the other, an anti-system, anti-establishment outlook against the political class.”

In the 2023 campaign the party is taking up new battles, notably against ‘cancel culture’ and what it calls ‘gender terror and woke madness’. Following its foundation in a 1971 merger, the

SVP bumbled along at around 11 per cent in elections to the National Council lower house of parliament, finishing in fourth place and making it the smallest of the four parties in the power-sharing government.

But Blocher launched a vigorous campaign in the 1990s against the prospect of Switzerland joining the European Union, and in the 1999 elections the SVP shot up to first place with 23 per cent. Furthermore, in the 2015

polls in the midst of the European migration crisis, it hit 29 per cent: ‘not only its best score but the best score of all parties in Switzerland since the introduction of proportional representation in 1919’, said Sean Muller, a political scientist at the University of Lausanne.

The party’s liberal economic outlook appeals to business circles yet also finds favour in working-class neighbourhoods.

AFP

Ecuador’s youngest-ever president-elect Noboa vows to ‘restore peace’

Quito, Ecuador - Car horns in Quito blared in celebration on Sunday as banana empire heir Daniel Noboa, 35, became Ecuador’s youngest-ever president-elect, vowing to ‘restore peace’ to a country ravaged by a bloody drug gang war.

After the electoral authority declared him the victor and socialist rival Luisa Gonzalez conceded defeat, Noboa vowed that ‘tomorrow we begin work to rebuild a country that has been severely hit by violence, corruption and hatred’.

Long a peaceful haven between major cocaine exporters Colombia and Peru, Ecuador has seen violence explode in recent

years as enemy gangs with links to Mexican and Colombian cartels vie for control. The fighting has seen at least 460 inmates massacred in prisons since February 2021 - many beheaded or burned alive in mass riots.

The bloodbath has spilled into the streets, with gangs dangling headless corpses from city bridges and detonating car bombs outside police stations in a show of force. In August, the violence claimed the life of anti-graft and anti-cartel presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio, mowed down in a barrage of submachine-gun fire after a campaign speech.

He had been polling in second



Daniel Noboa speaks to supporters next to his wife Angela Lavania Valbonesi in Olon, Santa Elena province, Ecuador, on Sunday (AFP)

Tomorrow we begin work to rebuild a country that has been severely hit by violence, corruption and hatred

DANIEL NOBOA

place.

A state of emergency was declared after former journalist Villavicencio’s assassination, and Noboa and Gonzalez both campaigned, and voted, in bullet-proof vests and with heavy

security details. On Sunday, Noboa told supporters in his home town of Olon in the southwest his goal was ‘to restore peace... to bring back education to the youth’ and create jobs.

‘Destroyed’ country

Ecuadorans voted for 10 hours on Sunday with no reports of violence, watched over by some 100,000 police and soldiers.

“May we elect the best president because (he or she) will govern a country that is destroyed... to address all these problems such as insecurity,” Indigenous voter Ramiro Duchitanga told AFP in Cuenca in Ecuador’s south.

“It is a critical election,” added Freddy Escobar, a popular 49-year-old singer in Quito, citing crime as his main worry. “I am voting in fear, not knowing what will happen.”

The main concerns of Ecuadorans, according to opinion polls, are crime and violence in a country where the murder rate quadrupled in the four years to 2022.

Noboa, who obtained some 52 per cent of the vote according to a near-complete count, was elected to only 16 months in office to complete the term of incumbent Guillermo Lasso, who called a snap vote.

AFP

India’s Gaganyaan: Flight Test Vehicle Abort Mission set for Saturday

New Delhi, India - ISRO is all set for the Flight Test Vehicle Abort Mission a key part of its ambitious human space mission Gaganyaan, between 7am and 9am this Saturday, the space agency confirmed on Monday through a post on X.

The Test Vehicle is a single-stage liquid rocket developed for this abort mission. The payloads consist of the crew module (CM) and crew escape systems (CES), along with others.

This flight will simulate the abort condition during the ascent trajectory. Crew escape systems with crude modules will be separated from the test vehicle at an altitude of about 17km.

Subsequently, the abort sequence will be executed autonomously commencing with the separation of crew escape systems and deployment of the series of parachutes, finally culminating in the safe touchdown of crew module in the sea, about 10km from the coast of Sriharikota.

The crew module after its integration progress underwent various electrical testing, at ISRO’s facility in Bengaluru, and has been dispatched to Sriharikota on August 13.

This test will be a significant milestone for the overall Gaganyaan programme as a near-complete system is inte-



The preparations for the Flight Test Vehicle Abort Mission is underway in Sriharikota (ANI)

grated for a flight test. The success of this test flight will set the stage for the remaining qualification tests and unmanned missions, leading to the first Gaganyaan mission with Indian astronauts.

ISRO Chief S Somanath had on Saturday said there would be at least three more tests of the same nature in the coming days.

Gaganyaan project envisages a demonstration of human spaceflight capability by launching a crew of 3 members to an orbit of 400km for a 3-day mission and bringing them back safely to earth, by landing in Indian sea waters.

This programme will make

India the fourth nation to launch a manned spaceflight mission after the US, Russia, and China.

The Gaganyaan mission entails the safe transportation of astronauts to space and back. A crucial component of this mission is the deployment of drogue parachutes, which play a pivotal role in stabilising the crew module and reducing its velocity to a safe level during re-entry.

On August 23, India took a giant leap as the Chandrayaan-3 lander module successfully landed on the moon’s South Pole, making it the first country to have achieved the historic feat.

ANI

Muslim boy in US killed in attack

Washington, US - US President Joe Biden condemned the killing of a six-year-old Muslim boy as a 'horrific act of hate' on Sunday, after authorities charged the assailant with murder and hate crimes for an attack allegedly linked to the war between Israel and Hamas.

The child was stabbed 26 times by his landlord on Saturday and later died at hospital, while his 32-year-old mother was also wounded but expected to survive, the Will County sheriff’s office in Illinois said in a statement.

"Detectives were able to determine that both victims in this brutal attack were targeted by the suspect due to them being Muslim and the on-going Middle Eastern conflict involving Hamas and the Israelis," the sheriff’s office said, adding the killing took place about 40 miles (64km) west of Chicago.

Biden, in a statement late on Sunday, confirmed that the woman was the boy’s mother and said their 'Palestinian Muslim family came to America seeking what we all seek - a refuge to live, learn, and pray in peace'. "This horrific act of hate has no place in America, and stands against our fundamental values," added Biden.

AFP

No aid into Gaza as desperation escalates for millions trapped

Gaza/Jerusalem - Israel said on Monday there was no temporary truce to allow aid in or foreigners out of the Gaza Strip, as fears grew over the dire humanitarian situation faced by millions of Palestinians trapped in the heavily bombed enclave.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken returned to Israel on Monday - ahead of a looming ground offensive to 'destroy' the Hamas Islamist group that rules Gaza.

Israel declared war on the Palestinian Islamist group a day after waves of its fighters broke through the heavily fortified border on October 7.

Reeling from the deadliest attack in its history, Israel unleashed a relentless bombing campaign of the Gaza Strip that flattened neighbourhoods and killed at least 2,750 people, mainly civilians.

As Israel continued to mass troops along the Gaza border ahead of a major offensive, the Arab League’s chief called for an immediate end to military operations and for safe corridors to allow in aid.

The entire region was 'on the verge of the abyss', warned UN chief Antonio Guterres, as cross-border fires also intensified between Israel and the Lebanese Iran-backed Hezbollah group, which has warned of retaliation if Israeli forces invade Gaza.

In Gaza, scenes of panic, anger and despair were at every corner. Laden with suitcases, plastic bags or even mattresses,



Palestinians walks amid the rubble of buildings destroyed in an Israeli airstrike in the Rafah refugee camp in the southern of Gaza Strip, on Monday (AFP)

Reeling from the deadliest attack in its history, Israel unleashed a relentless bombing campaign of the Gaza Strip that flattened neighbourhoods and killed at least 2,750 people, mainly civilians

inhabitants of northern Gaza were frantically fleeing to the south after Israel’s warning to vacate before its major offensive.

But the arrival of hundreds of thousands of people was putting further pressure on already

stretched resources in the densely populated south where there is no escape valve.

"No electricity, no water, no internet. I feel like I'm losing my humanity," said Mona Abdel Hamid, 55, who fled Gaza City to

Rafah in the south of the enclave, where she is staying with strangers.

Trapped

Gazans are effectively trapped, with Israeli-controlled crossings closed and Egypt also having shut the Rafah border in the south.

Any departure of Palestinians from Gaza is a sensitive issue, with Arab nations fearing that it could lead to permanent expulsion, something which Blinken has also categorically rejected.

Foreigners have flocked to Rafah in the hopes of being let out, after Blinken said he was confident the crossing 'will be open' for aid into the strip.

Reports had suggested that Egypt was blocking the passage of Gazans with foreign passports until relief supplies are allowed in. But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office dashed hopes of a deal, saying in a statement on Monday that 'there is currently no ceasefire and humanitarian aid in Gaza in return for removing foreigners'.

Lynn Hastings, the UN humanitarian coordinator for the Palestinian territories, meanwhile decried that Israel was connecting humanitarian aid into Gaza with the release of scores of hostages kidnapped during the Hamas attack.

"Neither should be conditional," she insisted in a video posted by the UN.

"They have said they want to destroy Hamas, but their current trajectory is going to destroy Gaza."

'No guarantee of control'

Israel has massed forces outside the long-blockaded enclave of 2.4mn in preparation for what the army has said would be a land, air and sea attack involving a 'significant ground operation'.

Israel has also bolstered deployment to its northern border with Lebanon, where Hezbollah and Palestinian factions have exchanged fire in the last days with Israeli forces.

Hamas backer Iran has warned that an invasion of Gaza would be met with a response.

'No one can guarantee the control of the situation and the non-expansion of the conflicts' if Israel sends its soldiers into Gaza, said Iran’s Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian.

On Sunday, a rocket hit the UN peacekeeping base in southern Lebanon, while Hezbollah attacks killed one person in Israel, the Israeli military said.

AFP

LAUNCHING VIBRANT NIGHTS



Artists perform to launch the Vibrant Navratri 2023 dance festival in Ahmedabad, India, on Sunday (AFP)

Balkan meet urges Serbia-Kosovo talks

Tirana, Albania - European leaders urged dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia after a recent spike in tensions, as a regional Balkan summit opened on Monday in the Albanian capital Tirana.

Following the killing of a Kosovo police officer and three Serb gunmen in clashes in Kosovo’s volatile north, simmering friction escalated to the highest level in years.

"It is time to overcome conflicts that have continued for far too long," German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told the summit. "The recent escalation of the situation in north Kosovo has proven just how important that is."

On the eve of the event, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen urged Belgrade and Pristina to return to a Brussels-sponsored dialogue on normalisation of ties.

"This is the way towards a fu-



EU officials and western Balkans leaders pose for a family photograph in Tirana on Monday (AFP)

ture where Kosovo and Serbia will be part of the European Union," she said in Tirana on Sunday.

But Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic will not attend this year’s edition of the annual summit. He travelled instead to Beijing for the Belt and Road Forum,

where he is due to sign a free trade agreement with China.

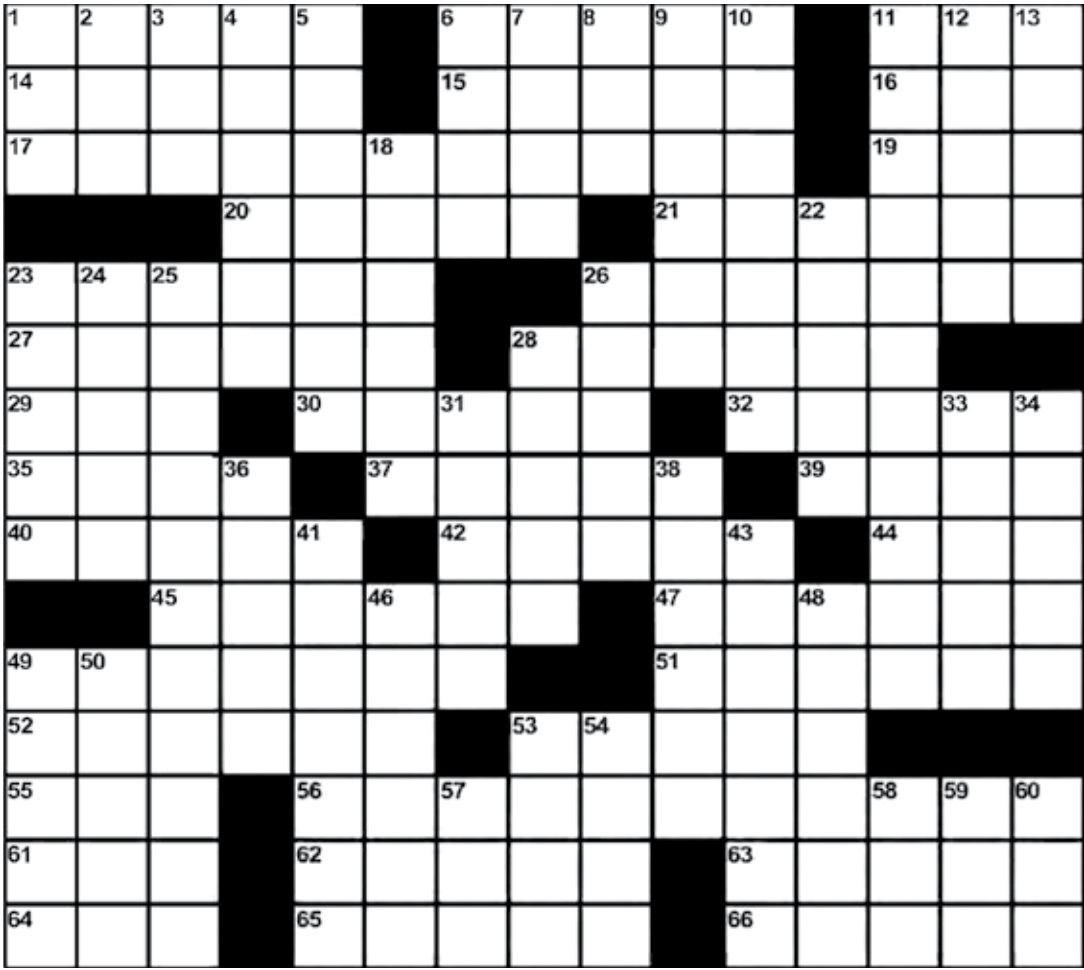
Serbia’s Prime Minister Ana Brnabic, however is present in Tirana. On the agenda at the meeting are discussions around a greater convergence with the European Union and 'supporting ecological and digital transition'

in the region.

During the one-day meeting, leaders are also expected to ratify an agreement on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications, and announce the opening of a College of Europe campus in Tirana.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Swap

6) Ancient calculators

11) Baby that barks

14) Lots ofland

15) Man-made fiber

16) Santa_, Calif.

17) Indy 500 leaders

19) Sleet-covered

20) "... porridge hot ..."

21) Bring under control

23) Trees with quaking leaves

26) Legendary actress Holm

27) Meeting with a medium

28) Holder of baby's milk

29) Attack, to a dog

30) Baylor of basketball fame

32) Begot

35) Looped cross

37) Japanese rice wines

P.S.

39) "As " (letter closing)

40) Arizona flat tops

42) Place of pilgrimage, for some

44) English 101 verb

45) More creative, perhaps

47) Abdominal protrusion

49) Disheartens

51) Author

52) Natural, hairwise

53) Newton of science

55) Shutout score, in soccer

56) It's undone for change?

61) Part of SUV, briefly

62) French school

63) Over, as a meal

64) Faux_ (public misstep)

65) Impede the progress of

66) Ice cream serving

DOWN

1) Spigot

2) Old electronics company

3) Line made with a compass

4) Extend farther down

5) True nature

6) They might be liberal

7) Make less intense

8) "Sure thing, skipper!"

9) Outmoded women's garment

10) "Yo mama" jokes, essentially

11) Professional butler,

for one

12) Whole, as a film

13) Check casher

18) Art-studio stands

22) Be in contradiction with

23) Black tea from India

24) Catcher in the Rhine?

25) Burdens for Grand Canyon mules

26) Like a dunce cap

28) Man on a "hog"

31) Arcade attractions

33) Creepy and supernatural

34) Dismal, to a bard

36) Built to take it

38) Unstressed vowel sounds

41) Prepared tea, in a way

43) Pumps full of bubbles

46) Bring on, as labor

48) Zigzag braid on clothing (Var.)

49) Time to rise, for some

50) "West Side Story" girl

53) Sea-girl land

54) Tarot reader, supposedly

57) Decay

58) "What was_ think?"

59) Keanu in "The Matrix"

60) A country's output, for short

NOTE PAD

S	T	I	L	E	B	A	H	T	S	R	B	C
O	W	N	E	R	A	D	I	E	U	A	L	L
B	O	N	G	O	P	L	A	Y	E	R	N	E
T	A	B	B	I	E	S	S	E	L	M	A	G
O	P	E	R	O	N	B	E	A	R	E	R	N
T	E	N	O	N	B	I	D	D	Y	M	U	D
E	R	G	S	P	O	N	G	O	D	A	M	E
R	Y	A	H	O	A	G	Y	T	R	I	B	E
L	E	A	N	T	O	M	O	A	N	E	D	
A	T	T	E	N	D	F	I	B	B	E	R	S
C	H	I	L	D	S	A	L	L	Y			
T	O	G	B	U	N	G	E	E	J	U	M	P
U	S	E	A	F	I	R	E		U	K	A	S
P	E	R	G	O	T	A	T		G	E	N	I

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

When something confuses you today, don't get annoyed. Get curious! Facts that don't line up are clues that you should follow. For example, if there's confusion over cleanliness, perhaps you need to get rid of the clutter in your life. This could be a sign that you need to toss out the bad attitudes, negative feelings, and self-doubt you've been holding on to for far too long. Look to the things that give you pause in your daily routine. You might need to address them on a deeper level.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

It's time for you to be in the audience cheering someone else on. Step offstage and into the wings and let someone else bask in the spotlight for a while. Singing the praises of other people and applauding a job well done cost you nothing and mean so much to the people receiving your adulation. Your opinions matter to a lot of people, and it's too rare that you share them. Try to be more forthcoming with your assessments in the future.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

It's a great time to get what you want today. Luck is definitely on your side. Whether you want to get some more time with the boss, the phone number of that cutie, or an interview for that intriguing job, it can be yours. The way things seem to just fall into place and in your favor will keep your spirits high all day and help clear your mind. This is a great day to start thinking about your plans for the future, including vacations, job goals, and more.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

There could be a bit of a power struggle today, so you'll have to keep your eye on the ball in order to win. No matter who wins the battle technically, you want the prize. You deserve some major recognition, but you're not going to get it if you stay wrapped up in some petty squabble or competition. You have to rise above it and focus on what's right for you, not on keeping that other person from getting it. Stop paying so much attention to others and pay more attention to yourself.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Your latest accomplishment is brightening your life tremendously, so it's only natural that you want to spread some of that light around. But don't brag too much about it. It's way too easy to drift over the line of being justifiably proud of yourself and into the territory of being a total bore. People want to applaud you. They want the chance to pat you on the back, and then be done with it. Droning on and on about your situation will only bring diminishing returns. Be sensitive to that.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Reconnecting with a person from your past is more important to your future than you think. Someone you used to work with, date, or attend school with could make a connection that proves valuable for your career, so get in contact with them today and find out what's going on. While you're reaching out, consider integrating them into your life more. They're more deserving of your time than you think. Give them another chance to be your friend.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

If you're taking action today, take it seriously. If someone wronged you or is sending too much negative energy your way, you need to stand up to them as soon as possible. You're ready for the confrontation, and you're confident that you'll prevail. And your confidence is well founded. The stars are sending you a lot of inner strength right now, and there's practically no way that you won't come out on top. You'll have your opponent on the ropes in no time.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Avoid sharing too much of your intimate life with others today, especially people who are new to your life. If someone you don't know very well asks you a personal question, don't be too specific with your answer. Stay general and vague about what you do in your free time, where you live, and even your marital status. It's not that you need to be unfriendly, it's just that you need to keep the boundaries clear until you know more about them.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You might need to come up with a compromise in a group situation today, but luckily your diplomacy skills are stronger than ever. Be confident that you can ensure clear, concise communication and help everyone feel heard, valued, and as though they're getting what they need. Encourage everyone to talk more slowly and listen to each other before responding. The sooner you step up and tell people what to do, the sooner all the tension will be over.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

A few people might need your help today, but don't worry. You'll be glad to give it. You're feeling generous and very willing to give your time, advice, or even money if you're in the position to do so comfortably. There are many erratic energies humming around your circle of friends and family now, and you seem to be the only person who has it all together at the moment. It's no wonder they look to you for the calm answers that will help them.

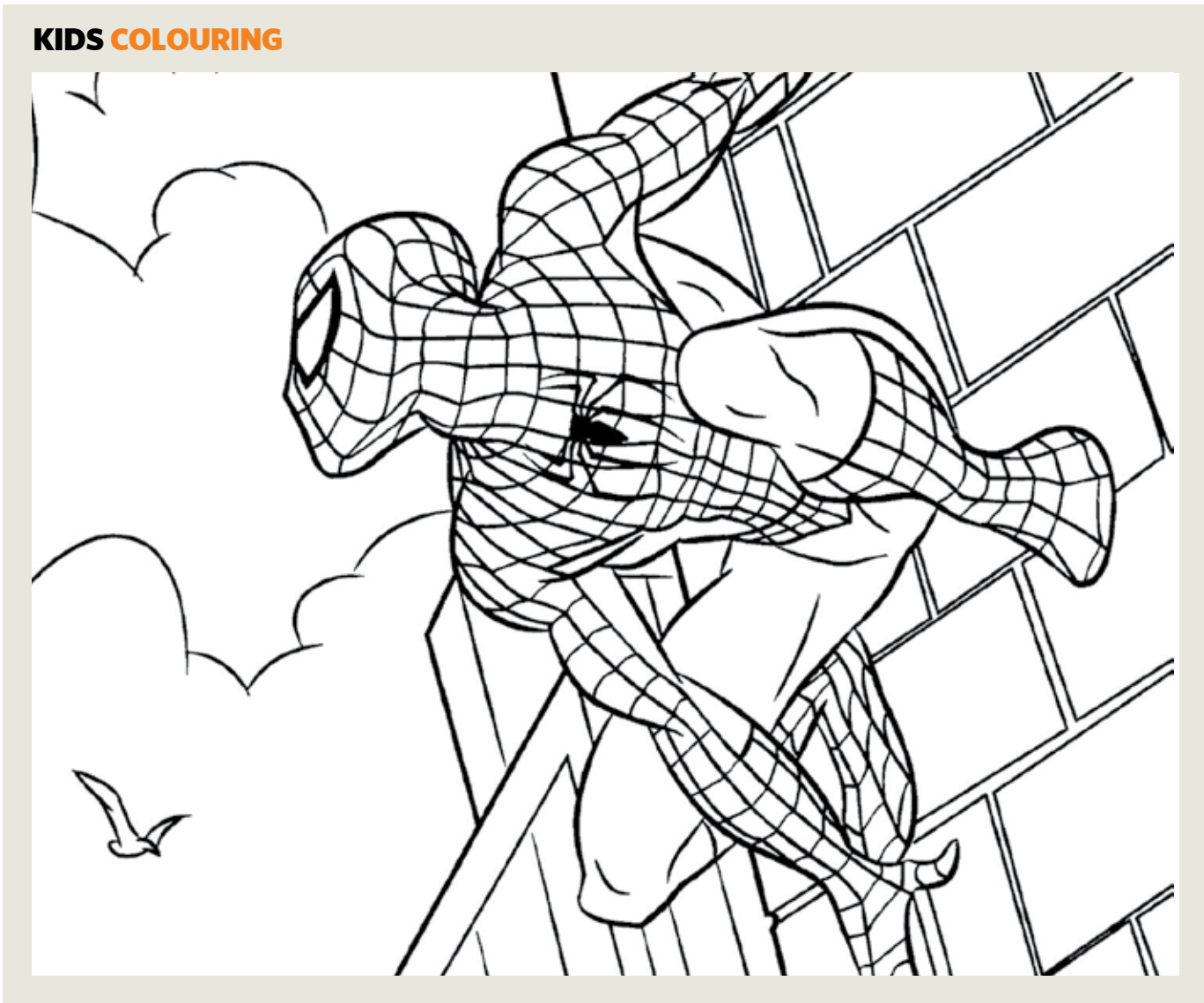
SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Respect and embrace the unique qualities of other people today. While not everyone you encounter is going to delight and impress you, they all deserve your understanding. You'll be missing out on some interesting people if you assume they aren't worth talking or listening to based on what they look like, what they're wearing, or who they're hanging out with. Keep from becoming too judgmental. You'll only be depriving yourself of good things.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

If you get stuck in an argument with a friend today, make sure you don't miss the point of the exchange. Keep your emotions in check and stay focused on what you really need to accomplish with this person. Chances are good that the issue you're squabbling about isn't the real root of the problem. You need to dig deeper to get to that. The other person might not be prepared to do this, but you can't get anywhere without their cooperation. Try to convince them to open up.

Answers: 1.D 2.A 3.C



BOGGLER

V	K	A	B
S	O	R	S
V	E	R	O
Y	I	T	O

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.

Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9 and only one instance of each number

3				4	8			2
	8		3		6			7
2		7		5	1			
5	9				7			
1			5	8	9			4
			6				3	9
			4	9		8		1
7			1		3		9	
4			8	7				3

WORD BUILDER

O C E

I C O

K

You have three minutes to find all the words contained in this word.

Rules: Words should be at least four letters long, proper nouns and duplicates don't count

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

8	9	2	6	7	8	6	1	4
5	6	4	5	9	1	8	2	7
1	7	8	2	6	4	3	5	9
6	3	9	1	9	2	7	8	
4	2	7	6	8	5	9	3	1
8	1	9	7	3	2	4	6	
9	8	3	1	5	6	7	4	2
1	4	7	1	3	6	2	5	8
2	5	6	8	7	1	4	9	3

'MISSION ACCOMPLISHED'

Spain, Scotland and Turkey lock up Euro 2024 spots

Paris, France - Spain clinched their place at Euro 2024 on Sunday after a 1-0 win away to Norway, also sending Scotland through from Group A as Turkey joined the growing ranks of qualifiers.

Barcelona midfielder Gavi scored the only goal early in the second half in Oslo, bouncing a shot into the corner to help Spain qualify for next year's finals in Germany with two games to spare.

"We are very happy because the team has grown a lot and has a great future," said Spain coach Luis de la Fuente. "We have worked to get to this moment."

They moved top of Group A on goal difference, but the result ensured Scotland punched their ticket to the tournament as well, with Norway five points adrift going into their last match next month.

"When we qualified via the play-offs last time, we set ourselves a target of doing it automatically next time - so that's the first mission accomplished," said Scotland captain Andy Robertson.

Norway have not qualified for



Spain's Gavi celebrates after scoring against Norway on Sunday

Turkey capped off a momentous week in which they were announced as co-hosts of Euro 2032 with Italy, by turning on the style in the closing minutes to beat Latvia 4-0 and book their place at the finals

a major competition since Euro 2000, but a team featuring Erling Haaland and Martin Odegaard

still has hope of advancing to the play-offs. Georgia thrashed Cyprus 4-0

in the other game in that group. Turkey capped off a momentous week in which they were announced as co-hosts of Euro 2032 with Italy, by turning on the style in the closing minutes to beat Latvia 4-0 and book their place at the finals.

Yunus Akgun broke the deadlock just before the hour and former Everton forward Cenk Tosun grabbed two late goals either side of a Kerem Akturkoglu strike

to complete the victory for the Group D leaders.

"I am very happy that we confirmed (qualification) tonight with this win," Turkey coach Vincenzo Montella told UEFA.com.

"I am perhaps the happiest coach in the world right now. That's why I'll enjoy it first, and then we'll continue our preparations immediately."

Turkey sit six points clear of Wales, who leapfrogged Croatia

into second as Harry Wilson got both goals in a 2-1 victory over last year's World Cup semi-finalists in Cardiff.

Wilson outran the Croatia defence to loft in the opening goal shortly after half-time and then glanced in a Dan James cross for the second.

Mario Pasalic reduced the deficit but Wales now have control of their own destiny heading into the concluding rounds of

qualifying games in November.

Croatia find themselves at risk of missing a major tournament for the first time since the 2010 World Cup after back-to-back defeats.

Romania eased to a 4-0 victory over Andorra to move a point clear of Switzerland, who have a game in hand after Thursday's trip to Tel Aviv was postponed due to the war between Israel and Hamas.



Jude Bellingham

Bellingham 'the difference' as England plot Italy revenge

London, United Kingdom - Italy return to the scene of their Euro 2020 triumph at Wembley on Tuesday to face an England side enhanced by the emergence of Jude Bellingham as one of the world's best players.

Bellingham was an unused substitute when the Azzurri broke English hearts on home soil just over two years ago, winning a penalty shootout to extend the Three Lions' wait for major tournament glory.

The 20-year-old Bellingham is now central to Gareth Southgate's plans as England look to seal qualification for Euro 2024 with revenge over the Italians.

Bellingham announced himself on the international stage with a series of eye-

catching performances at last year's World Cup.

Despite more pain in Qatar as they exited in the quarter-finals to France, a frightening array of talent available to Southgate makes England among the favourites for next year's Euro.

Bellingham is the star attraction after scoring 10 goals in his first 10 games for Real Madrid.

He has earned comparisons with Madrid greats Alfredo di Stefano and Zinedine Zidane for his blistering start in the Spanish capital.

England full-back Kieran Trippier believes Bellingham can now be the difference in delivering a major tournament for his country.

AFP

Swiss scramble to salvage draw with Belarus

St. Gallen, Switzerland - Switzerland left it late to rescue a 3-3 draw at home to Belarus on Sunday and save some face as captain Granit Xhaka won a record-equalling 118th cap.

The Swiss started the match at the top of Group I looking to take a step closer to reaching Euro 2024 at the Kybunpark in St. Gallen, against a team they had beaten 5-0 to kick off their qualifying campaign.

Murat Yakin's side are 14th in the FIFA rankings, while Belarus sit in 105th place.

But the Euro 2020 quarter-finalists fluffed their lines as they blew a 1-0 lead and then found themselves 3-1 down with just minutes to go. Veteran midfielder Xherdan Shaqiri - himself winning his 117th cap - scored the opener in the 28th minute with a left-foot curling effort from just outside the penalty box.

Belarus equalised in the 61st minute with a stooping header from Max Ebong.

The visitors took the lead eight minutes later with another header, Denis Polyakov nodding in this time from a corner.

And the more than 17,000 spectators in the Kybunpark were stunned when substitute



Switzerland's Xherdan Shaqiri (C) celebrates with team-mates after scoring against Belarus on Sunday (AFP)

Dmitri Antilevski struck a third for Belarus in the 84th minute, with the goal given the green light after a VAR check.

Switzerland went on the attack and Manchester City defender Manuel Akanji tapped in from a Shaqiri free-kick in the 89th minute to start the last-ditch comeback for the hosts.

Then a minute later, substitute Zeki Amdouni saved Switzerland's blushes, scrambling the equaliser after Belarus failed to clear the Burnley striker's header.

The result opens the door for Romania to overtake Switzerland in the group, though the top two go through to next year's finals in Germany.

Before the match, Xhaka was honoured for winning his 118th cap, with the 31-year-old Bayer Leverkusen midfielder now level

at the top with 1980s midfielder Heinz Hermann, who had held the record alone for 36 years.

Switzerland had been due to play Israel in Tel Aviv on Thursday but the match was postponed to November 15 due to the war between Israel and Hamas.

They then host Kosovo in Basel on November 18 and complete their campaign away to Romania in Bucharest.

Koepka defends LIV Jeddah title in play-off

King Abdullah Economic City, Saudi Arabia - Brooks Koepka defended his LIV Golf Jeddah title on Sunday, beating his American compatriot Talor Gooch in a play-off.

Despite losing out on the day at the Royal Greens Golf and Country Club the 31-year-old Gooch walked away with the individual season title. Gooch fired a final round eight-under par 62, forcing the play-off after run-away leader after the first two



Brooks Koepka celebrates with the trophy

rounds Koepka shot a 68.

Koepka was struggling on the greens and was even par through 15 holes. However, he made a 30-footer birdie putt on the par-3 16th when he needed it, and closed with another on the par-5 18th to catch up with the bogey-free Gooch.

In the play-off, after tying at 14-under par, the duo made birdies on the first extra hole, before Gooch dumped his second shot into the water.



Steve Clarke

Clarke's rejuvenated Scotland cruise to Euro 2024 qualification

Glasgow, United Kingdom - Scotland's serene qualification for Euro 2024 comes as a culture shock for a country used to crushing disappointment from its national team.

For only the second time since the 1998 World Cup, Scotland will grace a major tournament in Germany next year.

Qualification was secured on Sunday without the Scots kicking a ball thanks to Spain's 1-0 win in Norway.

But Steve Clarke's men had already done the hard work themselves with a scintillating start to what was considered a highly challenging group.

As well as facing the three-time European champions Spain, Norway and Georgia currently boast generational talents in Erling Haaland and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia. Scotland slayed all three, along with a pair of 3-0 wins home and away against Cyprus, in a perfect start to the campaign.

Aiyappan stars in Vanderlande’s win

Muscat - Vanderlande defeated AER by 108 runs in the A Division League 2023-24 powered by Khimji Ramdas LLC.

Imran Ilyas Raghu 59(55) and Balamurugan Balsamy 56(42) notched up half-centuries while Aiyappan B 43(49) and Abhishek Madan 40 (56) also were in fine nick as for Vanderlande made 260. Akbar Ali of AER bagged three wickets. In response, AER crumbled to 152 with only Rubel Sattar 57 (58) able to contribute a noteworthy innings. Aiyappan took five-wickets to seal the victory for Vanderlande.

ABL Task beat Douglas Al Jadidi by 108 runs in the B Division League 2023-24 powered by Al Ansari Group of Companies.

ABL Task posted 205 courtesy Nishanth Meethalveedu’s 61(56) along with Vijay Anand’s 45(27). Abdul Rauf



Aiyappan B

bagged four wickets for Douglas Al Jadidi. In response, ABL Task were bundled out for a paltry 97 as Aneermon A bagged four wickets and Nidhin M took three.

Waves Engineering beat Team Coorg by 49 runs in the E Division League 2023-24 powered by Credit Oman. Peace Players - FOS Energy beat OCT Mabela by 14 runs,

also in the E Division League Brief Scores : Vanderlande 260/10 in 47.3 overs (Imran Ilyas Raghu 59(55) - 3x4,1x6 ; Akbar Ali 3/42) beat AER 152/10 in 31.5 overs (Rubel Sattar 57(58) - 8x4; Aiyappan B 5/27) by 108 runs.

ABL Task 205/10 in 29.2 overs (Nishanth M 61(56) 8x4; Abdul Rauf 4/44) beat Douglas Al Jadidi 97/10 in 24 overs (Dharvesh Asath 20(20) 3x4 ; Aneermon A 4/20) by 108 runs.

Waves Engineering 219/6 in 20 overs (Mohd Wasim Ali 66(35) 10x4; Fajes MP 2/28) beat Team Coorg 170/10 in 19.5 overs (Thimmanna CS 65(44) 5x4, 2x6; Mohd Wasim Ali 2/29) by 49 runs.

Peace Players 171/6 in 20 overs (Tejash Shetty 54(43) 3x4; Sharif Balushi 2/24) beat OCT Mabela 157/9 in 20 overs (Yasir Dur Mohd 64(42) 9x4, 1x6; Muhd Abrar 3/28) by 14 runs.

CRICKET TO FEATURE AT 2028 OLYMPICS

Mumbai, India - Cricket will feature as one of five new sports at the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles after being approved on Monday in a vote of the International Olympic Committee’s session.

The IOC’s executive board last week accepted a proposal by LA organisers for cricket’s Twenty20 format, together with baseball/softball, flag football, squash and lacrosse, to be included.

But the final choice still had to be voted on Monday at the IOC session in Mumbai, one of the global centres for cricket, as India hosts the men’s 50-over Cricket World Cup.

Only two delegates at the session voted against the new sports.

Organisers have proposed a six-team event, in both men’s and women’s Twenty20 cricket, the shortest form of the game.

The United States is set to field sides as the host nation, but no firm decision has been made on the number of teams, or how they will qualify.

Cricket last featured at the 1900 Paris Olympics, when a team from Britain beat a side representing France.

Adding cricket to the Olympic programme is an obvious move, financially speaking.

It would tap into the lucrative



Organisers have proposed a six-team event, in both men’s and women’s Twenty20 cricket

Adding cricket to the Olympic programme is an obvious move, financially speaking

South Asian market, attracting fans in countries such as India and Pakistan.

The Indian Premier League, featuring cricket’s global stars, has helped India become the unquestioned economic driving

force of the sport, thanks to legions of fans and lucrative broadcasting deals in a nation where the game is almost a religion.

Major League Cricket, a professional Twenty20 League, launched in the United States in July, with the US a co-host of next year’s men’s T20 World Cup together with territories in the West Indies.

“It’s a win-win situation,” International Cricket Council chairman Greg Barclay told reporters in Mumbai, of cricket’s inclusion in the LA 2028 programme.

“We’ve got a global sport, what I think is the fastest-growing global sport, but getting onto the biggest sporting stage in the world, the Olympics, is a massive shot in the arm for the game,” the New Zealander added.

Explaining the push for cricket’s inclusion, Los Angeles 2028 chairman Casey Wasserman, said: “It’s a sport that is incredibly popular around the world, it’s growing in the United States. The diaspora in the US is growing and engaged and exciting.

South Africa edge France

Paris, France - Defending champions South Africa edged hosts France 29-28 in a thrilling seventy encounter on Sunday to reach next weekend’s Rugby World Cup semi-finals.

The Springboks kept their hopes of a record fourth title alive thanks to fly-half Handre Pollard’s second-half points, setting

up a last-four meeting with England back in Paris on Saturday.

France were knocked out at the quarter-final stage despite leading at the break in a huge disappointment for the expectant home support at the Stade de France.

“I just thought we really wanted it. I must give credit to

the guys who came off the bench. They came and made a good defence,” South Africa captain Siya Kolisi said. “It was a hard game. We knew how tough it was going to be with the French team at home and honestly I just want to say well done to them for what they have achieved and how hard they worked.”

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| 9. Bakery Chef | 10. Assistant bakery Chef |
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‘A remarkable journey of quality healthcare’

Dr Azad Moopen, founder chairman and managing director, Aster DM Healthcare, shares a few insights on Aster's 14-year journey in Oman

Looking back at your 14-year journey in Oman, how satisfied are you with your mission of providing quality healthcare in the private sector?

Looking back at Aster DM Healthcare's 14-year journey in Oman, I am extremely pleased with our mission of providing quality healthcare in the private sector. It has been a remarkable journey, and we have consistently strived to deliver world-class healthcare services to the people of Oman.

The support we have received from the Oman government has been instrumental in our success. The government's commitment to promoting healthcare in the private sector, as well as its efforts to create an enabling environment for healthcare providers, has been invaluable. They have been supportive in terms of regulatory frameworks, infrastructure development, and collaboration on various healthcare initiatives.

The combination of our dedication to quality healthcare and the government's support has allowed us to make a significant positive impact on the healthcare landscape in Oman. We look forward to continuing our mission of providing exceptional healthcare services and contributing to the well-being of the Omani people in the years to come.

How many new specialties do you currently offer people in Oman and are they on par with what is available in the rest of the world?

Aster DM Healthcare has undoubtedly established an enduring legacy in providing world-class quality treatment over the last 36 years. This legacy is characterised by a commitment to excellence and a dedication to delivering the highest standards of medical care. This success model and medical expertise have now been seamlessly transplanted to Oman, offering the same level of care that has garnered international acclaim.

Our team of doctors and experts in Oman are renowned for their deep knowledge and years of experience in specialty treatment. They are uniquely positioned to provide specialised treatments locally, eliminating the

INTERVIEW: DR AZAD MOOPEN



Our dedication to quality healthcare and the government's support has allowed us to make a significant positive impact on the healthcare landscape in Oman

need for patients to travel abroad for world-class medical care. For instance, Advanced Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PMR), is one area for which a large number of patients travel outside the country. We are exploring the possibility of starting an advanced center for PMR in Oman.

Also, at Aster DM Healthcare in Oman, we have introduced a range of new specialties that were previously less accessible to the people of Oman. These include advanced cardiac care, interventional radiology, advanced urology, neurosciences, sports medicine, orthopedics, interventional gastroenterology, and women and child's health.

What is unique about the new hospital in Muscat compared with other existing healthcare facilities?

The Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital is a modern, well-equipped, and comprehensive healthcare facility with a strong emphasis on advanced medical technology, patient-centred care, and a commitment to making high-quality healthcare easily accessible to the people of Oman.

The hospital is described as a state-of-the-art facility, signifying its modern infrastructure and advanced medical technology. The 175 bedded multi-specialty tertiary care hospital offers a wide range of specialised centres, including Cardiac Care, Urology, Neurosciences, Sports Medicine, Orthopedics, Gastroenterology, and Women and Child Health. This demonstrates its commitment to providing comprehensive healthcare services.

The facility is equipped with cutting-edge technology, including a Cath-lab, Interventional Radiology Center, Oman's first Thulium Laser in Urology, and a Dialysis Unit with CRRT, among others. It integrates digital technology with electronic hospital management systems, electronic medical records, and a secure patient portal.

Has your group contributed significantly enough in the private sector such that people in Oman do not need to go abroad for many treatments?

The key role of private players in healthcare is to complement the efforts of the government in providing high-quality medical services and to contribute to the overall development of the healthcare sector. In Oman, we have strived to play a vital role in this regard. Our group, Aster DM Healthcare, has been committed to bringing world-class healthcare services closer to the people of Oman. Over the years, we have made significant contributions to healthcare in the country.

Our new facility, Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital in Al Ghubra, Muscat, is a testament to our commitment. It is equipped with advanced medical technology and specialised centres that were not previously available in Oman, such as a Cath-lab for Cardiac Care, Interventional Radiology, Oman's first Thulium Laser in Urology, and many others. This means that Oman's residents no longer need to travel abroad for a wide range of treatments, as we now offer them locally.

In totality, the key role of private players in healthcare is to bridge gaps and enhance healthcare services, and Aster DM Healthcare has made substantial contributions to ensuring that people in Oman have access to a wider range of treatments without the need to go abroad.

Unlocking the potential of IVF



Dr Mangala Tulsidas Kawade
Consultant IVF & Gynaecologist
Badr SOI IVF & Fertility Centre
Badr Al Samaa Medical Centre, Mabella

Infertility is a challenge that many people face. It can happen for different reasons like lifestyle, genetics, or certain health problems. But, don't lose hope. Science has given us a special help called Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs) to overcome these challenges and have a healthy pregnancy.

Infertility can be caused by many factors. Conditions like Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS), advanced age, structural complications (such as blocked fallopian tubes or sperm ducts, or endometriosis), uterine damage, gamete health, and certain medical disorders like cancer can all contribute to the challenge of conceiving. But remember, these problems don't mean you can't become a parent.

One remarkable solution is freezing eggs. Egg freezing involves extracting a woman's eggs, preserving, and saving them for when you're ready to have a baby. IntraCyttoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI) can be employed to fertilise the eggs. Subsequently, the fertilised egg is carefully transferred to the uterus for implantation. Similarly, sperm can be preserved for future use in procedures like IVF and Intrauterine Insemination (IUI).

The journey to parenthood is a profound and transformative experience, one that begins with careful planning and consideration. To pave the way for a healthy and successful pregnancy, it is crucial to identify the right

tests and screenings at every step of the process. At Seeds of Innocence, we are dedicated to supporting prospective parents in their quest for a safe and joyful delivery.

Pre-Conception Testing

The path to parenthood ideally starts well before conception. Pre-conception testing plays a pivotal role in ensuring a healthy pregnancy. Among the most important tests to consider are Pre-Implantation Genetic Testing for Aneuploidy (PGT-A) and Pre-Implantation Genetic Testing for Monogenic Disorders (PGT-M).

PGT-A (Pre-Implantation Genetic Testing for Aneuploidy): This is a groundbreaking genetic screening procedure that examines embryos for chromosomal abnormalities. It helps identify embryos with the correct number of chromosomes, increasing the chances of a successful pregnancy. This test is particularly vital for couples with a history of miscarriages, advanced maternal age, or recurrent IVF failures.

PGT-M (Pre-Implantation Genetic Testing for Monogenic Disorders): This is an invaluable tool for couples who are carriers of specific genetic conditions. This test ensures that only embryos free of the targeted genetic disorder are transferred during IVF, minimizing the risk of passing on a hereditary condition to the child.

Both PGT-A and PGT-M serve as essential pre-conception tests that

enhance the prospects of a healthy pregnancy. These tests empower prospective parents with the information they need to make informed decisions and reduce the risk of genetic abnormalities in their offspring.

NIPT (Non-Invasive Prenatal Testing)

Once conception has taken place, the focus shifts to monitoring the pregnancy's progress and the health of the developing fetus. Non-Invasive Prenatal Testing (NIPT) is a remarkable advancement in prenatal care that allows expectant parents to gain valuable insights into their baby's well-being without invasive procedures.

NIPT is typically performed during the first trimester of pregnancy and involves a simple blood test. This test screens for a variety of genetic conditions, including Down syndrome, Edwards syndrome, and Patau syndrome, among others. Unlike traditional invasive prenatal testing methods, such as amniocentesis or chorionic villus sampling, NIPT carries no risk of miscarriage.

Before starting IVF, it's highly advisable to undergo genetic testing. This essential step not only reduces the risk of miscarriage but also ensures the road to a healthy pregnancy and a happy, healthy baby. Genetic testing can prevent the transmission of life-threatening disorders like Down Syndrome, Sickle Cell Anemia, and Autism from parents to their offspring.



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LOGISTICS SECTOR SET TO DRIVE OMAN'S ECONOMIC GROWTH

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman, which is strategically located at the crossroads of Asia, Europe, and Africa, has made remarkable progress in developing its logistics and transport infrastructure over the years. The development and expansion of key seaports, coupled with the establishment of economic and free zones, have significantly expanded Oman's prospects as a leading logistics hub and play a vital role in diversifying its economy.

The sultanate's geographical location has proven to be a valuable asset for the country. Situated along major trade routes that connect Asia, Europe, and Africa, Oman has capitalised on this strategic advantage. Substantial investments in infrastructure, including ports, airports, roads, economic and free zones, and industrial estates, have cemented Oman's position as a leading logistics hub in the region.

Global ranking

Oman's strategic positioning and excellent logistics and transportation infrastructure have transformed the country into a

gateway to some of the world's most significant and affluent markets and improved Oman's global logistics ranking.

In 2022, Oman made impressive strides in non-oil exports, with non-oil products worth \$19.1bn being exported - a remarkable 41% increase compared to 2021.

Oman's logistical prowess is underscored by its ranking of 43rd out of 139 nations in the World Bank's 2023 Logistics Performance Index.

Moreover, Oman achieved a notable 12th place globally in the Agility Emerging Markets Logistics Index 2023. These rankings reflect its competitiveness based on logistics strength and business fundamentals.

Logistics strategy

Oman's Logistics Strategy 2040, which was launched in 2015, serves as a blueprint for the country's ambitions in the logistics sector. The strategy sets ambitious targets, including breaking into the top 10 of the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index, creating 300,000 jobs within the logistics sector, and contributing RO14bn (US\$ 36.4bn) to the country's GDP



by 2040.

This strategy aims to elevate the logistics sector to become Oman's second-largest contributor to GDP after hydrocarbons. With Oman's economy projected to continue growing, transport and logistics are expected to remain one of the leading non-hydrocarbon sources of economic growth.

The Logistics Strategy 2040 also plans to create up to

300,000 jobs within the logistics industry. This initiative not only bolsters employment opportunities but also strengthens the sector's position as a major contributor to the nation's economy.

RO2.5bn investment by 2025

The Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology (MTCIT) recently launched an executive pro-

gramme for Oman Logistics Centre for the period 2023 to 2025.

The programme's core objectives include economic diversification in transportation and logistics, targeting a robust increase in investments to RO2.5bn by 2025.

Ambitious goals include boosting government revenue growth from the sector, achieving RO18mn in returns from land

transport by 2025, and increasing employment opportunities in related sectors from 19% in 2023 to 21% in 2025.

H E Said bin Hamood al Mawali, Minister of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology, highlighted the sector's rapid growth, noting its contribution to Oman's GDP in 2022 was approximately RO2bn. He envisions the logistics sector becoming the second-largest contributor to Oman's economy by 2040.

H E Khamis al Shamakhii, Undersecretary for Transport in MTCIT, pointed to Oman's fifth position in the Arab world's Logistics Performance Index.

Breaking down the logistics sector's GDP contribution, he informed that land transport contributed 60%, water transport 6.7%, air transport 3.2%, and warehousing/supporting activities 30%. Additionally, 2022 saw a 21% export growth via Omani ports, with imports increasing by 18% and re-exports by 3%.

Asyad Group: The driving force

As a government company, Asyad Group plays a pivotal role in Oman's logistics landscape.

Established in 2016, Asyad Group has been at the forefront of the nation's logistics transformation. Leveraging its status as the sultanate's flagship global integrated logistics provider, Asyad Group is actively working to connect Oman's ports and zones with the world.

In 2022, Asyad Group's efforts paid off as the major ports of Salalah, Sohar, and Duqm collectively achieved an impressive growth rate of 8%. They handled over 62.3mn tonnes of general cargo, representing a 10% increase compared to the previous year.

This success demonstrates the Asyad Group's commitment to developing a world-class integrated logistics network that adheres to the highest international standards of operational efficiency.

Oman's journey towards becoming a global logistics hub is marked by remarkable achievements and ambitious plans. Its strategic location, coupled with significant investments in infrastructure and a forward-looking Logistics Strategy 2040, has set the stage for unprecedented economic diversification and growth.

Middle East logistics market expected to grow 6.3% annually until 2029

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The size of the Middle East and Africa transport and logistics market is estimated at US\$153.79bn in 2023 and is expected to reach US\$209.32bn by 2029, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of more than 6.36% over the next six years, according to an industry report published by Mordor Intelligence.

During the past decade, globalisation and technology have created new opportunities for internationalisation, boosting supply chains and competitiveness in the region, the report noted.

It said that despite a sustained period of decline over the last few years, affected by a fall in oil prices and geopolitical strife, the Middle East and Africa are fast becoming regions of automotive and supply chain opportunity. Carmakers such as VW, Toyota, GM, Groupe PSA, and Mercedes-Benz are investing in local assembly, ranging from North African countries, including Morocco, Algeria, and Egypt, to sub-Saharan markets such as Rwanda, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Ghana. The region also has some notable logistics developments.

Logistics infrastructure

The Middle East and African region are projected to grow significantly, with the Middle East witnessing significant annual growth in terms of air transport.

According to the report, cargo volumes are estimated to double in most countries of the region. At such levels, several challenges and opportunities arise. For airports in Africa and the Middle



East, this presents a stellar opportunity to capitalise on the growth potential and prepare for change, keeping the airlines and consumers at the heart of development and how it serves the national interest.

In the Middle East, a vast number of significant airport capital expansion programmes are driven by demand coming from the growth of domiciled carriers. However, there is also geographic proximity to major source markets, such as the Indian subcontinent and intercontinental traffic flows in the MENA regional travel.

'This factor, along with a favourable regulatory environment and governments that have understood and harnessed the value of aviation, has led to the development of airport hubs that cater to the largest movements of passenger and cargo traffic globally,' the report said.

Airports in the Gulf have led this trend, with Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Doha, Muscat, and Jeddah investing billions of dollars in infrastructure and focusing on improving the passen-

ger experience, the report added.

It further said this investment is due to the close symbiotic relationships the airports have with domiciled carriers such as Emirates Airlines, Etihad Airways, Qatar Airways, and Saudi Arabian Airlines, which enable most stakeholders in the value chain to work together and develop an end-to-end experience, serving the industry and the respective local economies.

Like their global peers, airports in the Middle East aspire to overcome project development challenges through effective stakeholder collaboration, capitalizing on digitisation, the airport retail revolution, and non-aeronautical opportunities. In addition, they aim to create personalised experiences by offering guests a sense of place with enough capacity.

'Airport developers in the Middle East are also striving to achieve green building credentials through international certifications and those developed by national programs while working toward ACI carbon accreditation,' the report said.

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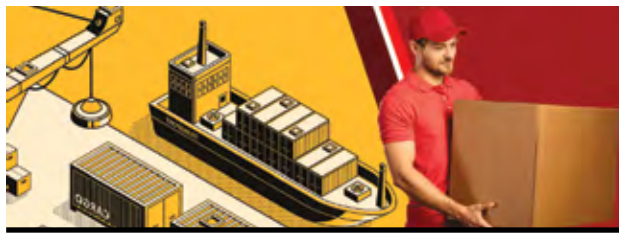
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Khazaen - A preferred destination for GCC logistics

Khazaen Economic City is an ambitious project that stands as one of the largest Public-Private Partnership (PPP) development initiative in the Sultanate of Oman. It is situated in Barka, within the South Al Batinah Governorate, and holds the distinction of being the largest integrated economic city planned for development in that region with the aim to attract foreign direct investments and domestic investments in key-driving sectors such as logistics, industrial, food, pharmaceutical, clean energy and business & technology.

It is conveniently located within a 30-minute drive from Muscat Airport, allowing for efficient air transportation. Moreover, it is only a 35-minute drive from Suwaiq Port and approximately a 2-hour drive from Sohar Port, providing convenient access to maritime trade routes. These logistical advantages make Khazaen a strategic hub for trade and commerce.

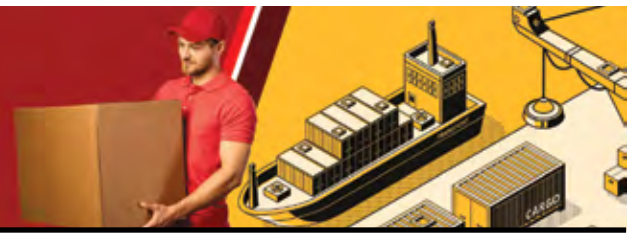
Khazaen Economic City has successfully attracted a significant number of investors, marking its appeal as a lucrative investment destination. To date, over 110 investment agreements have been signed, with a cumulative value surpassing 840 million USD. This impressive achievement highlights the growing interest and confidence that investors have in the city's potential.

The International Logistic Hub, supported by the Khazaen Dry Port Oman's first inland dry port, stands as a central and vital component of the logistics sector within Khazaen Economic City. This hub serves as a key component for the efficient movement and management of goods, providing comprehensive logistics services to businesses operating within the city. It facilitates seamless connectivity between different transportation modes, enabling the smooth flow of goods both domestically and internationally. Furthermore, the International Logistics Hub provides a seamless opportunity for investors seeking to expand their E-commerce enterprises. This hub encompasses industry-leading logistics giants that offer comprehensive integrated logistics services, coupled with cutting-edge technological solutions. These solutions encompass inventory management, online order monitoring, and shipment tracking, ensuring a streamlined and efficient operation for businesses.

It's important to note that the Khazaen Dry Port operates on a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, with ownership lying in the private sector. This approach leverages the expertise and resources of the private sector to develop and operate the dry port, promoting efficiency and effectiveness in cargo handling and distribution. Khazaen Dry Port is the first integrated international dry port in the sultanate. It links various seaports, commercial, and industrial areas. It is considered a main pillar in the city due to its importance to enhance integration of logistics solutions for investors.



Khazaen Economic City has successfully attracted a significant number of investors, marking its appeal as a lucrative investment destination. To date, over 110 investment agreements have been signed, with a cumulative value surpassing 840 million USD. This impressive achievement highlights the growing interest and confidence that investors have in the city's potential.



Preferred destination for logistics giants

One notable investor that Khazaen has attracted is the Global Warehousing Company (GWC), a prominent player in the GCC region known for its extensive warehousing capabilities. Recognising the potential in Oman, GWC has chosen Khazaen as its base to establish and expand its business operations. With their vast experience and millions of square metres in warehousing infrastructure across the GCC, their decision to invest in Khazaen is a testament to the city's appeal and potential for growth.

Another significant investor is Naqel Express, a Saudi Arabian company that has recognised the opportunities in Khazaen Economic City. Their involvement further strengthens the city's appeal as a preferred investment destination. The inclusion of renowned companies such as GWC and Naqel Express signifies the growing interest from established players in the region, further boosting Khazaen's reputation and credibility.

This year, Khazaen signed an agreement with SARCO, subsidiary of the Qatari Al Mana Group, to establish an integrated logistics centre on area of 37,000 sqm. Investors looking to establish logistics operations will find the Khazaen Logistics hub to be an ideal location. It provides the necessary infrastructure and facilities to support manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution activities.

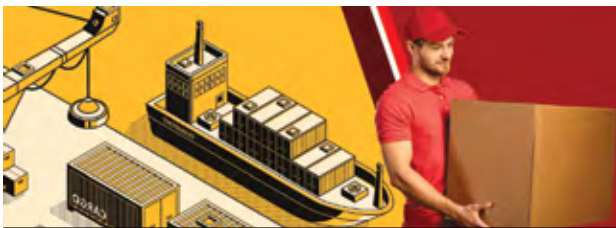
The Khazaen Fruits and Vegetables Central Market is currently under construction and is scheduled to open in the first quarter of 2024. This market serves as an integral part of the Food City within Khazaen Economic City. It aims to centralise and relocate all wholesale activities and central cold stores from the existing market. It is strategically located near Khazaen Economic City anchor logistics project to ease the business operations of export and import, enhance food supply chains and cold chains, attract companies in packaging and storage. It is strategically situated near Khazaen Dry Port and Khazaen International Logistics Hub with the aim to become a regional centre for importing, collection, distributing and exporting food products.

Khazaen Economic City offers an ecosystem that streamlines the investment journey, providing integrated components to facilitate the successful establishment and expansion of projects. To further enhance the investment process, Khazaen has strategically planned the establishment of a comprehensive one-stop shop within the city, in accordance with the esteemed Royal Decree 44/2023. This decree also grants the establishment of two free zones: one exclusively designed for logistics operations, and the other dedicated to facilitating industrial and commercial activities.



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Logistics solutions you can rely on

Duqm United Logistics LLC is a Joint Venture between a renowned Oman based group Mohsin Haider Darwish and Duqm Local Community Developer, Duqm Ahlia Development.

Duqm United Logistics, has been serving Oman since 2016, one of the most strategic trade hubs in the Middle East and the World, offering the most reliable, integrated, and effective freight forwarding and logistics services.

The group is now looking to expand its freight forwarding division and broaden its horizon of services offered by effectively managing shipping and logistics on behalf of its customers at any stage of their product's lifecycle, including from manufacturing all through to end delivery with the end user.

The company would undertake complete end-to-end solutions and services to meet an entire gamut of logistics and distribution needs of the customers with its extensive experience and expertise.

Our vision is to become a recognised brand in the freight forwarding industry and create a service-based entity that will strive to exceed the expectations of its customers.

We are serving our customers for their shipments to and fro from the entire globe to whole of Oman thru its sea-ports, airports and land borders, we also have strong cross

trade experience. Services being offered, such as;

- International Freight Forwarding (by Ocean, Air, Land)
- Contract Logistics (such as Warehousing, Distribution)
- Transportation
- Custom Clearance
- Conventional and Bulk Cargo Handling
- Project & Specialised Cargo Logistics
- Regional Overland Transportation
- Courier Freight Services
- Ecommerce Fulfilment
- Last mile delivery



These services can act as stand-alone products or as part of our broader offering as a supply chain provider.

With the core supply chain elements in place, we at DUL Design, Implement, and Manage supply chains specific to global industry markets, or bespoke solutions for more complex transportation models for our customers.

As a service provider, we have been building these elements and focusing on devel-

oping strong relationships with our customers to deliver long-term success for their logistics & transportation requirements.

Supply Chain and Industry Correlation

Supply Chain Management is the integration of our main services of Freight Forwarding and Contract Logistics to provide a seamless distribution process for our customers. This means arranging the movement of goods from any point in the supply chain (as early as manufacturing or even sourcing) through to delivery at the final destination.

This service has evolved over the years into a highly specialized area that can be implemented as a;

- Standard management solution,
- A specific industry solution, or
- As a custom-designed solution for a specific customer requirement.

A well-managed supply chain improves efficiencies and streamlines a company's inventory, reducing overall costs.

Our strength lies in showcasing the effective management of our principal's relationships and their supply chain requirements as evolved, managed and practiced over the years. This could form a glimpse of what to expect and what can evolve going forward.

Offering end to end Contract Logistics

These are the services including warehousing, inventory management, distribution, and transport management.

We offer complete solutions and service and allow customer to pick and choose, customer should have the flexibility to off-load the entire scope or simply contract us for a very specific requirement. Our intention has always been to:

- Be able to design and offer the best solution,
- Be able to deliver what we believe is the cost effective & value additive solution,
- Be able to manage the entire chain of activities including after delivery support.

Complete spectrum of offering would allow us to remain cost effective and deliver results faster.

Our offering would include:

- Cargo collection and delivery arrangement
- Distribution processing services, including cargo packing, labelling and sorting
- Storage and delivery services which could be provided as facilities

The key to success is understanding the market reality, align it to customer sentiments, based on which set realistic customer expectations and then not to just meet them, but to exceed them.

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Pankaj Oberoi
Chief Executive Officer

FASTCO unveils robust logistics solutions covering International Express Delivery to project logistics

In a dynamic world driven by the demands of global commerce, FASTCO, the integrated logistics and supply chain solutions provider, emerges as the go-to partner for businesses seeking reliability and comprehensive logistics solutions. Established in 1976, FASTCO, a subsidiary of the OHI Group, has evolved into a key player in the logistics industry in the sultanate, with an impressive portfolio of services tailored to meet the diverse needs of its clients.

FASTCO's extensive business portfolio encompasses a wide range of services, including: International Express Delivery Services: In collaboration with UPS, FASTCO serves as the Authorised Service Contractor for UPS in Oman, providing International Express delivery services to more than 220 countries. Leveraging UPS's extensive service footprint in North America and Europe, FASTCO ensures the rapid delivery of time-critical express shipments to Oman, backed by a fleet of over 600 UPS aircraft. The company employs advanced shipment tracking technology, allowing customers to receive real-time updates on the status of their shipments.

Whether it's urgent shipping documents, trade samples, or express freight, FASTCO, in collaboration with UPS, stands ready to provide impeccable door-to-door service solutions that meet the evolving shipping demands of customers in Oman.

Last Mile Delivery Services: FASTCO excels in last-mile delivery, ensuring the timely and efficient delivery of goods for e-commerce platforms.

Worldwide Air and Sea Freight Transportation Services: The company offers comprehensive air and sea freight transportation services to connect businesses globally.

Customs Clearance: FASTCO facilitates seamless customs clearance for its clients, ensuring efficient cross-border trade.

Project Cargo Logistics: FASTCO specialises in handling project cargo, including over-dimensional cargo and heavy lifts. The company has a strong track record of successfully managing the transportation of oil field equipment, construction machinery, and other large-scale

cargo from major ports to industrial sites and free zones across Oman.

Warehousing: FASTCO provides a range of warehousing solutions, including bonded, non-bonded, temperature-controlled, and ambient warehousing facilities.

Trucking, Transportation, and Distribution: The company offers reliable trucking, transportation, and distribution services to ensure the smooth movement of goods.

FASTCO's commitment to excellence is underscored by its investment in a state-of-the-art operations facility in Muscat, complete with on-site customs clearance capabilities. The company's dedicated drivers prioritise deliveries in key commercial areas, ensuring the timely delivery of urgent documents and packages. With a highly experienced team boasting over 40 years of collective industry experience, FASTCO continually strives to enhance the customer experience while maintaining global service standards in partnership with our principals.

For more information on FASTCO and its logistics solutions, visit: www.fastcooman.com

Allied Logistics (AGS Oman) launched

How does the launch of the AGS brand in Oman benefit existing Allied Logistics clients?

The launch of the AGS brand in Oman brings substantial benefits to our existing clients. As part of the Mobilintas Group, AGS is internationally recognized for its expertise in global mobility and relocation services. By aligning with AGS, our clients gain access to an extensive global network, specialized knowledge, and innovative solutions. This translates into smoother and more efficient relocations, comprehensive support, and enhanced customer experiences. The AGS brand launch solidifies our commitment to delivering exceptional services and elevating the standards of the industry in Oman.

Can you explain the significance of the joint venture between Allied Logistics and Mobilintas Group?

The joint venture between Allied Logistics and Mobilintas Group under its flagship AGS brand holds great significance for both companies. It combines the strengths and expertise of two respected entities to create a powerful alliance in the logistics industry. Through this partnership, we can leverage AGS's global mobility, physical and digital records management, and heritage conservation services, along with Allied Logistics' local knowledge and capabilities. This collaboration allows us to offer our clients a broader range of services, enhanced resources, and expanded global reach, reinforcing our position as a leading logistics provider in Oman.

How does this new joint venture strengthen Mobilintas Group's presence in the Middle East region?

The establishment of this joint venture significantly strengthens Mobilintas Group's presence in the Middle East region. By partnering with Allied Logistics, a well-established local company, Mobilintas Group gains a strong foothold in Oman, complementing its existing operations in the Middle East. This partnership enables Mobilintas Group to expand its service offerings and provide clients with comprehensive logistics solutions, including international mobility, relocation services, and physical and digital records management, we reinforce the group's footprint in the region and its ability to serve



clients across the Middle East effectively.

What benefits do you expect this new partnership between Allied Logistics and Mobilintas Group to bring to your existing and potential clients in Oman?

This new partnership brings a multitude of benefits to our existing and potential clients in Oman. Firstly, clients can access a wider range of services and solutions tailored to their specific needs, including global mobility, relocation support, and advanced records management capabilities. Secondly, the alliance enhances our ability to offer competitive pricing, improved efficiency, and seamless end-to-end solutions. Additionally, clients can leverage the combined expertise and resources of Allied Logistics and Mobilintas Group, ensuring exceptional service quality, enhanced global reach, and comprehensive support throughout their logistics journey.

How will the integration of Allied Logistics into the Mobilintas network enhance the services provided by AGS Oman?

The integration of Allied Logistics into the Mobilintas network brings significant enhancements to the services provided by AGS Oman. By becoming part of the Mobilintas Group, we gain access to a vast global network, advanced

technology platforms, and best practices in the industry. This integration allows us to streamline operations, optimize efficiency, and deliver an even higher level of service excellence. Clients can expect seamless coordination, enhanced capabilities, and a comprehensive range of logistics solutions backed by the expertise and support of the wider Mobilintas network.

What specific advantages does Allied Logistics (or AGS Oman) offer to its client base in the international moving sector?

Allied Logistics, with its new AGS Oman division, offers several specific advantages to its client base in the international moving sector. These include:

- Extensive Expertise:** With our deep knowledge and experience in the logistics industry, we understand the complexities and requirements of international moves. Our team is well-equipped to handle every aspect, from customs procedures to transport logistics, ensuring a smooth and hassle-free relocation experience.
- Personalized Approach:** We take a client-centric approach, focusing on understanding our clients' unique needs and tailoring our services accordingly. Whether it's a corporate relocation or an individual move, we work closely with our clients to develop cus-

tomized solutions that meet their specific requirements, ensuring a seamless and personalized experience.

c. **Global Network:** As part of the AGS brand and the wider Mobilintas Group, we have a vast global network spanning across 99 countries. This extensive network allows us to provide comprehensive door-to-door services, ensuring a smooth transition for our clients, wherever their destination may be.

d. **Quality Assurance:** We place great emphasis on quality assurance and adherence to international standards. Our processes and operations are designed to meet the highest industry benchmarks, ensuring the safety and security of our clients' belongings throughout the entire moving process.

e. **Dedicated Customer Support:** Our team of dedicated professionals is committed to providing exceptional customer support at every step of the way. From the initial planning stages to post-move assistance, we are there to address any queries, concerns, or special requests our clients may have.

f. **Innovative Solutions:** We continuously invest in advanced technology and innovative solutions to enhance our services. This includes digital tracking systems, secure online platforms, and state-of-the-art logistics management tools, enabling us to offer efficient and transparent services to our clients.

What are the shared goals and vision between Mobilintas Group and Allied Logistics in this partnership?

The shared goals and vision between Mobilintas Group and Allied Logistics revolve around providing exceptional logistics services, exceeding client expectations, and expanding our global reach. Together, we aim to leverage our collective strengths, expertise, and resources to become a leading provider of comprehensive logistics solutions in Oman. We are committed to delivering exceptional service quality, fostering long-term client relationships, and contributing to the growth and success of our clients' businesses. Our vision is to be the preferred choice for international moving and lo-

gistics services in Oman, driven by innovation, excellence, and a customer-centric approach.

Can you tell us about the AGS branches in the Middle East and their role within the Mobilintas Group's global network?

AGS has a strong presence in the Middle East region with several branches strategically located to serve clients across various countries. In addition to AGS Oman, we have branches in key locations such as Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Qatar, and Bahrain, among others. These branches play a crucial role within the Mobilintas Group's global network by serving as regional hubs for international moving and logistics services.

The Middle East branches of AGS are interconnected with the wider Mobilintas Group network, enabling seamless coordination and collaboration across borders. This integration allows us to leverage the collective expertise, resources, and best practices of the group, ensuring consistent service quality, global reach, and comprehensive logistics solutions for our clients.

Mobilintas Group is globally known for its physical and digital records management services. What is your outlook for these services in the Omani market?

The outlook for physical and digital records management services in the Omani market is promising. As the business landscape continues to evolve, organizations are recognizing the importance of efficient records management to enhance productivity, compliance, and data security. With the expertise and reputation of the Mobilintas Group in this field, we are well-positioned to meet the growing demand for physical and digital records management services in Oman. We aim to introduce innovative solutions and advanced technologies that will help businesses streamline their document management processes, improve access to critical information, and ensure compliance with local regulations.

Our goal is to become a trusted partner for organizations in Oman, offering comprehensive solutions that are tailored to their specific needs, backed by the global expertise and best practices of the Mobilintas Group.



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