

P15

VISIT OMAN,
PRIOTICKET SIGN
PACT TO DIGITISE
TOURISM



P20

THE LAST
OF SUR'S
DHOW
BUILDERS



P12

AUSTRALIA
REACH SEMIS AS
MAXWELL HITS
STUNNING 201



MUSCAT

**HM THANKED
BY PARTICIPANT'S**

Participants in the 19th World Federation for Ultrasound in Medicine and Biology WFUMB Congress, sent a cable of thanks and appreciation to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, on Tuesday. The participants expressed the highest utmost thanks and gratitude for His Majesty's interest in developing the health sector and advancing its services in light of the efforts exerted by His Majesty's government to enhance the process of sustainable development in various sectors particularly the health sector.

JEDDAH

**OMAN AT WOMEN IN
ISLAM CONFERENCE**

Represented by the Ministry of Social Development, the Sultanate of Oman is taking part in an international conference titled 'Women in Islam: Status and Empowerment,' held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, from November 6 to 8. The conference is held under the auspices of King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. The conference is jointly organised by the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Secretariat-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Oman's delegation at the conference is led by Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development.

DETAILS ON P3

**TEMPERATURES
LIKELY TO DROP**



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Al Rustaq and Al Awabi received maximum rain on Tuesday. With this spell of rain, cooler days are expected soon due to the change in wind direction. "The impact of the depression will continue on Wednesday and Thursday as well. But it might reduce by Thursday," said the weather forecaster. The latest weather maps and analysis of the National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre showed that the impact of the depression will continue until Thursday. It is expected that clouds will flow and form over the Sultanate of Oman, with chances of thunderstorms of varying intensity accompanied by active winds and hailstones over the governorates of Musandam, Al Buraimi, North Al Batinah, South Al Batinah, Al Dhahirah, Muscat, Al Dakhiliyah, North Al Sharqiyah and South Al Sharqiyah. **SEE ALSO P2**

I N S O L I D A R I T Y W I T H T H E P A L E S T I N I A N P E O P L E

Oman National Day celebrations limited to military parade

UN DECRIES
MONTH OF MIDDLE
EAST 'CARNAGE'

ISRAEL SAYS ITS
FORCES IN THE 'HEART
OF GAZA CITY'

GAZANS RAISE
WHITE FLAGS TO FLEE
ONSLAUGHT

DEAD CHILDREN
IN GAZA WORLD'S
'MORAL FAILING'

MUSCAT/GAZA: The Secretariat-General for National Celebrations announced that, in solidarity with the Palestinian people, the programme of the Sultanate of Oman's 53rd National Day will be limited to a military parade under the Royal patronage of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, and raising the flags of Oman.

A month into Israel's devastating military assault on the Gaza Strip, Palestinians stuck inside the besieged enclave face daily suffering of a scale, intensity and repetitiveness that have pushed some into fury and despair.

"I swear we are waiting for death. It will be better than living. We are waiting for death at each moment. It's a suspended death," said Abu Jihad, a middle-aged resident of Khan Younis in the south of the tiny, densely populated territory.

He was standing in a street close to a house flattened by an air strike that shook the neighbourhood awake in the middle of the night.

"We are not living. We need a solution. Either kill us all or let us live," he said, raging at Israel and at the wider world which he accused of being silent and impotent.

Israel's air, sea and ground onslaught has killed more than 10,000 people in the coastal strip, according to health authorities there. Israel has told residents of the northern part of the enclave, where its forces have encircled Gaza City, to move to the south for their own safety, but has been bombarding the south too, though less intensively than the north.

In Khan Younis and Rafah, two separate strikes on homes killed 23 people overnight, health officials said on Tuesday. At the site of the Khan Younis strike, a man carried the lifeless body of a tiny child, dressed in what looked like pink pyjamas, from the flattened ruin of a home.

A young girl had survived but was



A Palestinian woman holds a white flag while evacuating with a group of civilians from the north of the Gaza Strip towards south on Tuesday. – Reuters

trapped by a slab of concrete that had fallen on her legs. A group of men were using their bare hands to try and free her as an anxious crowd stood outside, calling out encouragements to the rescuers.

Ahmed Ayesha, a resident injured in the strike, walked out of the bomb site with a bloodied face and blood spattered over his T-shirt and one arm. He was visibly enraged as he spoke to reporters.

"This is the bravery of the so-called Israel. They show their might and power against civilians. Babies inside! Kids inside!" he said, jabbing his finger towards the ruin and raising his voice.

ROW OF CORPSES

At Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, a row of corpses wrapped in white shrouds had been placed on the ground outside the door. From the length of the bodies, it was clear that some of the dead were adults and some were children. A woman in a red dress and beige head scarf broke down into uncontrollable weeping, her body folding forwards as a man tried to comfort her. A man in a black shirt crouched down and cried, his face reddened and contorted by anguish.

After a time, a group of men including medical staff in surgical scrubs and plastic aprons knelt down to pray alongside the bodies. In Rafah, also in the south, another all-too-familiar scene unfolded as men and boys lined up on a sandy expanse strewn with rubbish, where a single functioning hosepipe was the only source of water accessible to thousands of residents. A lengthy line of yellow, black, green and blue jerry cans were placed in a tidy line as people settled in for hours of waiting to get a meagre ration.

"Each person comes with a 20-litre container and shares it with the rest of his family. Every person gets four or five litres. It's the same situation every day," said Bakr al Kashef, a young man in a yellow jacket.

SEE ALSO P6 & 7

Iconic
Muttrah
Souq to
get a major
facelift

VINOD NAIR

@vinot_nair

The iconic Muttrah Souq will undergo a facelift with Muscat Municipality issuing a tender for its refurbishment, which will include adding a number of facilities using sustainable technologies among others.

Muttrah Souq, one of the oldest markets in the Arab world and a popular destination among cruise tourists to the Sultanate of Oman,

consists of alleyways lined with small shops selling basic essentials. Visitors can explore the place for shopping clothes, souvenirs, utensils, Omani frankincense, spices, oils, jewellery, pots, among others. Lately, Muttrah Souq has been facing continuous problems of flooding after every heavy rain (evident through viral videos), bringing in heavy losses to the shop owners there.

The Muttrah Souq Development Project is aimed at developing the souq infrastructure with more

facilities and services that are consistent with its historical and cultural identity.

The development project has been welcomed by businesses at the souq who have struggled to stay afloat during the non-tourism season, especially the long summer months.

Apart from cosmetic changes to the souq to make it a more attractive destination for tourists, the project includes canopies with solar panels that will help in reducing power consumption as part of the plans for net-zero

carbon emissions. The other projects include replacing roofs made of unstable materials, LED lighting for corridors, adding extra entrances, a smart site map of the souq, having new walkways, benches and chairs, sculptures and an archaeological rest house.

Muttrah Souq has narrow winding alleys roofed with wood. Among the locals, this souq is called the Market of Darkness, with its myriad of alleys and roads lined by shops that block the sun during the day.



Royal Office Minister receives ambassadors of Algeria, Austria

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of Royal Office on Tuesday received Dr Mohammed Ali Boughazi, Ambassador of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria to the Sultanate of Oman. Algeria's ambassador expressed his delight in being appointed as his country's ambassador to Oman.

He underscored the importance of enhancing cooperation and achieving joint interests.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed several matters of mutual interest.

Gen Al Numani also received Christophe Ceska, Ambassador of the Republic of Austria to the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, Al Numani highlighted the march of bilateral relations.

The two sides reviewed areas of joint cooperation.

They also discussed several matters of mutual interest.

— ONA



Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of Royal Office on Tuesday received Dr Mohammed Ali Boughazi, Ambassador of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. — ONA



Gen Al Numani also received Christophe Ceska, Ambassador of the Republic of Austria to the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister arrives



MUSCAT: Shaikh Talal Khalid Al Ahmad al Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of the State of Kuwait arrived in Oman on Tuesday to take part in the GCC Interior Ministers' 40th meeting, due to be held today (Wednesday) in Muscat. He was received upon his

arrival by Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior. Alongside Sayyid Hamoud, the Kuwaiti Minister was also received by Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Interior, Maj Gen Abdullah bin Ali al Harthy, Assistant Inspector General of Police

and Customs, Sayyid Khalifa bin Al Murdas al Busaidy, Secretary-General at the Ministry of Interior and Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Hajri, Ambassador of Kuwait to Oman, as well as some officials at the Ministry of Interior and the Royal Oman Police.

— ONA

Muscat, Salalah airports see surge in passenger traffic

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The number of passengers using the Muscat International Airport increased 36 per cent to 1,053,254 in September 2023 compared to the same period last year, according to the figures released by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). During the same period, aircraft movement at Muscat Airport increased by 30 per cent to 8,835 in 2023 from 6,802 in 2022. The freight movement at Muscat increased by three per cent to 13,770 tonnes from 13,416 tonnes. The number of passengers using Salalah Airport increased 28 per cent to 122,289 in June 2023 compared to 95,563 during the same period last year. During the same period, aircraft movement at Salalah increased by 19 per cent to 1,183 in 2023 from 998 in 2022. The freight movement increased by two per cent to 64 tonnes from 57 tonnes. The number of passengers using Sohar Airport dropped 50 per cent to 2,417 in June 2023 compared to 4,873

passengers in the same period last year. During the same period, aircraft movement at Sohar increased by 55 per cent to 93 in 2023 from 60 in 2022. The number of passengers using Duqm Airport decreased 0.3 per cent to 6,018 in June 2023 compared to 6,

034 passengers in the same period last year. During the same period, aircraft movement dropped by 15 per cent to 74 in 2023 from 90 in 2022. The number of aircraft passing the Omani airspace increased by 19 per cent from 38,633 to 33,445.



The number of passengers using the Muscat International Airport increased 36 per cent to 1,053,254 in September 2023



MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Internal Tender Committee in Ministry of Information announces its Tender for the following work:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Class & Grade	Last Date For Collection	Submission Date	Purchase Fees (R.O.)
4/2023 2023/257 13 - ٢٠٢٣	CONSTRUCTION OF RADIO AND TV STATION IN DABBA (MUSANDAM GOVERNORATE)	Third	19/11/2023	21/12/2023	25/-

1. All specialized companies in the field of the tender shown above and are registered with the Tender Board to the degree indicated above, may obtain tender documents, against non-refundable fees, from the website through the following link: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

2. Companies and institutions are exempted from providing a temporary insurance of 1% when submitting their bid, provided that they sign a document committing themselves to the submitted bid for a period determined when the bidding strategy is approved in accordance with the document attached to the Isnad platform. As for international companies that do not have a headquarters in the Sultanate of Oman, they are required to provide temporary insurance of 1%.

(For more information, please see the original circular issued by the Tender Board on the Isnad platform.)

Note that the last date for accepting bids as mentioned above is before 10:00 am. Any bid received after the time and date mentioned in the submission date will be rejected automatically.

You are requested to provide 2 hard copies for your offer after the submission in Projects Department at Ministry of Information.

3. The Ministry has the right to:

1) Add or Cancel some works in the tender if necessary.

2) Cancellation of the tender without giving reasons.

For clarifications you may contact via:
Telephone : 24943785, 24943177, Email: (Moi.Tenders@omaninfo.om)

Oman participates in regional Unesco committees meeting



Amna bint Salim al Balushiyyah

PARIS: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Education is taking part in the 10th regional meeting of national committees of members states in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco).

The regional meeting was held on the sidelines of the 42nd session of the Unesco General Conference, in Paris.

Oman was represented during the meeting by Amna bint Salim al Balushiyyah, Secretary-General of Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science. Oman was chosen as deputy chair during this meeting.

The meeting discussed a spectrum of topics related to Unesco action, especially the organisation's efforts in dealing with accelerating developments in the 21st century.

Moreover, the meeting highlighted best practices of national Unesco committees, as well as related tangible initiatives. — ONA

RAINS LASH AL RUSTAQ, AL AWABI



Al Rustaq and Al Awabi received maximum rain on Tuesday. With this spell of rain, cooler days are expected due to change in wind direction. — ONA



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3



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Musandam on comprehensive development track

KHASAB: The comprehensive strategy for economic development and overall planning in Musandam Governorate (2040), is based on the diversification of income sources and improving individuals' standard of living and initiating sustainable economic development in various sectors.

Besides, the strategy seeks to maintain the natural and cultural potentials and develop infrastructure

and public facilities.

This was stated by Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said bin Ibrahim al Busaidy, Governorate of Musandam in an exclusive interview with ONA.

The strategy focuses on economic diversification through developing certain economic sectors namely: logistics, tourism (to develop local economy), fisheries (which includes fishing ports, value-added projects, aquaculture, and trade and industry,



the governor said.

The governor added that the strategy comprises 56 projects spanning the strategic, developmental, tourism and municipal sectors in different wilayats of the Musandam Governorate with the aim of transforming the governorate into an investment hub over the upcoming period. Thanks to the Royal support extended by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, many of these

projects have been implemented while others are under implementation. These projects are being implemented by relevant authorities under the supervision of the Governor's Office.

Municipal projects that have direct effect on communities represent the majority of projects at 39 per cent. These include the development of waterfronts, public parks, children's playgrounds, road services and urban development projects.

— ONA

Tender invited for Muscat Airport free zone work

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Asyad Group invited a tender to construct infrastructure for the upcoming Free Zone (Phase 1) project at Muscat International Airport on Monday.

The Free Zone Area will be located east of the Muscat International Airport land.

According to the tender, the project area will be spread around 1.7 million sqm and to be developed over three phases.

The first phase area is 0.37 million sqm, including preparing the land and building the infrastructures, superstructures, and ancillary services.

The scope of work in Phase 1 will include the construction of the following infrastructure elements - 0.9 km of dual carriageway, 4.45 km of single-carriageway access roads to the Free Zone, two access points for the Free Zone (Phase 1) are provided through a Right-in/right-out (RI-RO) junction, one access point has been provided from the airport road, 3.40 km of chain link security fence along with CCTV camera security.



The project area will be spread around 1.7 million sqm

It includes street lighting and substations, including substation building. Access controlled entry and exits (primary and secondary security gates and parking area for cars/trucks, earthworks, and site grading will also come under the scope of the tender.

It may be noted that Royal Decree 10/2022 was issued to set up three free zones in Muscat International Airport Free Zone, Sohar Airport Free Zone and Salalah Airport. The decision was to start with Muscat International Airport (area of 1.7 min sqm).

The operator and the working company shall be granted the incentives, benefits, and facilities

stipulated in the aforementioned Law of Free Zones.

The operator and the working companies shall be exempt from income tax, and the exemption shall be for a period not exceeding 15 (fifteen) years for each project separately, renewable for five additional years.

The free zone area will be mainly dedicated to industrial, logistics, fish processing, e-commerce, aerospace, pharmaceutical and amenity offices. It offers opportunities for international companies interested in import and export, distribution of various products and light industry merchandise.

Oman at 'Women in Islam' conference

JEDDAH: Represented by the Ministry of Social Development, the Sultanate of Oman is taking part in an international conference titled 'Women in Islam: Status and Empowerment', held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, from 6 to 8 November 2023.

The international conference is held under the auspices of King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques.

The conference is jointly organised by the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Secretariat-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Oman's delegation at the



Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar

conference is led by Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development.

The conference seeks to highlight women's success stories and the gains made

by Muslim women since the dawn of Islam until the present time, in addition to women's role and contribution to development in OIC-member states.

The conference includes five panel discussions during which officials, scholars and intellectuals will elaborate on women's status and women's rights in Islam.

The conferees will also explore prospects for empowering women in the field of education and at the workplace, in addition to opportunities and challenges related to Muslim women in contemporary societies.

— ONA

Judges take oath of office

MUSCAT: Seven judges on Tuesday took the oath of office before Sayyid Mohammed bin Sultan al Busaidy, Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council. The judges were inducted after they passed training at the Higher Judicial Institute and courts.

They are joining the administrative judiciary to safeguard the rights of individuals and establish the values of justice.

This step contributed to the Council's efforts to enhance the judicial authority through the addition of specialised Omani staff to furnish a sound business environment that encourages



Seven judges on Tuesday took the oath of office. — ONA

investment and realises indirect monitoring of management contracts.

The oath-taking ceremony was attended by Sayyid Khalifa bin Said al Busaidy, Chairman of the

Supreme Court, Issa bin Hamad al Azri, Secretary-General of the Supreme Judicial Council, and Shaikh Al Mukhtar bin Abdullah al Harthy, Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Court. — ONA

'Overdependence on AI can hinder critical thinking'

Kaushalendra Singh
@patkaushal

With the introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the education sector is grappling with the question of how the education system can modify to address, incorporate, or challenge the AI systems, which are likely to compromise the ethics and skill growth of the students. There are opposite views as well, as a section of academics and educators favour AI as a tool, which can fasten research, innovation and many other things.

In an interview with the

Observer, Dr Ali al Bimani, Vice-Chancellor of the National University of Science & Technology, threw light on the issue and called for educators and institutions to strike a balance while using AI tools and ensure that they do not obstruct students' critical thinking skills and ethical awareness.

Commenting on the challenges of technological advancements and their impact on higher education institutions (HEIs), Dr Al Bimani said, "The HEIs face both opportunities and challenges in adapting to technological advancements. HEIs can embrace technological

advancements by integrating technology, offering online and hybrid learning, using data analytics, and prioritising adaptive learning." He called for cybersecurity, professional development, and adapting to the curriculum. He suggested addressing ethical concerns, ensuring inclusivity, and promoting research and innovation in HEIs to navigate the impact of technological changes effectively.

AI, according to him, can be a valuable tool for students, offering personalised learning, research assistance, and homework support when used



Dr Ali al Bimani

responsibly and in moderation.

"However, overdependence on AI can hinder critical thinking, raise ethical concerns, exacerbate technology gaps, and compromise data privacy. Balancing AI use with the development of essential skills

and ethical awareness is crucial for responsible integration into education," he emphasised.

To address the technological concerns of the current generation, the National University (NU) of Science & Technology has come up with the College of Advanced Technology, which, according to Dr Al Bimani, is playing a unique role in offering specialised education and research opportunities in advanced and emerging fields.

"It distinguishes from traditional technical colleges, like the College of Engineering, by focusing on postgraduate

education, interdisciplinary research, industry collaboration, and a strong emphasis on cutting-edge technologies and innovation. The specific distinctions would depend on the institution and its programmes and goals," he said.

Colleges of Advanced Technology emphasise research and innovation, encourage students to work on cutting-edge projects and collaborate with industry partners. Many of these programmes promote entrepreneurship and the development of business and management skills alongside technical knowledge.



TOURISM GETS A BOOST FROM CRUISE LINERS

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Oman's tourism sector is set to significantly boost with the increasing number of cruise liners docking at Omani ports. The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism anticipates that before the end of the year, over 100,000 foreign tourists will visit Oman aboard cruise ships, making more than 142 port visits. This surge in cruise ship tourism is expected to not only benefit the tourism industry, but also have a positive ripple effect on the retail business and transportation, thanks to the post-Covid resurgence in tourism-related activities.

In 2022, Oman's major ports, including Port Sultan Qaboos, Port of Salalah, and Khasab Port, welcomed an average of 77 vessels carrying 85,092 tourists. This number is projected to increase by at least 25 per cent in 2023, building upon the steady growth witnessed in the past four years, which saw a 43.6-per cent increase in cruise ship tourists in 2019, totalling 283,488 passengers.

The ministry attributes this growth in the number of vessels and tourists visiting Oman to the government's initiatives, such as infrastructure development and robust tourism campaigns highlighting Oman's rich culture, heritage, diverse adventures and popular attractions. Furthermore, the winter season from October to April 2023 is expected to see the highest influx of tourists.

The ministry has been actively collaborating with government entities, the private sector, ship owners and operators to enhance cruise tourism in Oman and improve the efficiency of local ports to accommodate larger cruise ships. Unlike in the past, when ships would merely pass through Oman's waters, more ships are now keen to dock at Omani ports, thanks to the government's open policies, which have led to increased economic opportunities for Omanis, SMEs, and start-ups.



The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism anticipates that before the end of the year, over **100,000** foreign tourists will visit Oman aboard cruise ships, making more than 142 port visits

A tailor-made tour programme for cruise tourists includes visits to essential archaeological and tourist attractions in Muscat, such as forts, the Grand Mosque, Royal Opera House Muscat, the Corniche, and more. Additionally, iconic places in Dhofar Governorate, including Al Baleed Archaeological Site, Sumharam, Al Mughsail, Al Haffa Market and Taqah Fort, are on the itinerary.

According to the Oman cruise port calendar for 2023, these ships are expected to bring in over 150,000 passengers to Oman, docking at the three main ports. Some tourists will spend a day or two exploring the Sultanate, while others may leave the same day after visiting the most sought-after tourist destinations.

In 2024, several prominent cruise liners, including Costa Toscana, AIDAcosma, MSC Opera, Mein Schiff 6, Queen Mary 2 and Norwegian Jade, are scheduled to make port calls in Oman. Oman's ambitious cruise tourism plans align with its growing popularity in the European market, and the government's policies have led to an increasing number of charters and cruise liners choosing Oman as a destination. This surge in cruise liners not only enhances the tourism sector, but also significantly contributes to Oman's economy.



Recall Date: 08/11/2023

Recall

**Toyota & Lexus
NX350,NX350H,BZ4X**

Brand of Commodity#	Year of Production**	Number of Affected Commodities#
LEXUS NX350	April 15, 2021 - Jan 31, 2023	77
LEXUS NX350H	April 16, 2021 - Jan 27, 2023	5
TOYOTA BZ4X	Nov 1, 2021 - Dec 26, 2022	1

*Not all vehicles in this production period, are affected.
Subject to revision, based on the information received from manufacturer, from time to time.

Recall consequence

Due to the programming of the PDA software within the forward recognition camera, when a subject vehicle passes a line of stopped or parked vehicles, there is a possibility of a discrepancy on detected objects between the PDA and TSS or LSS+ system. If this occurs, the camera will be rebooted and TSS or LSS+ functions will be inoperative for approximately 4 seconds, during which time the PCS system will be inoperative and the PCS warning light will be illuminated. After rebooting, the functions will be restored and operative

Recall Action

To update the software in the forward recognition camera.
This customer Satisfaction Campaign is set to expire on 31/03/2026

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

TOYOTA

LEXUS

Saud Bahwan Automotive LLC
C.R. 1703412
Contact details: Toll free - 80073000
Working days: Sunday - Thursday
Working Time: 8:00 - 17:00 hrs.

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www.pacp.gov.om

خط المستهلك
Consumer line
80079009
80077997



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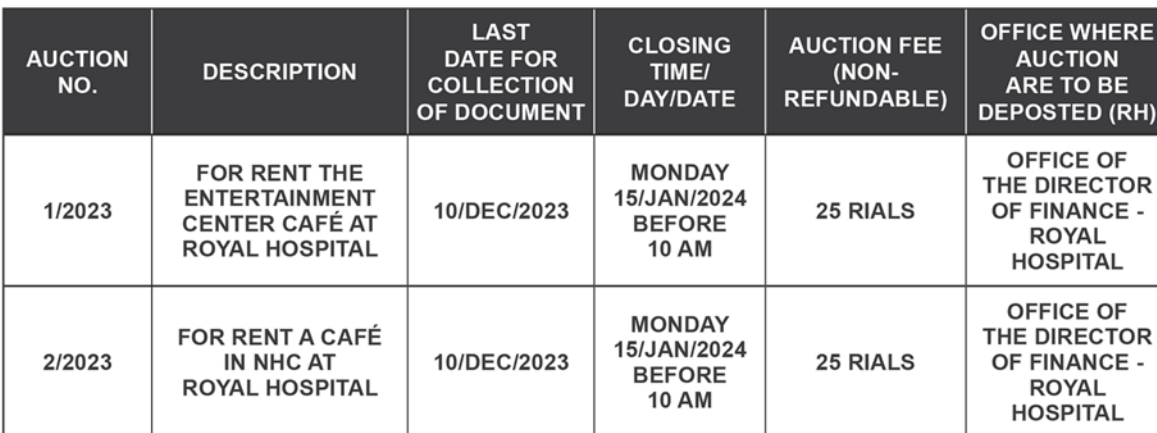
5

Study highlights challenges of renewable energy

The research team, consisting of Dr Yousif as the principal investigator and Prof (Dr) Hussein A Kazem as the co-principal investigator, mentioned that the results explained that dust reduces the energy production performance of photovoltaic units by about one per cent.



The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests them. The request to be made at P.O. Box 44, P.C. 311, Tel: 26850120, Fax: 26721258



- Companies, institutions and individuals willing to participate can purchase Auction Documents from the Financial Affairs Department (Non-Medical Purchase Section) between **8.00 am and 12.30 pm** on working days till date of **10/Dec/2023**, on payment of Auction fee mentioned above.
- Auction should be submitted in plain, sealed envelope, Enclosing A Bank Guarantee issued by a Local bank for not less than (1%) of the value of the bid, addressed to the Ministry of Finance and it will be refunded if the bid is not awarded and valid for (90) days from the date of submission of offers.
- Auction should be submitted in plain, sealed envelope with wax, on which the number and name of the auction should be written on the outside on the envelope, avoid writing the bidder name.
- Requested to Deposit their Auction Documents at the Office of Director of Finance Directorate of The Royal Hospital (RH), **Before 10.00 am** on Monday, **15/Jan/2024**, and bids submitted after this date shall not be considered, whatever the reasons for the delay.
- Copy of **Commercial Registration Certificate** is to be Submitted for the collection of Auction Documents.
- Auction(s) Submitted without Bank Guarantee will not be considered.
- The Directorate General of Royal Hospital is not bound to accept the lowest or any other offer.



Jordan opens to ‘all options’ as conflict intensifies

AMMAN: Jordan said it was leaving “all options” open in its response to what it called Israel’s failure to discriminate between military and civilian targets in its intensifying bombardment and invasion of the Gaza Strip.

Prime Minister Bisher al Khasawneh did not elaborate on what steps Jordan would take, days after it recalled its ambassador from Israel in protest at Israel’s offensive in Gaza.

Jordan also announced last week that Israel’s ambassador, who left Amman shortly after the war has started, would not be allowed to come back, effectively declaring him persona non grata.

“All options are on the table for Jordan in our dealing with the Israeli aggression on Gaza and its repercussions,” Khasawneh said.

Khasawneh added that Israel’s siege of the densely populated Gaza was not self-defence as it



Healthcare workers carry flags and banners during a protest in support of Palestinians, in Amman, Jordan. — Reuters

maintains. “The brutal Israeli attack does not discriminate between civilian and military targets and is extending to safe areas and ambulances,” he said.

Israel has denied deliberately targeting civilian objects in heavily populated areas.

In a statement, Israel’s foreign ministry said the country’s

“relations with Jordan are of strategic importance to both countries and we regret the inflammatory statements from Jordan’s leadership.”

They fear that Israel could expel Palestinians en masse from the West Bank, where Israeli settler attacks on inhabitants have surged. — Reuters

UAE to set up 150-bed field hospital: Official media

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates is to set up a field hospital in the Gaza Strip, official media said after the death toll from the war passed 10,000, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

Five aircraft flew out of Abu Dhabi for Arish in northern Egypt carrying equipment and supplies for the 150-bed facility, WAM news agency said late on Monday.

An official said there was no immediate information on how the equipment will be transferred to Gaza, where there is only one operational border point, the Rafah crossing near Arish.

The hospital’s facilities will include anaesthetics and surgery, gynaecology and intensive care units “catering to both children and adults”, WAM said.

Health facilities in Gaza are overwhelmed, and medical stocks are in short supply as hospitals and healthcare are increasingly targeted by attacks, according to a



Ambulances queue at the Egyptian side of the border with the Gaza Strip in Rafah. — AFP file photo

report from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Since the start of hostilities, 14 out of 35 hospitals with inpatient capacities have stopped functioning and 71 per cent of all primary care facilities across

Gaza have shut down due to Israeli strikes or lack of fuel.

The United Arab Emirates has previously announced plans to bring about 1,000 Palestinian children and their families from the Gaza Strip for treatment at UAE hospitals. — AFP

UN decries month of Middle East ‘ca



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

GAZA: Israel says its forces have surrounded Gaza City, home to a third of the enclave’s 2.3 million people, and are poised to storm it soon in their campaign.

“It has been one full month of carnage, of incessant suffering, bloodshed, destruction, outrage and despair,” UN Human Rights Commissioner Volcker Turk said in a statement at the start of a trip to the region, during which he will visit the Rafah crossing from Egypt, the sole route for aid.

“Human rights violations are at the root of this escalation and human rights play a central role in finding a way out of this vortex of pain.”

Gaza is becoming a “graveyard for children”, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Monday, amplifying demands for a ceasefire in the enclave, where Palestinian health authorities said the death toll from Israeli strike had exceeded 10,300.

Israel gave residents a window from 10:00 am until 2:00 pm to leave Gaza City on Tuesday. Residents say Israeli tanks have been moving mostly at night, with Israeli forces largely relying on air and artillery strikes to clear a path for their ground advance.

“For your safety, take this next opportunity to move south beyond Wadi Gaza,” the military announced, referring to the wetlands that bisect the strip.

“The most dangerous trip in my life. We saw the tanks from point blank. We saw decomposed body parts. We saw death,” resident Adam Fayez Zeyara posted.



A Palestinian man carries a victim child of an Israeli bombardment in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. — AFP

More and more facilities are closing down, and more and more life saving means are closing down

CHRISTIAN LINDMEIER
WHO spokesperson

While Israel’s military operation is focused on the northern half of Gaza, the south has also come under attack. Palestinian health officials said at least 23 people were killed in two separate Israeli air strikes early on Tuesday in the southern Gaza cities of Khan Younis and Rafah.

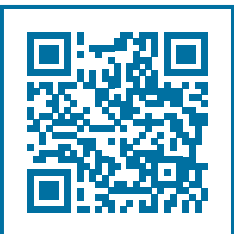
“We are civilians,” said Ahmed Ayeshe, who was rescued from the rubble of a house in Khan Younis where health officials said 11 people had been killed. “This is the bravery of the so-called Israel, they show their might and power against civilians, babies inside, kids inside and elderly.”

US President Joe Biden discussed war pauses with Netanyahu by phone on Monday, emphasising it must protect civilians, the White House said.

The enclave is becoming a “graveyard for children”, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Monday, where Palestinian health authorities said the death toll from Israeli strike had exceeded 10,300, including some 40 per cent of children. International organisations have said hospitals cannot cope with the wounded and food and clean water are running out with aid deliveries nowhere near enough.

“We need an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. It’s been 30 days. Enough is enough.

This must stop now,” said a statement from the heads of several United Nations’ bodies on Monday. — Reuters



Indonesia denies Israel claim over Rumah Sakit hospital

JAKARTA: Indonesia denied on Tuesday an Israeli claim that a hospital built in Gaza using Indonesian funding sits atop a network of tunnels and is located near a launchpad for rocket attacks.

The hospital, situated in the north of the Gaza Strip near the fortified border with Israel, was built using Indonesian charity funds.

“The Indonesian Hospital in Gaza is a facility built by the Indonesian people entirely for humanitarian purposes and to serve the medical needs of the Palestinian people in Gaza,” Indonesia’s foreign ministry said in a statement on Tuesday.

The statement came a day after Israeli military spokesman Daniel Hagari said the Indonesian Hospital had been built at a site that sat on top of a network of tunnels.

He also said it was in a nearby area as a base to launch rockets



A picture shows the Rumah Sakit Indonesia hospital in Gaza City. – AFP file photo

into Israel.

“I will show you the reason why they built the hospital there. Unsurprisingly, the hospital was built on top of their attack infrastructures,” Hagari said in a video statement posted by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on YouTube.

The Indonesian charity that operates the hospital, MER-C,

also denied the facility was used to launch rockets.

“What Israel accused us of can be a precondition for them to launch an attack at the Indonesian hospital in Gaza,” MER-C chief Sarbini Abdul Murad said in Jakarta on Monday.

The “IDF’s accusation is a precondition to justify attacks against us”, Murad added. — AFP

US envoy urges ‘restoring calm’ on Lebanon-Israel border

BEIRUT: Visiting US envoy Amos Hochstein on Tuesday urged for calm to return to Lebanon’s southern border with Israel, after weeks of skirmishes following the start of the war in Gaza.

“The United States does not want to see conflict in Gaza escalating and expanding into Lebanon,” Hochstein told a press conference in Beirut.

“Restoring calm along the southern border is of utmost importance to the United States and it should be the highest priority for both Lebanon and Israel,” he added.

Since October 7, Lebanon’s southern border has seen intensifying tit-for-tat exchanges, stoking fears of a broader conflagration.

Israel has been striking the Lebanon’s south and sending reconnaissance drones across the border, according to the official National News Agency (NNA).



US special envoy Amos Hochstein (C) and US ambassador to Lebanon, Dorothy Shea, meet with Lebanese caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati in Beirut. – AFP

UN Security Council Resolution 1701 ended the 2006 war and called for the removal of weapons in southern Lebanon from the hands of everyone except the Lebanese army and other state security forces.

Hochstein urged all parties to use Resolution 1701 “and fully implement it”, following a meeting with parliament speaker

Nabih Berri.

On the Israeli side, six soldiers and two civilians have been killed.

Three girls, aged 10, 12 and 14, and their grandmother were buried on Tuesday, days after the NNA said an Israeli strike hit their vehicle in south Lebanon.

Fears appear as conflict could turn into a regional war if attacks on Gaza continue. — AFP

‘Murnage,’ calls it a children’s graveyard



Flares are fired by Israeli forces, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestinians, in Gaza City. – Reuters



A Palestinian firefighter stands amidst smoke after Israeli bombardment in Khan Yunis in southern Gaza. – AFP

Tanks poise around, as Gaza reaches a ‘breaking point’ without fuel

GAZA: Israel gave civilians still trapped inside freshly encircled Gaza City a four-hour window to leave on Tuesday, and residents escaping the city said they passed tanks in position to storm it.

Gaza services are close to “breaking point” without fuel supplies, UN humanitarian office (OCHA) spokesperson Jens Laerke said on Tuesday, adding that none of the 569 aid trucks that had reached the enclave so far were carrying fuel.

Israel gave residents a window from 10:00 am until 2:00 pm to leave Gaza City. Residents say Israeli tanks have been moving mostly at night, with Israeli forces largely relying on air and artillery strikes to clear a path for their ground advance.

“For your safety, take this next opportunity to move south beyond Wadi Gaza,” the military announced, referring to the wetlands that bisect the strip.

Interior ministry says 900,000 Palestinians are still sheltering in northern Gaza including Gaza City.

Netanyahu said a general ceasefire would hamper his



Displaced Palestinians prepare food in front of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) school at the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip. – Reuters

country’s war effort, but pauses to fighting for humanitarian reasons could continue to be considered based on circumstances.

US President Joe Biden discussed such pauses by phone on Monday with Netanyahu, emphasising it must protect civilians, the White House said.

Many countries say a ceasefire is needed at once to help Gazans in peril.

Last week UN aid chief Martin Griffiths said there had been “some progress” in negotiations on letting fuel into the Israeli-

besieged Gaza strip, without elaborating.

“More and more facilities are closing down, and more and more life saving means are closing down,” said World Health Organization spokesperson Christian Lindmeier at the same briefing, referring to fuel supplies.

There are fears that the month-old conflict could spread to other fronts, including the Israeli-occupied West Bank and the northern border with Lebanon, both areas that have seen a surge in unrest. — Reuters

Israeli army ground operations in the Gaza Strip

- Approximate areas where Israeli army ground operations have been reported, as of November 6, 1900 GMT
- Southern limit of the area that Israel warned civilians to evacuate



Source: Institute for the Study of War and AEI’s Critical Threats Project based on satellite image observations and statements by authorities from both sides of the conflict

Map data: OSM

Left to live without basic necessities!

EVERY war brings out very brutal consequences. The longer the war continues, the more there will be deaths and tragedies among the innocent.

Although wars directly destroy basic infrastructure like hospitals, schools, homes, businesses, and other national resources worth billions, what is more disastrous is that they fuel poverty by disrupting livelihoods.

As history shows, vulnerability to being targeted leads to the displacement of people from their homes, forcing children from the classroom, worsening gender inequality, and exposing people to extreme levels of violence.

If poverty, in its broadest sense, refers to a living condition without access to basic necessities such as food, shelter, clean water, education, and healthcare, living below the extreme poverty line, according to the World Bank, means surviving on less than \$1.90 a day.

So if we include deprivation of basic necessities of life to define poverty, then nothing fuels it quite like war. This means those war-hit countries will be in grinding poverty for months and years! The least developed countries will struggle the most to escape and recover from conflict-related poverty!

According to a United Nations report, two billion people, or a quarter of the world's population, are now living in conflict-affected areas. Over 84 million people were displaced, and an estimated 274 million people will need humanitarian assistance.

These displaced people are forced to seek safety in other countries, where they live in makeshift camps in horrible conditions, often struggling to meet basic needs like health, education, food, housing, water, and sanitation, to name a few.

The UN report also reveals that 8.4 per cent of the world's population, or as many as 670 million people, were living in extreme poverty at the end of 2022. An estimated 7 per cent or



Samuel Kutty
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The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

THE BEST PARTS
OF KARAOKE
ARE WATCHING
PEOPLE SMILE,
SING ALONG,
AND TAP THEIR
FEET - OR MAYBE
EVEN COMING
OUT IN FRONT
OF THE CROWD
TO SEE WHO IS
SINGING

575 million people, could still find themselves trapped in extreme poverty by 2030.

Long after the conflict is over, the resonating effects on the next generation ripple on. Projections by the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and others estimate that by 2030, about 50 to 64 per cent of the global poor will live in countries affected by conflicts and high levels of violence.

In a recent Human Rights Council discussion, speakers pointed out that conflict remained a key driver for food insecurity and malnutrition and represented one of the main hindrances to the fulfilment of the right to food.

Conflict makes it very difficult for countries to develop functionally and cripples the economy as businesses fail and foreign investment leaves. This makes further conflict and civil war almost inevitable.

The fact is that the world is only less than seven years past the deadline to “end poverty in all its forms everywhere” by 2030! The intensifying wars, armed conflicts, and violence are suggesting that the global target of ending extreme poverty will be missed by a large margin.

Conflict negatively affects the entire food system and aggravates the unaffordability of healthy diets. Around 345 million people were projected to be food insecure in 2023. This number is more than twice the number in 2020!

The number of conflicts around the world has more than doubled in the last three decades. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, there are 27 active conflicts around the world. Although some of these conflicts have been going on for decades, and others for only a few years, in all cases, the results have been ruinous.

After all, creating stability is crucial for economies to develop and governments to eradicate extreme poverty.

THE KNIFE ANGEL SCULPTURE



The Knife Angel sculpture, also known as The National Monument Against Violence and Aggression, created by artist Alfie Bradley from over 100,000 knives obtained from knife amnesties and weapons seized by British police forces, is seen on display as part of a national tour in Bolton, Britain, on Tuesday. – Reuters

Impasse broken on climate fund....

FINAL talks over the weekend to agree a proposal for a new climate disaster fund averted a deadlock ahead of the UN's COP28 climate summit later this month, but cracked open tough questions about who will pay and how soon.

The fifth meeting of a 24-member UN committee tasked with designing the fund concluded in Abu Dhabi over the weekend, with support for a “take-it-or-leave-it” deal that would make the World Bank the interim home of the fund and encourage - but not oblige - all countries to contribute to it.

A loss and damage fund would be the first United Nations mechanism dedicated to helping countries that have suffered irreparable climate-driven damage from drought, floods and rising sea levels. It would aim to divert billions of dollars towards nations that are “particularly vulnerable.”

After months of contentious talks, negotiators produced recommendations for the fund that will be put to nearly 200 governments for approval at the annual UN climate summit COP28, from November 30 to December 12 in Dubai.

Both developing and developed countries said they had made major concessions to avoid a failure that would have soured COP28 - where governments will face pressure to



Valerie Volcovici
Covers US climate and energy policy from Washington, DC for Reuters



Kate Abnett
Covers EU climate and energy policy in Brussels for Reuters

unlock other deals on phasing out fossil fuels and increasing funding for climate action.

“There was a lot at stake at this meeting,” Avinash Persaud, special envoy to the Prime Minister of Barbados and the country’s representative on the UN committee, said. “The value of the agreement is that it avoided a disaster ahead of COP and gives positive momentum.”

The recommendation “urges” developed countries to take the lead in capitalising the fund and also “invites” contributions from other countries and funding sources like carbon markets.

That means no country would be legally obliged to pay into the fund - reflecting a hard-fought compromise. Developing nations argue that rich countries responsible for most of the historical CO2 emissions causing climate change should be obliged to pay - something the United States and other rich nations refused to accept.

“It’s like a GoFundMe account for climate destruction,” Persaud said of the deal.

As the hours passed on the second day of talks, negotiators haggled over wording and punctuation on the section of the text on countries’ financial commitments to the fund.

A US State Department official

said the country had sought - unsuccessfully - to get a footnote included in the text to clarify that any contribution to the fund would be voluntary.

The official welcomed the fact that the committee agreed on “many aspects of loss and damage funding” but expressed regret that the text does not “reflect consensus concerning the need for clarity on the voluntary nature of contributions”.

Egypt, which represents African countries on the committee, also raised concerns in the meeting after the deal was agreed, noting that some of their

key demands had not been met - such as agreeing the size of the fund or clearer obligations for rich nations to contribute.

Such complaints could risk a blow-up at COP28 if countries attempt to reopen the deal.

“I suppose from both sides there will be attempts to break open the text,” one European negotiator said.

But that could complicate efforts to actually put money in the fund - if donor countries don’t have a clear idea of the rules that will govern their contributions, and which countries would be in line to receive it.

“You’re not going to pledge to the fund if you don’t know where the money’s going to go,” the European negotiator said.

The European Union, which is the biggest source of other types of climate finance - money that helps poorer countries invest in cleaner energy, or adapt to worsening storms and heat - is already preparing to contribute to the fund. Jennifer Morgan, Climate Envoy for Germany - Europe’s biggest economy - said in a post on X that Berlin is also working on a contribution.

Mohamed Nasr, Egypt’s lead climate negotiator and representative on the committee, said such pledges would be crucial to the overall COP28 negotiations.

If rich nations fail to follow through, he said, it could reopen decades-old fights that have derailed past climate deals - with poorer nations demanding “compensation” from rich nations for causing climate change, or refusing to agree to cut emissions faster without substantially more financial support from rich countries.

If the fund ends up as an “empty shell” then countries will have “no choice but to bring back discussions on historical responsibility and compensation,” Nasr said.



No country would be legally obliged to pay into the fund.

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OMAN CRICKET STARS RETURN TO HEROES’ WELCOME

MUSCAT: Oman’s senior cricket team’s remarkable achievement in the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup Asia Qualifier Final stirred the enthusiasm of many, drawing fans, families, Oman Cricket board members, and officials from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth to Muscat International Airport. They were there to greet the champions of the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup Asia Qualifier Final.

In a thrilling final match held at the TU ground in Kirtipur on Sunday, Oman triumphed over the host nation, Nepal, in a super over, winning the T20 World Cup 2024 qualifier with a perfect record in front of nearly 35,000 local fans.

The title victory, along with securing qualification for the T20 World Cup for the third time under the leadership of head coach Duleep Mendis, ignited a strong sense of national pride and jubilation. This was evident on Monday night when the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth organised a reception for the national heroes at the VIP lounge, a space typically reserved for foreign dignitaries.

Leading the welcome party at the airport was Hisham al Sinani, Director-General at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, along with Oman Cricket (OC) Vice-Chairman Paul Sheridan, OC secretary Madhu Jesrani, OC treasurer Alkesh Joshi, OC board members Kiran Asher and Syed Anwar Ahsan, along with numerous fans and family members.

Mendis, the legendary Sri Lankan cricketer, expressed his immense satisfaction and pride upon his arrival at the airport.

He said, “This is a monumental achievement. Qualifying for the T20 World Cup with an undefeated record in such a highly competitive qualifier fills

me with joy. The players poured their hearts into the games, and defeating the host nation Nepal, not once but twice, in front of a cheering crowd of nearly 30,000-40,000 locals, underscores the tremendous progress Oman Cricket has made over the years under the adept leadership of Pankaj Khimji, Chairman of Oman Cricket.”

Mendis has led Oman to all three T20 World Cups, an achievement that only a few coaches can boast of. He previously steered the Men in Red to their maiden T20 World Cup win in 2016 in India and repeated the feat in 2021 when Oman co-hosted the event with the UAE.

Oman’s captain, Zeeshan Maqsood, who currently holds the World No 7 spot in the ICC ODI all-rounders list, shared his happiness at their qualification and the remarkable unbeaten journey to claim the trophy. He commended his exceptional team, which secured victories over Nepal, all in front of an appreciative crowd numbering in the thousands.

For Maqsood it will also be the third T20 World Cup, having been part of the national team in the previous T20 World Cup in 2016 and 2021.

Maqsood said: “Aqib Ilyas was adjudged the Player of the Tournament and Bilal Khan named the best bowler of the Asia Qualifier Final. Their recognitions were like an icing on the cake. It underlines the consistency in the team and each player owed up their responsibilities and played a role in the success. The title win is a result of all-round work for the past many months of players, coach Mendis, assistant coaches, bowling coach, support staff, and Oman Cricket board members. I also would like to express my deep appreciation to



our fans here in Oman and also in Nepal, who cheered us during the matches.”

Oman Cricket (OC) Chairman Pankaj Khimji was delighted with the team’s success and said: “The team has made the country proud once again. The final was a thriller and the best I’ve witnessed in a long time. It was truly a deserving final and the large Nepal crowd added a different dimension to the final. Oman are worthy champions and the players and the support staff deserve the credit.”

The Oman Cricket boss, who is also the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) vice-chairman and ICC director, added: “HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, has been a tremendous support throughout our Asia Qualifier Final. The title triumph and qualification to the T20 World Cup for the third time is a tribute to the nation and our people. Above all, it is a tribute to our patron-in-chief His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.”

The success story of Oman’s vice-captain and Most Valuable Player (MVP) of the Asia Qualifier Final, Aqib Ilyas, reflects resilience and determination.

Ilyas, who made a remarkable comeback to competitive cricket after an injury hiatus of nearly one and a half years, expressed his elation at qualifying for the World Cup.

He said: “It is the best feeling to make it to the World Cup. It is a dream to qualify for any player to play in the World Cup. And this time with the ICC expanding the 2024 tournament to 20



Oman cricket team arrives at Muscat Airport.



teams, we will play in the main round with the big teams as there will be four groups of five teams each. We have worked hard for the past seven-eight months. I came back after injury and had to get to the level of my team-mates. I also led Oman to the inaugural T20 Gulf Cup win in the absence of regular captain Zeeshan Maqsood. I have been consistently scoring since our ICC ODI Qualifier in Zimbabwe in June where I got three fifties.

“The confidence was growing since then and I also received the backing of my coach Mendis. It is a great feeling to get player of the series in back-to-back tournaments, first Oman D20 and now in Nepal. I know the team relies on me a lot and it gives me great satisfaction when I am able to deliver and produce favourable results. Now we will work hard to make an impact at the 2024 World Cup.”

Long-serving OC secretary Madhu Jesrani celebrated the incredible achievement of the team, expressing his pride in their performance. He looked ahead to the team’s preparations for the upcoming year, expressing the hope that they would compete with the world’s best in the 2024 T20 World Cup in the USA and the West Indies.

OC treasurer Alkesh Joshi attributed the success to the team’s collective efforts over the past 14 months. He highlighted the strategic changes that were made to elevate the team’s performance and success. Joshi pointed out their remarkable journey, including reaching the Super Six stage at the ICC ODI World Cup Qualifiers in Zimbabwe, winning the Gulf Cup T20 title, and clinching qualification to the 2024 T20 World Cup for the third time. He credited head coach Duleep Mendis, the coaching staff, and the entire OC administration, emphasising that reaching this stage would not have been possible without the relentless support of the ministry and the strong backing of HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said.

OOC fetes accomplishers at Asian Games, Asian Para Games

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 7

In a glittering event, the Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) felicitated the national medallists in the 19th edition of Asian Games which was held in Hangzhou, China, during September 23 to October 8 and the fourth edition of Asian Para Games which was held in China, from October 22 to 28. The function was held under the auspices of Shaikh Khalid bin Mohammed al Zubair, Chairman of OOC, in presence of dignitaries. Honouring of the Sultanate of Oman’s Asian accomplishers was inline to the OOC commitment to support Omani athletes and praise their outstanding sporting performance at the regional and international levels.

Oman Sail’s 49er team comprising sailors Musab al Hadi and Walid al Kindi had clinched silver medal for Oman in sailing competition while sprinter Hussain al Farsi had bagged bronze for the nation in the men’s

800 metres final.

Oman para athletics team stars had achieved remarkable accomplishment as Mohammed al Mashaykhi clinched two gold medals in shot put and javelin throw events. Moreover, the bronze medallist of 2022 Paralympics in Tokyo had earned direct qualification spot in shot put event at the 2024 Paris Paralympic Games in France. Oman’s para star Mohammed al Qasmi had bagged two deserved silver medals in shot put and javelin throw events.

The chairman of OOC in his opening speech praised the champions for their outstanding accomplishment. “We are all proud of our national team athletes for their top show and registered accomplishments in the 19th Asian Games and the 4th Asian Paralympic Games which were recently concluded in China and the Sultanate of Oman’s athletes had captured six medals in both events,” he said.

“This honour comes within the framework of supporting



Omani athletes and with an aim of achieving more honourable results and motivating the rest of the athletes and national teams to make better efforts to reach top levels in various continental and international events.”

Al Zubair appreciated all the efforts taken by all the government parties and associations who contributed positively to the achievement.

“Special thanks to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Omani Athletics Association (OAA), Oman Sail, Oman Paralympic Committee and all the technical and coaching staff for their hard and diligent work,” he said.

Al Zubair concluded his speech with confirmation that OOC will continue its close follow-up and will provide the necessary support to all national teams in order to raise the flag of the Sultanate of Oman high in all the international events and championships.

Sailor Walid al Kindi thanked OOC for the honour. “Getting

the honour from the OOC and previously from the Ministry will encourage us to perform much better in the coming events. We are currently gearing up to take part in the final Asian qualifiers to 2024 Paris Olympic Games, in Thailand during December. The competition will be very tough and only the first place will advance to the Olympic Games. We will work hard to accomplish this target,” he told *Oman Daily Observer*.

Sprinter Hussain al Farsi expressed his joy to be honoured after securing bronze medal in the Asian Games. “I am very glad to be one of the accomplishers in this top Asian Games event. It was a great moment and I am working hard to register more better achievements in the near future. I am preparing now in Kuwait under supervision of coach Fahad al Shammari to take part in the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships in Iran in February 2024 and then the World Indoor Athletics Championships in London in April next year,” he signed off.



Thrilling contests mark fifth round of world chess

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, NOV 7

The intensity of competition increased at the end of the fifth round of the 2023 World Amateur Chess Championship, organised by the Oman Chess Committee in collaboration with Fide and running until November 11. The round witnessed a strong and exciting competition among players from around the world, with the results determining the overall rankings, and some surprises were recorded during the round.

The fifth round started with the first move made by Aimen Ahmed al Hosni, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Airports, in the main hall of the Sultan Qaboos Complex in Bausher.

In the women's under 1700, Mongolia's Bat-Amgalan Anujin took lead after winning an exciting game against compatriot Naranbold Sodgerelt. Both players sought to win and secure first place in the category, but Bat-Amgalan Anujin managed to achieve victory and earn the match points. As a result, Bat-Amgalan Anujin secured first place with five points in the standings, followed by Naranbold Sodgerelt with four points.

In the men's under 1700, Aleksandr Martynov of Fide earned a hard-fought victory against UAE's Humaidan al Zaabi. With the win, Martynov took the lead in the category with five points, followed by Sweden's Hamed Imani on same points.



Aimen Ahmed al Hosni, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Airports, makes the first move of Round 5.

In the men's under 2000, Mongolia's Dashtogtokh Amarsaikhan topped the standings with five points, securing the lead by 0.5 point over his closest competitors. In the fifth round, Amarsaikhan beat Sri Lanka's Desandhi Dhihansa in a match characterised by high-level tactics. Following him in the standings is Kazakhstan's Alikhan Khazhatuly with 4.5 points.

In the men's under 2300, Abilmansur Abdilkhair achieved his fifth victory and took the lead



Imani Lasaki Hamed of Sweden

in the standings with five points. In this round, he faced Mongolian competitor Burentegsh Aldar to succeed in a tactical match. India's



Deepak Batra of India

Indrajeet Mahindrakar is second with 4.5 points.

Aimen al Hosni said that hosting international events of this

kind enhances the global travel market and highlights the Sultanate of Oman's role in attracting such events. He mentioned that he had witnessed many renowned international figures in this sport, which fills him with pride for having Omani representatives in these global tournaments and contributes to elevating them to this distinguished level.

Al Hosni added that these international events support companies seeking regular participation in such events, noting

that all supporting companies aim to shine and spotlight their names in these important international arenas.

Omani player Omar al Harrasi said hosting the World Amateur Chess Championship is a great opportunity for the Omani players to participate and interact with international players. He explained that the participation of more than 80 Omani players would not have been possible if the championship had been held in a location other than Oman, as participating in foreign tournaments is costly and cannot be borne by the Oman Chess Committee's budget. Therefore, hosting the championship is a golden opportunity for everyone to participate and compete to improve their international ranking.

He added: "It is my first international participation, and I find it a wonderful opportunity to test my classic chess skills and a personal challenge to elevate my level to the next stage by facing professional players and those with international rankings."

In order to promote chess and enhance its culture, a daily programme for schools and children was initiated in the morning, attracting approximately 100 children daily. This programme includes miniature chess games, face painting, colouring, and several entertainment activities organised by the OCC in collaboration with the Oman School Sports Committee in the Muscat Governorate.



Iga Swiatek celebrates with the trophy after winning her final match against Jessica Pegula. — Reuters

Swiatek thrashes Pegula to win WTA Finals, reclaim No 1 ranking

CANCUN, Mexico: Poland's Iga Swiatek thrashed Jessica Pegula to win the WTA Finals on Monday, sealing her return to world number one.

Second seed Swiatek dominated Pegula from start to finish to clinch a 6-1, 6-0 victory in a 59-minute masterclass.

The 17th win of Swiatek's career ensures that the four-time major singles champion from Warsaw will finish the season as world number one for a second straight year.

"The team that's been with me the whole season, we had many ups and downs," a jubilant Swiatek said after her win.

"This is for sure an up. We will for sure have many more if we keep working like that," added Swiatek, who lost just 20 games across the tournament -- a new record.

Pegula had few complaints

about her defeat after an error-strewn display.

"It just was one of those days where I felt like I was going for too much," Pegula said. "And she was just playing super solid."

Swiatek, 22, had beaten outgoing world number one Aryna Sabalenka in the semi-finals on Sunday. Sabalenka took over the number one ranking from Swiatek following the US Open in September.

Pegula defeated Swiatek in the two players' previous meeting in Montreal in August, and had impressed on her way to Monday's final, which had been shunted back 24 hours after wet weather washed out play on Saturday.

But the 29-year-old American from New York never looked capable of pulling off a repeat of her Canadian victory against three-time French Open champion

Swiatek, who was sharper in every facet of her game.

The Polish star dominated on serve, and pulled Pegula all over the court with whipped groundstrokes that left her opponent flailing.

Pegula also struggled on serve, being broken five times while coughing up 23 unforced errors compared to Swiatek's six.

Swiatek — who gave up only one break point opportunity in the entire match, which Pegula was unable to convert — sealed victory in the sixth game of the second set when the American pulled a backhand return long.

Swiatek took control of Monday's contest early on, breaking Pegula in the fourth game for 3-1 before holding and breaking again for a 5-1 lead. She served out to love to claim the first set and then carried that momentum into the second set. —AFP

International stars set to thrill at Oman Grand Prix badminton

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, NOV 7

The second edition of Oman Grand Prix Season 2 badminton tournament will feature world-class players from India, Indonesia, Oman and the GCC on November 10 and 11.

The tournament will be organised by AMM Sports Arena in association with Oman Racket Sports Committee. This prestigious sporting event is a continuation to the massively successful Oman Grand Prix Season 1 held last year.

With the support of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the tournament will be held at the state-of-the-art AMM Arena at Ghala. The event will feature singles, doubles and mixed doubles categories.

The tournament will attract top-tier players from various countries like India, Indonesia and the wider GCC region making it a true international showdown.

STAR ATTRACTION

Star Indian player Chirag Sen and young Indian sensation Dhruv Rawat along with Ansal Yadav and Siddharth Pratap Singh will be among the prominent international players in fray for the top honours.

The AMM Sports Arena is equipped with world-class facilities such as Badminton World Federation (BWF) approved courts and a stunning



Dhruv Rawat

arena, ensuring a thrilling atmosphere for both players and fans.

The AMM Arena in association with Oman Racket Sports Committee will provide a great opportunity for young Oman nationals and residents alike to feature in the top tournament.

The event will see participation from other prominent clubs like Marvel Sports Club, Muscat Badminton Club, Oasis Badminton Academy, Falcon Badminton Academy, Kosmos Badminton Academy and Sohar Falajianz.

A substantial prize money pool awaits the winners of each category.

On November 8 and 9, there will be age-group competitions for boys and girls from 5pm to 9pm at the AMM Arena.

Singles events will be held in under-13, under-15 and under-17 while doubles will be conducted in under-15 and under-17 age groups. For Omanis, Under-11 and under-15 singles events will be organised.



Chirag Sen

It will be free for Omani nationals in the junior age groups competitions while other nationalities will have a registration fee of RO 3. A registration fee of RO 5 will be required for players in the adult section.

In the main tournament on November 10 and 11, men's singles open, men's A doubles, men's B doubles, men's premier doubles, veterans doubles (plus 45 years old), women's singles, women's doubles, men's singles elite, men's doubles elite and mixed doubles elite are the various categories to be competed for the honours. The matches will start from 8 am till 9 pm.

Badminton enthusiasts around the world will be able to follow the action through live streaming and television broadcasts.

This tournament is not only a testament to Oman's growing presence in the world of badminton but also an opportunity for the local community to come together and celebrate the sport.

201



MAXWELL
MAXIMUM

AUSTRALIA REACH
SEMIS AFTER
MAXWELL'S STUNNING
201 NOT OUT SPOILS
AFGHAN HOPES



MUMBAI: Glenn Maxwell’s stunning 201 not out guided Australia into the semifinals of the World Cup as the five-time champions snatched a sensational three-wicket victory from the jaws of defeat against Afghanistan in Mumbai on Tuesday.

At 91-7, chasing 292, Australia were all set to join title-holders England, 1996 champions Pakistan and 1992 winners Sri Lanka as yet another notable Afghanistan scalp at this World Cup. Crucially, however, recalled all-rounder Maxwell was dropped soon afterwards on 33 when Mujeeb Ur Rahman somehow floored a simple chance at short fine leg off fellow spinner Noor Ahmad.

“It would’ve been nice if it was chanceless, I’ve lived a very charmed life out there,” said Maxwell, appropriately nicknamed “The Big Show”.

He made Afghanistan pay with an astounding 128-ball innings featuring 21 fours and 10 sixes as he became just the third batsman after New Zealand’s Martin Guptill and West Indies’ Chris Gayle to score a World Cup double century.

Maxwell ended the match in style with nearly three overs to spare when he slammed Mujeeb for another six.

The 35-year-old Maxwell’s highest one-day international score was just his fourth century in 136 matches at this level, but second of the tournament after he scored the fastest hundred in men’s World Cup history, off just 40 balls, against the Netherlands.

Australia captain Pat Cummins was 12 not out but played his part by holding firm in an unbroken eighth-wicket stand of 202.

There was one more twist late on in a dramatic encounter when Maxwell, on 146, suffered a violent attack of cramp as he hobbled through for a single.

But following on-field treatment a still-struggling Maxwell continued to pulverise Afghanistan’s attack with a dazzling array of shots.

These included an extraordinary reverse hit for six off paceman Azmatullah Omarzai — earlier denied a hat-trick by Maxwell.

Afghanistan, despite this defeat, remain in last-four contention but they will need to beat second-placed South Africa and hope other results go their way to qualify for the knockout phase.

It had seemed the night would belong to Ibrahim Zadran, whose 129 not out in a total of 291-5 was the first hundred by an Afghanistan batsman at a World Cup.

Thar left Australia needing to better their previous highest winning score to win a World Cup match of 287 against New Zealand in a 1996 quarter-final in Chennai

But opener Travis Head fell for a duck, caught behind off a superb Naveen-ul-Haq delivery that seamed away sharply, with the paceman also having Mitchell Marsh lbw for 24.

Australia’s 43-2 then became 49-4 as Omarzai struck with successive deliveries, clean bowling veteran opener David Warner following the left-hander’s ugly heave across the line before Josh Inglis edged to first slip.

Maxwell survived the hat-trick, nicking short of wicketkeeper Ikram Alikhil.

Australia were 69-5 when a mix-up with Maxwell saw Marnus Labuschagne run out by Rahmat Shah’s direct hit from midwicket before leg-spinner Rashid Khan removed Marcus Stoinis and Mitchell Starc as the crowd roared Afghanistan on.

But then came Maxwell’s big reprieve, with Australia 112-7.

Earlier, opener Zadran took Afghanistan to their highest World Cup total as they topped their 288 they made against the West Indies at Headingley in 2019.

Australia initially kept Afghanistan in check after losing the toss, albeit they struggled for wickets with Zadran completing his fifth hundred in 27 ODIs, off 131 balls, including seven fours.

Zadran, however, accelerated after going to three figures with Rashid making a dashing 35 not out during a quickfire unbroken stand of 58. — AFP



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Oman to showcase climate mitigation efforts at COP28

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is focusing on the sustainability of natural resources and exploiting clean energy such as wind and solar energy to produce electricity, and is working to accelerate the pace of hydrogen production, in which it is investing more than \$30 billion.

Dr Ghazi bin Ali al Rawas, Dean of Scientific Research at Sultan Qaboos University and member of the Steering Committee for Climate Change, explained that Oman's policies to reach zero carbon neutrality by 2050 are underpinned by a commitment to environmental sustainability, carbon emission reduction, transition to clean energy use, and the adoption of green hydrogen.

He said Oman's participation in the COP28 Summit, which opens in Dubai shortly, will highlight national efforts to mitigate climate change.

Oman is taking part in the COP28 Summit under the theme "Oman's Sustainable Future".

Dr Said bin Mohammed al Sarmi, Climate Affairs Expert at the Environment Authority and member of the Steering Committee on Climate Change, noted that climate change is also occurring in Oman as evident from the rising frequency and intensity of tropical cyclones.



Dr Ghazi bin Ali al Rawas, Dean of Scientific Research at Sultan Qaboos University and member of the Steering Committee for Climate Change

Temperatures around the world are also rising, while rainfall levels are fluctuating. Therefore, a clear national plan has been developed to support climate mitigation and adaptation, he said.

Emission reductions are also being monitored to ensure there is no disruption to the national economy, and the transition towards a sustainable green economy is flexible and smooth, he said.

COP28 will be a decisive summit that will review targets set out in the Paris Agreement.

National teams taking part in the Summit will focus on environmental performance, technical transformation, innovation, negotiation, media and logistics.

They are collaborating to ensure that all programmes align with Oman's Net Zero 2050 target. — ONA

Solar-powered desalination plant a global showcase

NASRULAH AL AJMI
SUR, NOV 7

A first-ever solar farm inaugurated at Sur on Monday as a source of renewable electricity for water desalination serves as a global showcase of Oman's ambitions to decarbonise its economy, according to a key executive involved in this landmark initiative.

Philippe Paulissen, CEO of Sharqiyah Desalination Company SAOG, said the initiative demonstrates that solar farms can effectively power desalination plants, potentially inspiring other nations to explore similar initiatives and furthering the worldwide transition to sustainable and eco-friendly energy solutions.

A joint initiative of TotalEnergies and Veolia, the solar plant was inaugurated on Monday by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Afi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, in the presence of a number of local and international dignitaries.

The solar plant boasts an



Solar PV farm powering the desalination plant in Sur.

annual capacity of over 32,000 megawatt-hours (MWh) of green and renewable electricity, which is expected to make a substantial impact on Oman's energy landscape, moving the nation closer to achieving its renewable energy goals.

In remarks to the *Observer*, Paulissen explained that a solar farm is a groundbreaking concept

that involves the capture of energy from the sun to generate electricity.

The heart of the project lies in the extensive installation of photovoltaic panels that efficiently convert sunlight into electrical power.

The outcome is a clean and sustainable source of electricity capable of powering crucial facilities such as desalination

plants. One of the most significant advantages of this project is its potential to mitigate environmental harm.

The solar farm is estimated to reduce approximately 27,200 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions annually, aligning with Oman's commitment to combating climate change and promoting sustainability.

Sohar Port launches Net Zero Alliance

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 7

Sohar Port and Freezone in collaboration with industrial tenants including OQ, Vale Oman Pelletizing Company, Sohar Aluminium Company, Jindal Shaded Iron & Steel, Al Tamman Indsil Ferrochrome (FZC) LLC, Shinas Generating Company, Sohar International



Members of SNZA

Urea & Chemical Industries, Al Batinah Power and Air Liquide Sohar Industrial Gases officially

announced the formation of SOHAR Net Zero Alliance (SNZA), a groundbreaking initiative dedicated to accelerating Oman's transition towards carbon neutrality by 2050.

Founded on principles of partnership, transparency, commitment and inclusiveness, the SOHAR Net Zero Alliance serves as a platform for the stakeholders to share insights, strategies and

requirements propelling the region's path towards sustainability. Emile Hoogsteden, CEO of SOHAR Port, expressed the significance of this alliance: "SOHAR Net Zero Alliance signifies our steadfast commitment to spearheading Oman's journey towards carbon neutrality."

"Together, we are setting a bold course towards a sustainable and carbon-free future, leaving no stone unturned."

Pilots prove efficacy of Omani carbon removal tech

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, NOV 7

Omani award-winning climate tech start-up 44.01 says a pair of pilot projects has validated the effectiveness of its pioneering carbon removal technology in permanently locking away planet-warming CO2 in peridotite rocks found in abundance in the Sultanate of Oman.

According to 44.01's Chief Commercial Officer Karan Khimji, the technology — which earned a prestigious Earthshot Prize for the start-up last year — has now been successfully tested at a pilot undertaken in Oman, with a second pilot currently under way in Fujairah in the

United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The two locations, while hundreds of kilometres apart, target the same massive peridotite-rich Ophiolite formation that starts in Oman and ends in the UAE.

Speaking at a forum on the growth of a Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) industry in Oman, Khimji said 44.01's carbon removal technology, in essence, accelerates a naturally occurring process of carbon mineralisation when CO2 and water reacts with the olivine properties of peridotite.

"What we do at 44.01 is that we accelerate this natural mineralisation process to take in meaningful amounts of CO2 from the atmosphere, and from the



Karan Khimji, 44.01 Chief Commercial Officer, addressing a forum held in Muscat recently

industries, to have an impact on the effects of climate change.

We take CO2 that's been captured from a Direct Air Capture (DAC) facility or (from industrial sources), we mix that with water and inject that fluid mixture into formations in the subsurface.

We target specific fracture networks that exist in the natural crystalline structure of the Ophiolite formation, and that's how we engage the CO2 with the Ophiolite formation itself.

Over the course of about a year, the CO2 reacts with the rock and turns into calcite minerals that permanently lock away that CO2 from existence in that mineral form," he explained. To minimise

the carbon footprint of the mineralisation process, renewable electricity is used to power the injection process, said Khimji.

The two pilots, 44.01's Chief Commercial Officer said, were a demonstration of Omani "homegrown technology" that has also been successfully validated in Oman and abroad.

He underlined in this regard the pivotal importance of carbon removal technology, such as that pioneered by 44.01, in fighting climate change — an assertion also made by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

As for the next steps in the application of the technology, Khimji stated: "We are going to

scale up our projects to the next phase, and we're slowly working with the relevant industries here that are overseeing our process to ensure that everything is done in a safe and protected way."

44.01, he further noted, can also support the development of green aviation fuel production in one of two ways: One — Airlines can offset "embodied carbons" associated with the construction of airplanes by purchasing the 44.01's carbon mineralisation credits; and Two — Producers of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) can divert their CO2 captured from the production process for permanent mineralisation based on 44.01's carbon removal technology.

Muzn’s bancatakaful products
safeguard your needs

MUSCAT: Driven by its customer-centric approach, Muzn, National Bank of Oman’s (NBO) Islamic banking window, constantly strives to secure its customers by providing value-added solutions in accordance with Shari’a principles.

Muzn has introduced a number of Bancatakaful products designed to offer financial protection to its customers and their loved ones.

Through its Bancatakaful products, Muzn offers special insurance products like the Takaful Elite Life Plan, My Health Plus ‘Himayati’ and Motor Insurance, all designed to follow Shari’a principles. These products aim to give customers financial security and peace of mind.

Salima al Marzouqi, Chief Islamic Banking Officer, said, “At Muzn, we understand our customers’ concerns when it comes to protecting themselves, their loved ones and their assets during life’s unexpected challenges.

Hence, we have introduced an array of Shari’a-compliant Bancatakaful products that align with our customers’ values. This demonstrates our commitment to providing the best banking experience to our growing customer base without compromising on their values and principles.” One of these offerings is the Takaful Elite Life Plan, a comprehensive life insurance plan designed to safeguard families’ financial futures.

This plan includes high-value life coverage, annual family travel Takaful and gadget protection, ensuring peace of mind and financial stability during unexpected events.



Salima al Marzouqi, Chief Islamic Banking Officer

For individuals prioritising their family’s safety and security, ‘Himayati’ under My Health Plus offers a streamlined solution designed for females.

“My Health Plus” is a simple term medical insurance product. It is easy to set up and manage, available to new and existing customers aged 18 to 65 and their spouses, providing seamless coverage. Moreover, Muzn, in collaboration with Takaful Oman, offers Motor Takaful insurance plan, recognising the importance of vehicle safety.

This comprehensive motor insurance plan not only covers the customer’s vehicle but also all its passengers, ensuring a worry-free experience and full protection for the car.

As the first licensed Islamic banking window in Oman, Muzn has been committed to safeguarding the interest of its customers through comprehensive portfolio of insurance products.

To find out more about Muzn’s products and services, call 24770001 or visit your nearest Muzn branch.

BANK DHOFAR LAUNCHES
MULTI-CURRENCY DEPOSITS

MUSCAT: BankDhofar is pleased to introduce a range of deposit options that will redefine saving experience within customers and provide opportunities to grow their wealth.

Fixed Deposit also called as Term Deposit: For those looking to secure their savings, BankDhofar offers an alluring Fixed Deposit scheme. With an impressive interest rate of 5 per cent per annum, customers can enjoy both peace of mind and substantial returns on their investments.

You have the option of getting the interest as an additional income credited to your account or let it get added to the principal and compound your growth.

US Dollar Deposit: In an ever-globalising world, the Bank’s US Dollar Deposit option is tailored for those holding USD. For deposits of \$50,000 or more, we offer an attractive interest rate of 4.84 per cent per annum. This not only keeps your funds safe but



With an impressive interest rate of 5% per annum, customers can enjoy both peace of mind and substantial returns on their investments.

also helps them grow steadily in this global currency.

Recurring Deposit: BankDhofar recognises the value of commitment, and our Recurring Deposit option is designed to reward customers. With a three-year commitment, customers can enjoy an impressive 5 per cent interest rate. This is a flexible and accessible way to achieve your savings goals while also reaping the benefits

of consistent investment and compounding interest.

Children’s Recurring Deposit: With the aim of saving for the children’s future and education; BankDhofar is pleased to launch of the Recurring Deposit Account for Children.

This initiative encourages parents to save for their children’s education journey and get an exceptional up to 5 per cent p.a interest, as well as flexible tenors

-ranging from 6 months till the child reaches 18 years.

High Yield Savings Account: For those who prefer liquidity without sacrificing returns, our High Yield Savings Account is the ideal choice.

Offering a generous 4 per cent interest per annum for balances, it provides the flexibility to access your funds whenever you need them, all while enjoying an impressive interest rate.

BankDhofar is focused on its customer’s financial wellbeing.

Those encouraging interest rates meet the diverse needs of customers who are looking for security, flexibility, or high returns. BankDhofar is dedicated to empower the customers with wealth generation options.

You are one step away to take advantage of these attractive options.

Walk into any of our 100 plus branches across Oman, where our dedicated staff will be happy to assist you, or please visit www.bankdhofar.com.

Japanese language course from Oman Japan friendship association

MUSCAT: The Japanese language course specially planned by Oman Japan Friendship Association in cooperation with the Embassy of Japan, is expected to commence shortly.

The entire course will be taught by a native teacher from Japan.

What makes this course special is it well-planned contents

focusing on making the entire journey of learning the Japanese language convenient and easy.

Re-introduced after a while, the previous editions of the Japanese language course have been popular with various nationalities interested in learning Japanese, here in Oman.

The objective of the soon to be introduced course is to



Oman Japan Friendship Association in cooperation with the Embassy of Japan, is expected to commence shortly

offer students an opportunity to develop basic conversational skills, which could assist them in achieving desired goals.

The course will be held at the Children’s Public Library, Qurum.

Those interested in knowing more about the course details and its contents, can contact Mr. Shuichi Sawada on 91723461 or email: shu-sawada@hotmail.co.jp

Cedar-IBSi NextGen summit in Muscat
celebrates resounding success

MUSCAT: The Cedar-IBSi NextGen Banking & Technology Summit, held on November 4, 2023, in Muscat, Oman, has emerged as a resounding success, celebrating a day filled with profound insights, innovation, and a vision for a brighter future in the banking and technology sectors.

The summit brought together luminaries, thought leaders, and industry experts, making it one of the most significant and transformative events in the region.

Cedar Management Consulting, a Forbes-listed management consulting firm with a substantial presence and extensive work in the Middle East, and the UK-based IBS Intelligence, a news and media advisory firm for FinTechs, co-hosted the event.

This year, Cedar-IBSi events have delivered excellent banking summits in Mumbai, London, Bahrain, Dubai, and now Muscat. It has undoubtedly emerged as an invaluable platform for knowledge sharing, insightful discussions, and the exploration of cutting-edge trends and solutions that will shape the future of banking and technology.

The Muscat summit was no different, with over 110 delegates representing 30+ banks and



Cedar-IBSi NextGen Banking Technology Summit Muscat

financial institutions. Cedar-IBSi would like to express immense gratitude to our event partners for their invaluable support and collaboration.

Together with Backbase, BML Istisharat Sal, Expleo Group, Finastra, Fiorano, i-exceed, Nucleus Software, **ORACLE FINANCIAL SERVICES SOFTWARE LIMITED**, uqudo, and Temenos, we created a platform for insightful discussions, knowledge sharing, and the exploration of cutting-edge trends and solutions.

These partnerships have been essential in driving positive change and propelling the industry forward.

The willingness of these industry leaders to share their experiences and perspectives has been instrumental in driving innovation in the banking and technology sectors.

The summit featured 17+ distinguished speakers who shared their expertise, insights, and invaluable contributions.

From the Head of Strategy and Transformation at the National Bank of Oman, Mustahil bin Ahmed al Maamari, to the Managing Director of Universal Banking at Finastra, Rudy Kawmi, and many more, these leaders enriched the collective learning experience for all attendees.

The summit was organised

into panels covering various critical aspects of the banking and technology sectors.

These panels explored the future of digital Islamic banking, the evolution of payments in Oman, fostering FinTech innovation in the digital ecosystem, and market overviews and trends. Each panel provided profound insights and actionable takeaways.

The first panel had a forward-looking perspective on the digital transformation journey of Omani banks, exploring Oman’s Vision 2040 and how it will shape the NextGen tech solutions to enhance customer experiences, streamline operations, and extend their influence.

Panel 2 explored the role of FinTech in the digital ecosystem, highlighting the collaborative efforts between FinTech companies and banks and the potential for innovation in corporate transaction banking.

The third panel provided key insights into the disruptive technologies shaping Oman’s payment landscape in the next 5-10 years, including open banking APIs, cross-border payments, and real-time payments.

One of the event’s highlights was Panel #4, which focused on Empowering Digital in Islamic Banking.

CMA to promote GCC
Smart Investment
Award initiative

BUSINESS REPORTR
MUSCAT, NOV 6

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) continues to promote its GCC Smart Investor Award, as a part of the GCC investment awareness programme, “Mulim”.

This week, the CMA will start organising introductory meetings in the Directorates General of Education in the governorates, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

Based on the visits timetable covering all Directorates General of Education in governorates, the first meeting targeted career guidance teachers and plastic arts teachers in schools under the Ministry of Education in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate.

The CMA, through these meetings, seeks to introduce the award and enable teachers to transfer its message to students to ensure participation of talented students in fields of digital and traditional drawing, videography, photography and creative writing with visual and creative works on financial and investment

culture.

The CMA participates in this joint awareness campaign with the GCC countries for the third time under the title, Mulim, which aims to raise awareness in the GCC and uses many methods to spread awareness messages.

One of which is the GCC Smart Investor Award that started in the previous year and is currently going on.

It targets students of schools and universities as well as the public in many categories: videography, drawing, photography and writing. The award aims at motivating citizens and residents in the GCC countries to produce awareness content and present creative ideas related to saving and investment, raising financial awareness that enhances the ability to plan for the future properly, and taking sound financial decisions to accomplish financial stability.

The award also seeks to increasing the level of financial culture through gaining the required skills and learning the effective ways for using financial resources successfully.



Visit Oman, Prioticket sign pact to digitise tourism

BUSINESS REPORTER

LONDON, NOV 7

Following the first day of the World Travel Market London taking place from November 6 – 8, 2023 in London, the Sultanate of Oman's B2B travel booking gateway Visit Oman announced the signing of a new partnership agreement with global connectivity platform Prioticket.

The signing ceremony was attended by Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism and Chairman of Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group); Dr Hashil al Mahrouqi, OMRAN Group CEO; and Gert-Jan Ruiter, Prioticket Founder & CEO.

Through the strategic partnership, Visit Oman gets set to further revolutionise the Sultanate of Oman's tourism sector by leveraging Prioticket's reputation as a leading connectivity platform. This innovative platform will empower all B2B stakeholders, including online travel agents, hotels, tour operators, and destination management companies, to explore Oman's full range of offerings.

It allows stakeholders to craft bespoke and customisable visitor experiences tailored to the needs of today's global travellers. It will facilitate mobile transactions, timely bookings, and a higher



Representatives from Visit Oman, OMRAN and Prioticket at the signing on Monday

level of digital maturity, ensuring seamless interactions between industry resellers.

The partnership serves as a milestone event in Visit Oman's journey, and a never-seen-before "first" for Oman. Visit Oman provides international travel trade partners with access to the ultimate tourism marketplace that consolidates an extensive range of Oman suppliers.

The partnership therefore paves the way for an unprecedented scale and volume of tourism supply

distribution, while providing multiple benefits for the country's tourism-aligned SMEs.

SMEs and suppliers in Oman will benefit from a live-booking service together with instant access to a larger network of resellers and online aggregators, thus amplifying their global market reach.

They can also leverage a white-label booking platform that will make it easier to sell and distribute products and services, without the need for significant investment in

proprietary software.

Azzan al Busaidy remarked on the significance of the agreement: "We are witnessing a pivotal moment for Oman's tourism industry with the inception of this agreement.

It aligns perfectly with the country's vision of cultivating a robust SME economy enriched by the cultural exchange that tourism brings.

The increased influx of tourists not only catalyses the demand for Omani goods, services, and

experiences but also fosters employment opportunities within the tourism and ancillary sectors, and contributes to our In Country Value mandate.

Moreover, it is a strategic step in amplifying Oman's tourism footprint and enhancing our visibility in critical markets."

Elaborating on the operational benefits of the collaboration, Dr Hashil al Mahrouqi, CEO of Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group), conveyed: "Visit Oman is dedicated to simplifying the discovery and booking of authentic Omani experiences for global travellers and travel intermediaries.

This alliance with Prioticket is more than a partnership; it is a leap towards embedding technological innovation at the core of our tourism industry.

It propels us into the digital future, ensuring that the rich tapestry of Omani experiences is just a click away for all visitors." Gert-Jan Ruiter, Prioticket Founder & CEO, stated: "As a destination, the Sultanate of Oman offers a truly diverse and exciting portfolio of experiences for travellers from all over the world.

Our goal is to remove many of the challenges that suppliers in growing tourism markets traditionally face – such as global distribution, complex technology,

and access to a centralised booking platform – so that they can focus their efforts purely on growth and expansion.

This partnership with Visit Oman comes at a time when Prioticket is experiencing significant growth and moving into smart tourism and connected destination approaches."

In terms of In-Country Value (ICV) generation, the partnership reflects a new era of technological advancement for Oman's tourism sector: It will simplify business processes, and promote and aid a culture of digital innovation and data-driven insights, ensuring that Oman remains at the forefront of modern tourism trends as it works towards achieving its national tourism objectives laid out in the government's Oman Vision 2040 plan for sustainable progress and development. Founded in 2015, Prioticket has rapidly become a one-stop solution for the varied ticketing needs of the industry, from integrations to data and reporting.

In its quest to help travel businesses flourish online and offline, Prioticket's co-founders have pioneered a new ticketing approach to integrate every sales channel fully.

This comprehensive strategy eliminates outdated infrastructure and incompatible technologies, allowing both local and global operators and resellers to thrive.

Swiss bank UBS dragged into red in Q3

ZURICH: The major Swiss bank UBS suffered large losses in the third quarter, as it absorbed the financial impact of its Credit Suisse takeover. Not accounting for the costs of integrating Credit Suisse, however, the bank posted a significant pre-tax profit.

UBS posted a loss of \$785 million in the third quarter, it announced in Zurich on Tuesday.

This quarter is the first in which Credit Suisse is fully included. In the second quarter, only June was included in the UBS financial statements.

UBS estimates its pre-tax loss for the third quarter at \$255 million. Adjusted - without the costs of the Credit Suisse integration - the result was plus \$844 million. Adjusted for takeover effects, pre-tax profit at Group level was \$1.1 billion in the previous quarter.

The situation at Credit Suisse has stabilised further, according to the firm's press release. For the first time since the first quarter of 2022, new money inflows were generated



An employee of multinational investment bank UBS walks past a sign of Swiss giant banking UBS above a sign of Credit Suisse in Zurich

again in a quarterly period in Credit Suisse's wealth management business, it said.

The bank said it was making efforts to recover assets

from Credit Suisse clients. Overall, the UBS Group acquired net new money of \$22 billion in its core business, global wealth management, in the third quarter.

At the end of September, UBS thus managed assets totalling \$5.4 trillion at overall bank level.

At the end of June the figure was \$5.5 trillion. — **DPA**



The logo of German specialty chemical company Evonik Industries AG is pictured at their plant in Bitterfeld. — **Reuters**

German industry slipped in September for 4th straight month

FRANKFURT: Industrial production in Germany fell by 1.4 per cent in September compared to the previous month, the fourth monthly decline in a row, according to government figures released on Tuesday.

The decline was steeper than analysts had expected. The average forecast anticipated only a 0.1 per cent decline in September, according to the report from Germany's Federal Statistical Office.

In the third quarter as a whole, industrial production fell by 2.1 per cent compared to the previous quarter, the agency said. "The downward trend that has been ongoing since the summer is continuing," the German Economy Ministry said in a statement on the figures.

However, more stable incoming orders and sentiment indicators pointed to a bottoming out in the third quarter and the possibility of a recovery at the turn of the year.

The decline was felt across the board. With the exception of the construction industry, which stagnated, all sectors recorded declines. The production of industrial goods as well as energy production both fell by 1.7 per cent. — **DPA**

Aramco net profit drops 23 pc, shares flat

RIYADH: Energy giant Saudi Aramco on Tuesday posted a 23-per cent year-on-year drop in profits for the third quarter, the result of lower oil prices and production cuts.

The drop from \$42.43 billion last year to \$32.58 billion "principally reflects the impact of lower crude oil prices and volumes sold", the firm said in a statement to the Saudi stock exchange.

It follows a drop in net profit for Aramco, one of the world's richest companies, of 19.25 per cent in the

first quarter and 38 per cent in the second quarter compared to 2022. Aramco is the jewel of the Saudi economy and main source of revenue for Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's sweeping economic and social reform programme known as Vision 2030, which aims to shift the Gulf kingdom away from fossil fuels. Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, owns 90 per cent of Aramco's shares. Russia's attack of Ukraine in February 2022 prompted oil prices

to skyrocket, peaking at more than \$130 per barrel.

Aramco reported what it described as record profits for last year totalling \$161.1 billion, giving the kingdom its first annual budget surplus in nearly a decade. Prices this year are estimated to be around \$85 per barrel, Riyadh-based firm Jadwa Investment said in a report in late October.

Analysts say the kingdom needs oil to be priced at around \$80 per barrel to balance its budget, though that could be thrown off

by production cuts and ramped-up spending. Saudi Arabia in April announced it was slashing production by 500,000 barrels per day, part of a coordinated move with other oil powers to curb supply by more than one million bpd in a bid to prop up prices.

In June, the Saudi energy ministry announced a further voluntary cut of one million bpd which took effect in July.

That cut will last through December, the ministry confirmed on Sunday. — **AFP**



Saudi Aramco profits down 23 per cent on lower oil prices, cuts

Opportunity Oman: Unlocking the potential of Oman’s Blue Economy



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Duqm Industrial Fisheries Port in Duqm SEZ

Nestled along the picturesque Arabian Sea, Oman has a storied maritime history that is now converging with the global Blue Economy revolution. Positioned at the nexus of major shipping lanes, endowed with bountiful marine resources, and fortified by forward-thinking government policies, Oman stands as a beacon for Blue Economy growth.

Projections from the World Bank indicate that the Blue Economy could contribute up to \$3 trillion to the global economy by 2030. With its strategic advantages, Oman is poised to secure a significant share of this potential.

In recent years, Oman’s Blue Economy sector has witnessed phenomenal growth and is poised for continued expansion, with experts forecasting an impressive growth rate exceeding 8 per cent. This paints a compelling landscape for investors seeking opportunities in the following key sectors:

FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE:

Oman’s sprawling coastline, extending over 3,165 kilometres, provides an ideal ecosystem for seafood production. The fisheries and aquaculture industry is set to experience substantial growth by 2030. The popularity of Omani seafood products, encompassing delectable shrimp and an array of fish varieties, is on a steady rise domestically and globally. This sector significantly contributes to the economy, offering employment to thousands. The government’s proactive stance in modernising the fishing fleet and developing advanced aquaculture facilities underscores its commitment to meet the escalating demand for seafood, with an ambitious target of a 25 per cent increase in production by 2025.

SHIPPING AND PORTS:

Oman’s strategic location on pivotal maritime routes positions it as an indispensable logistics hub in the region. With

OMAN IS ACTIVELY
CHANNELLING
INVESTMENTS INTO
RENEWABLE ENERGY
SOURCES TO
PROMOTE
SUSTAINABLE
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THIS DOMAIN OFFERS
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INVESTORS THE
OPPORTUNITY TO
CONTRIBUTE TO
OMAN’S TRANSITION
TOWARDS CLEAN
ENERGY SOLUTIONS.

ambitious plans for port expansion and heightened trade activities, this sector presents lucrative investment prospects.

Oman boasts several strategically positioned ports, solidifying its status as a significant regional maritime nexus. Substantial investments in augmenting port capacity and enhancing naval services, such as the ongoing construction of the Duqm Port and the expansion at Sohar Port, demonstrate Oman’s unwavering commitment to fortifying its infrastructure.

Notably, the Port of Salalah, processing over 5 million TEUs annually, ranks as the second-largest container port in the Middle East.

TOURISM AND RECREATION:

Oman’s breathtaking coastal vistas and vibrant marine biodiversity allure tourists and adventure enthusiasts alike. The tourism sector, with an emphasis on immersive activities like diving, snorkelling, and eco-

friendly tours, is experiencing robust growth, with experts forecasting a remarkable 10 per cent expansion.

RENEWABLE ENERGY:

Oman is actively channelling investments into renewable energy sources to promote sustainable development.

This domain offers discerning investors the opportunity to contribute to Oman’s transition towards clean energy solutions.

MARINE BIOTECHNOLOGY:

Oman’s marine ecosystem harbours a treasure trove of biodiversity that holds immense potential for the development of innovative products and services.

The government’s staunch support for research and development in marine biotechnology underscores its commitment to harnessing the latent opportunities in this burgeoning sector.

- Oman has already garnered substantial investments in the Blue Economy, boasting

several noteworthy success stories that underscore the sector’s potential:

- The establishment of the Duqm Fishing Port has facilitated Oman’s capacity to expand its seafood exports.
- The strategic development of Salalah, Sohar, and Duqm ports has propelled Oman’s progress and bolstered the global trade community.
- Blue Waters Oman (LLC) has achieved the esteemed Best Aquaculture Practices certification for their offshore sea bream farm facilities, setting a high standard for sustainable aquaculture practices.
- Offshore wind projects envisioned in the future stand as a testament to Oman’s commitment to clean and sustainable energy sources, positioning the nation as a trailblazer in the renewable energy sector. The Blue Economy in Oman presents a multitude of opportunities for investors.

With its promising growth trajectory and a track record of successful investments, Oman is an alluring choice for those seeking financial rewards and the chance to contribute to Oman’s sustainable and prosperous future.

The commitment to data-driven strategies and the positive outlook make Oman an ideal destination for those seeking to take part in this exciting maritime journey. Oman’s development.

The government is steadfast in ensuring that Blue Economy initiatives are both environmentally and socially responsible.

As the world turns its focus towards the Blue Economy, Oman stands poised to seize the opportunities ahead.

As a result of its rich maritime heritage, strategic location, and supportive government policies, Oman is poised to emerge as one of the leading players in the global blue economy.

London Stock Exchange beats Europe in cash raises



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The London Stock Exchange has shown signs of life this year as new figures revealed the capital had surged ahead of European rivals in terms of cash raised by listed companies.

Firms listed on London’s embattled exchange raised some £14.6bn in follow-on equity issuance in the first nine months of the year, where listed firms raise cash by issuing more shares to the market, according to new figures from PwC. The figures put the City (the financial district of London) ahead of European rivals and cast a more positive light on London’s markets after a torrid 18 months for fresh listings.

IPOs have fallen sharply over the past two years as volatility rocked the market and frightened investors. Figures from EY in

early October found that firms raised just £953m in the first nine months of the year compared with 34 IPOs raising £1.16bn in the same period in an already quiet 2022.

London was surpassed by the likes of Budapest and Istanbul in the IPO rankings. Analysts at PwC said overall activity “remains subdued” this year despite follow-on cash in London topping its rivals. The new numbers were cheered by City minister Andrew Griffith, however, who said life was returning to the market.

“At a time of low issuance across markets in general, these figures confound the declinists and show that London continues to be resilient,” he said. “And as the benefit of our reforms kick in, including those boosting demand for UK listed equities – I am confident we will see more new

and follow-on capital raised here.”

London has been plunged into a period of introspection this year as London Stock Exchange officials and regulators look to overhaul the market and boost the flow of listings. Ministers and London Stock Exchange officials have been looking to strip back red tape from the market with measures like slimming down the prospectus regime for new firms and merging the standard and premium segments of the market.

A number of firms have fired barbs at the City over the past year amid a dearth of capital flowing into the stock market. Turkish soda ash firm WE Soda ditched a London float over the summer and criticised what it called the “conservatism” of London’s investors.

Analysts at PwC said the new numbers showed “some aspects

of the European equity market have normalised” as London firms could dip into the pockets of investors again.

“This points to one of London’s recurring attractions being the depth of liquidity that is available and also signals investor appetite for equities,” said Kat Kravstov, capital markets director at PwC UK.” He added: “That is certainly helpful in the context of providing a supportive environment for IPOs and we would expect this to feed through into a London IPO market in due course.”

Additionally, top Venture capital (VC) firms last week threw their weight behind a move to channel pension cash into startups as the government accelerates its effort to get more retirement money flowing into the economy.

In an announcement, 20

venture firms including Octopus, Balderton and Lakestar said they had signed a new “Venture Capital Investment Compact” backed by the Treasury, which would help unlock “£50bn to flow into unlisted companies by the end of the decade.

The new announcement follows a move by nine of the country’s top pension money managers over the summer to commit five per cent of their assets to startups by 2030. Pension money has typically been shut out of private markets due to the higher costs charged by money managers at VC and private equity firms.

However, backing for the plans from some of London’s top venture capital investors may now unlock a viable channel for pension money to flow into startups.



FASHION

Canadian model Coco Rocha attends the CFDA Fashion Awards at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. — AFP



Hollywood

Superstar Barbra Streisand is capping her storied career with a nearly 1,000-page memoir musing on her childhood, Broadway breakout and storied Hollywood love life. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

US singer and actress Teyana Taylor attends the CFDA Fashion Awards at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. — AFP



TRAVEL

A couple of women donning a traditional Chinese attire was enjoying the snow as it landed on Shenyang, in China's northeastern Liaoning province. — AFP



ART

Young Iraqis visit an exhibition at an art gallery in a compound housing a gym and a restaurant as well in Baghdad's upscale Karrada district. — AFP

art & life

WEDNESDAY | NOVEMBER 8, 2023 | RABEE AL THANI 24, 1445 AH | OMAN OBSERVER | www.omanobserver.om | features@omanobserver.om

The last of Sur's dhow builders

In Sur, the ancient art of dhow boat building persists, though demand wanes. Craftsmen uphold tradition amidst modern challenges, aiming to preserve maritime heritage... P20

ART

Monet painting to go on sale at Paris auction for first time in decades

A PAINTING BY FRENCH impressionist master Claude Monet, which has remained in private hands since 1948, is expected to fetch up to 3 million euros (\$3.22 million) when it goes under the hammer later this month in Paris, auction house Ader said. The landscape "Les Saules, Giverny"

("The Willows, Giverny"), dating from 1886, is reappearing on the French art market, where Monet's paintings have become increasingly rare. It is one of around three dozen lots at the upcoming Ader auction house's sale of impressionist and modern art at Hotel Drouot slated for Nov. 24. "Paintings of Claude Monet of this scale, of this dimension no longer really exist among French families. They're found mostly in big museums or in foreign collections, but it's very rare to find them in France," Ader auctioneer David Nordmann said on Friday in a preview of the sale. "It's a big occasion for the French market," he added. Monet's oil painting - measuring 73cm by 92cm (28.7 inches by 36.2 inches) - belonged to a family of Jewish origin, and was displayed in their luxurious flat in central Paris. The family's grandfather purchased the painting from a gallery in Nice in 1948, and it has remained in the family's hands

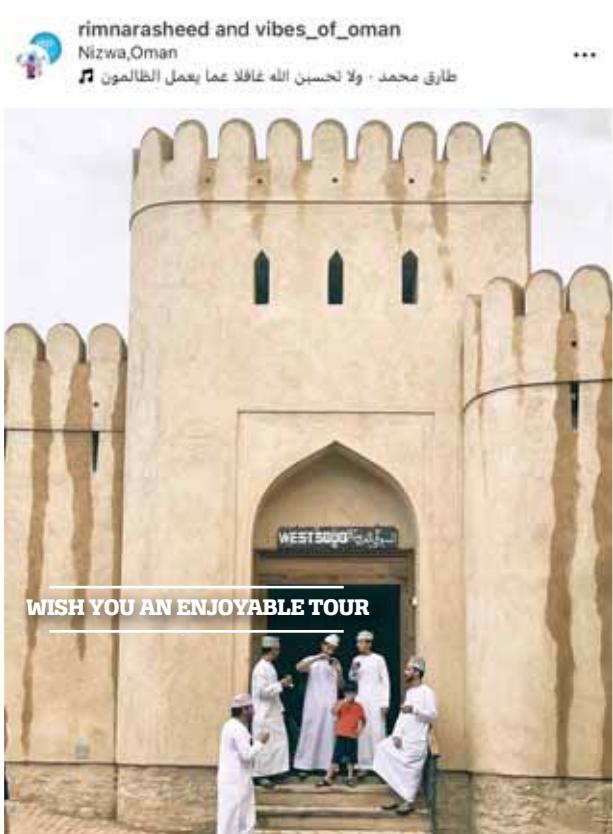
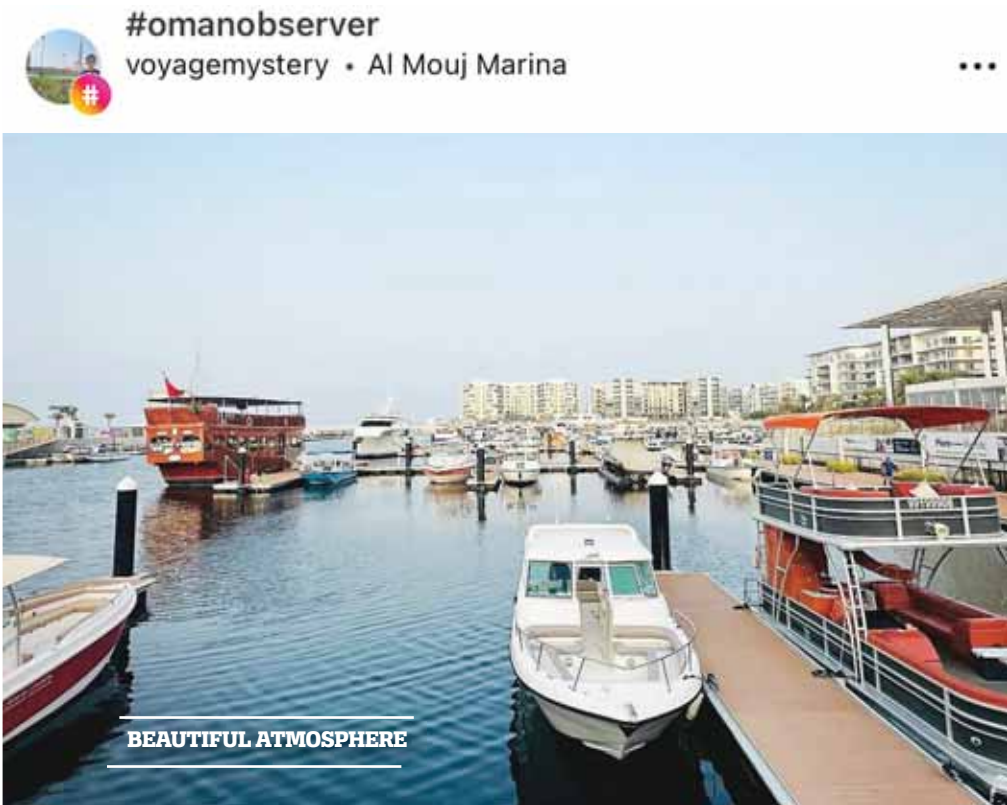


since. Though not as famous as Monet's water lilies or the Gare Saint Lazare paintings, which can command prices reaching 100 million euros, "Les Saules, Giverny" bears the artist's trademark style. "It's an oeuvre typical of Claude Monet, notably by the brush strokes and how he makes the light come out," Nordmann said. Monet found solace in Giverny, west of Paris, from 1883 until his death in 1926, transforming a pink stucco house into his permanent home and studio, and growing a Japanese-style garden of flowers and trees spread across a pond of water lilies, which inspired many of his paintings. The auction also includes a work by American painter Mary Cassatt. "Portrait de Jeune Fille au Chapeau Blanc" ("Portrait of a Young Woman in a White Hat") is estimated at 800,000 to 1.2 million euros. — Reuters



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AROUND THE WORLD

AGRICULTURE

Desert
Turkmenistan
plants 470,000
trees



WATER-SCARCE TURKMENISTAN said Monday it had planted almost half a million trees in a nationwide “green campaign” that is being used to advance the ruling family’s personality cult.

Since coming to power last year, Turkmen President Serdar Berdimukhamedov has advanced an intense campaign to promote himself and honour his father — ex-president Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov — with portraits, billboards, statues and monuments of the leaders having been erected across the country.

Neutral Turkmenistan, the government’s official newspaper, reported Monday details of a nationwide “green campaign”, in which Turkmen citizens planted more than 472,000 trees — including conifers, hardwoods and fruit trees — in a single day.

It published a photo of Serdar Berdimukhamedov shovelling earth in a green-and-white sports outfit.

“On this autumn day, the whole country went on a greening campaign to increase the ‘green wealth’ of the country,” the paper said.

Turkmenistan is one of the most closed societies in the world, where dissent is outlawed and the Berdimukhamedovs have exercised tight control over all spheres of public life for almost two decades.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) says water stress in Turkmenistan is “extremely high”.

Three-quarters of the country are covered by the black sands of the Karakum Desert and annual precipitation is below 100 mm in places.

A vast 1,400-kilometre canal — one of the world’s largest irrigation projects — carries water across the desert to the capital Ashgabat and supplies the country’s important cotton fields.

Officials say Turkmenistan has planted around 145 million trees in the past few years — but information coming out of the reclusive state is impossible to verify.

Reporters Without Borders ranks Turkmenistan 176th out of 180 for freedom of the press, while rights group Freedom House has called the country a “repressive authoritarian state, where political rights and civil liberties are almost completely denied”. —**AFP**

SCIENCES

Astronomers find seven
planets being ‘fried’ by
their star



IN OUR SOLAR system, little rocky Mercury is the planet orbiting closest to the sun, perpetually fried by solar radiation seven times more intense than what we experience on Earth.

Astronomers using data obtained by NASA’s now-retired Kepler space telescope have identified seven planets orbiting a star in our Milky Way galaxy, with all of them suffering the wrath of their star - radiant energy - even more brutally than Mercury. This is the second-most planets so far discovered around any star beyond our solar system.

All seven are larger than Earth, the biggest of our solar system’s four rocky planets, but littler than Neptune, the smallest of our solar system’s four gas planets. All of them have orbits closer to their star, called Kepler-385, than Mercury’s average distance to the sun.

“All of the planets are ‘fried’ more intensely than any planet in our solar system,” said astronomer Jack Lissauer of NASA’s Ames Research Center in California, lead author of the study set to be published in the Journal of Planetary Science and currently posted on the arXiv research site.

Scientists have to date identified more than 5,500 exoplanets — planets outside our solar system - and spotted hundreds of stars with multiple exoplanets. But Kepler-385’s collection

of seven exoplanets is topped only by the eight known to orbit a star called Kepler-90. One other star, TRAPPIST-1, is known to have seven. Our solar system has eight planets.

The Kepler space telescope, NASA’s first planet-hunting mission, was retired in 2018. It detected exoplanets by observing small dips in a star’s brightness when a planet crosses in front of it from our vantage point.

The new study catalogues roughly 4,400 planets spotted by the telescope from its 2009 launch to its retirement. Scientists continue to analyse its data, as evidenced by the identification of Kepler-385’s population of exoplanets.

The study further illustrates that there are lots of different kinds of planetary systems — and many probably do not closely resemble our solar system. There almost certainly are planetary systems with more than eight, but telescopes so far have not been sensitive enough to do well detecting smaller exoplanets.

The star Kepler-385 is about 10% larger in diameter and mass than our sun, while being somewhat more luminous and slightly hotter. It is located about 5,000 light years from Earth. A light year is the distance light travels in a year, 5.9 trillion miles (9.5 trillion km).

The smallest of its seven planets — 20% larger than Earth — orbits closest to the star, at a distance of a

little more than 4% of the distance between our planet and the sun. The next planet is about 20% larger than the innermost planet.

“Both of them are likely to be rocky, and tidally locked, showing the same face to their star all the time, as the moon does to Earth,” Lissauer said. “This makes them especially hot near the point closest to the star. But as any atmosphere is likely to long ago have boiled away, their hemispheres facing away from the star are perpetually dark and extremely cold.”

Most of the other planets are about 2.4 times larger than Earth.

“All likely have thick atmospheres, and are hot everywhere on their surfaces, which may be well below their cloud tops,” Lissauer said. “The outer planet orbits at about 40% of the Earth-sun distance. Its distance is slightly less than the average distance between the sun and Mercury.”

In the search for life beyond Earth, these planets are not promising candidates.

“The chance of life on any of these seven planets is indeed pretty remote,” Lissauer said. “There may well be additional planets orbiting farther from the star that we don’t know about because they are more difficult to detect. In particular, if there were an Earth-sized planet in the system at the Earth-sun distance, we would not have detected it.” —**Reuters**

TECHNOLOGY

EU tells TikTok
to ‘spare no
effort’ to fight
disinformation



The EU’s top tech enforcer told TikTok’s CEO on Monday to “spare no effort” to counter disinformation, but recognised the changes already made by the video-sharing platform.

The Chinese-owned app favoured by younger online users is one of 19 platforms that face stricter rules on tackling illegal and harmful content online under a landmark EU law.

“We have seen changes on TikTok’s platform in the past months, with new features being released with the aim to protect users and investments made in content moderation and trust and safety,” Thierry Breton, the EU’s internal market commissioner, said, after a video call with TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew.

TikTok said it pulled four million “violative” videos in the European Union in September, in its first transparency report since the Digital Services Act (DSA) came into force across the bloc.

Under the DSA, all major platforms must publish a transparency report every six months.

Breton said the European Commission was investigating whether TikTok had done enough to be compliant with the DSA, after opening a probe last month.

“Now more than ever, we must spare no effort to protect our citizens — especially children and teenagers — against illegal content and disinformation,” he added.

Theo Bertram, TikTok’s vice president for public policy in Europe, said Breton and Chew had a “positive discussion on TikTok’s progress” on the DSA.

“We’re encouraged that our efforts have not gone unnoticed. We continue to engage closely with the Commission on DSA compliance,” Bertram said in a social media post.

“Pleased that TikTok’s efforts to comply with the DSA and keep our community safe are being recognised,” said Caroline Greer, TikTok’s director of public policy.

Chew will meet on Tuesday with EU commissioners Vera Jourova and Didier Reynders in Brussels to discuss issues including data protection and Brussels’ tough new curbs on big tech’s market power. —**AFP**



The last of Sur's dhow builders

By Khaled Abdul Malak

The sound of hammers on teak and the whiff of coconut oil invade the senses when visiting Sur, the same way they did for visitors to the Omani coastal town centuries ago. The sounds and smells come from the last remaining factory that builds Oman's traditional wooden boats, the dhows.

Boats have been built in Sur, on the shores of the Sea of Oman, for thousands of years. The dhows, some capable of carrying up to 600 tonnes of cargo, sailed across the Arabian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean, and even reached China.

Dhows are no longer used for the trade that led to Oman's prosperity in ancient times, and Sur's boat builders no longer produce the giants of the dhow family.

"The shipyard belongs to the family whose members have been building dhows for hundreds of years," explains boat builder Jumaa bin Hassoun, one

of the last oustaz (Arabic for "master"), a name used to designate lead carpenters in the old days.

"Nowadays, all the boats we are building are smaller and go to the tourism sector as well as some private buyers, notably wealthy Qatari businessmen, like this one you see here ready to hit the sea," bin Hassoun said, pointing at the vessel with its timbers curved towards the upswept prow, a shape reminiscent of an Arabian sword.

The wooden ships are built without referring to sketches or blueprints, he said. "All the plans for construction are in here," he added, pointing at his head. "Inshallah, my son Mohammed will take over our ancestors' knowledge and skills after me to continue the legacy."

Seafaring and trade are at the core of Oman's history. Located at the tip of the Arabian Peninsula, Oman had maritime trade links with the ancient cities of Ur and Sumer in Iraq and the Indus Valley in India due to its excellent boat-building capability and

its sailors' navigation skills.

The dhow yards in Sur, however, have rapidly declined as the demand for the vessels plummeted in recent decades.

"Now people prefer to build fibreglass boats because they are much cheaper to make and easier to maintain," bin Hassoun said, fearing that Omani dhows may soon be relegated to a museum as a symbol of Oman's past. Old seafarers remain deeply nostalgic about the time when dhows were Oman's main means of sea travel.

"It used to take us sometimes two months to reach the island of Zanzibar (off the coast of east Africa) with the dhows," recalled Nasser al Alawi, an elderly captain from Sur.

"In order to get there, we used to go first from Sur to Salalah (south of Oman), then to Yemen, after which we crossed the Red Sea and sailed along the African coast down south to Zanzibar. It was a long and tough journey, especially when we had no

wind, but we used to enjoy it so much," he said.

Dhows, which have one or two masts supporting triangular sails, are built from the keel up with teak imported from India. In the past, wooden planks were sewn together without nails or glue. Now they are laid side-by-side and secured with long nails.

More traditionally, coconut-fibre rope was threaded through holes in

the teak, and the holes were plugged with fibre or cotton soaked in sesame, fish, or coconut oil.

The keel and hull are made from teak, but the ribs of the dhow, which are added after the hull has been completed, are usually made from locally grown timber.

Builders use modern saws and electric drills, but the yard still contains awls, bows, and caulking irons, the same tools that would have been used when Marco Polo sailed past 700 years ago.

Although it no longer retains its prominence in the trade industry, Sur continues to be the best at building wooden ships. A couple of centuries ago, the town built ships for clients in China, India, Iraq, and other prominent trade destinations.

One remnant of the bygone era in the vicinity of the dhow yard is the lighthouse built by the Portuguese during the 16th century to guide the bustling sea traffic that went in and out of Sur during those days.

